

**Preparing Student Teachers to be Teachers of EFL Reading: Effectiveness of curriculum development and instructional delivery of a Revised Teacher Education Reading Course upon student teachers' delivery methods during teaching practice in the UAE**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

There is an urgent need to invest in teacher education programmes in the Arab world. Outdated curricula and methodologies, reliance on rote learning and not enough qualified teachers present a threat to the quality of education in the region. Traditionally, language teacher education programs have focused on transmission, product-orientated approaches that are applicable to any teaching context. However, there is a growing shift towards a constructivist, process-orientated perspective where trainee teachers are active participants in learning to teach. This thesis explores the rationale behind shaping and contextualizing curriculum and delivery of a teacher education reading methodology course in a government college system in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a location that is currently underrepresented in the research literature. Employing a qualitative case study methodology, and drawing upon a range of influences including Vygotskian teacher education constructivist pedagogy, data is drawn from course evaluations, focus group interviews, online discussions and observational analysis.

The analysis explores the perceived impact of constructivist teacher education pedagogy on the formation of reading teaching styles during teaching practice at three levels: the perceived impact of curricular changes; the perceived and observed impact of constructivist delivery innovations (systematic microteaching, performance modelling and problem-based learning) and the perceived impact of teacher education pedagogy upon an evolving system of knowledge and beliefs. The findings suggest that by attending to a Vygotskian constructivist-based contextualized EFL model of second language teacher education pedagogy, the potential to enhance the capacity of Emirati student teachers to teach reading successfully and enact pedagogic change in local government schools is increased. However, while all participants aspired to become agents of change by making a clear distinction between themselves and their past teachers, differences in reading teaching styles were noted for varying ability groups, moving from eclectic to behaviourist styles. While investigating the unique features of the case itself, these findings may have resonance for teacher education programmes in other Middle Eastern contexts.

## **Dedication**

**I would like to dedicate this thesis to the two men in my life – my husband and my father. For their continual support and encouragement in realizing an academic dream, echoed in the words of my father “You are wise to follow it through”.  
I am forever grateful.**

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# Chapter 1 - Introduction

## 1.0 Introduction

As this case study of teacher education reading pedagogy is situated in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the nature of the context itself needs to be examined. The present innovative study is positioned within a wider educational reform movement involving the reconceptualization of pedagogy in primary government schools, along with the process of professionalization of teachers. This country-wide development and modernization is rapidly changing the educational landscape of the country itself. Encouraged by forces of internationalism and globalization and associated with developing the use of English and English language teaching and learning, educational reform is located within a changing national socio-political, linguistic and economic context. The discussion in this chapter sets the scene for the following chapters which examine the impact of revising instructional delivery and curriculum of a Teacher Education Reading Course upon the formation of reading teaching styles along with tracing the impact of past learning experiences upon student teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices. In an attempt to document the socio-cultural context in which the case is situated, this chapter indicates six contextual factors that influence the development of this revised teacher education reading methodology course, as follows:

- The UAE socio-political and economic context
- Traditions, transformation and Emiratisation
- The Role of Women
- Language
- The Nature of UAE Primary Education: Issues of Quality and Reform
- Teacher Education

The chapter examines how each of these factors has impacted on the need to revise English language teacher education practices within the UAE. This is to address the widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of the primary education system, particularly with English language teaching and learning. It therefore positions this particular study within its time and place, which is shaped by the unique historical, social and cultural context framing it. The

following two sections begin with describing the research setting and purpose of the current study.

### **1.1: The Research Setting and Overview of the B.Ed. Programme**

The research setting for this study took place primarily at College X, a female segregated college within a large UAE nationwide immersion bilingual college system. Established in 1988 by the UAE Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, HE Sheikh Nahayan Bin Mubarak Al Nahayan as the first publically-funded tertiary level institute, the college system consists of twelve gender-segregated colleges that internally follow a North American tertiary college model (Gallagher, 2007, p.61) in the disciplines of Health Science, Business, Information Technology, Communication Technology and Education. Within this small-scale research project, secondary data was derived from five of the female segregated colleges.

While colleges within this system (including college X) are charged by decree to be an ‘Arab Islamic’ institution, they have “never troubled to disguise .... their strong links to North America” (Findlow, 2005, p. 297). Indeed the current move towards North American institutional accreditation is indicative of a strategic national shift towards “Americanisation as the epitome of modernism and globalism” (Findlow, 2005, p. 298) and US-based affiliations “are widely perceived to be the future of the country’s higher education provision, for the sake of maintaining global currency” (Findlow, 2005, p. 297). Operating exclusively through the medium of English, the colleges aim to provide graduates with:

the linguistic ability to function effectively in an international environment;  
the technical skills to operate in an increasingly complex technological world;  
the intellectual capacity to adapt to constant change, and the leadership potential to make the fullest possible contribution to the development of the community for the good of all its people  
(The College Learning Model, 2006e, p.7).

The colleges exclusively serve a student population of UAE nationals, most of whom enter the colleges at Diploma level, having completed their final year secondary school ‘Common Educational Proficiency Assessment’ (CEPA) in both English and Maths, along with passing a challenge exam set by the college system upon entry. Within the college system, students exiting the diploma level must have attained a band 4.5 in the ‘International English Language Testing System’ (IELTS) exams, a band 5 for Higher Diploma level and a band 6 for Bachelor

levels. The student population varies from 400 to over 2500 depending on the size of the city, with over 2500 students in the college in which this case study is primarily situated. In the sixteen years between 1992 and 2008, student numbers have risen from 239 to 16,530 in the academic year 2008-2009 (Kelly, personal communication, November 19, 2008), reflecting the rapidly developing UAE economic, educational and social structures, identified earlier.

The majority of faculty across the college system derive from various countries of the Anglophone world (Gallagher, 2007) and although the students are gender segregated, both men and women teach at all colleges. Approximately one third of all faculty are employed as English language teachers, delivering what is essentially remedial EFL English language teaching, despite the fact that all students have learnt English in school for eight years at a minimum rate of four periods a week. However, as mentioned earlier, the standard of educational practices and English language teaching in government schools is low, resulting in most students entering the College system with a lack of the English proficiency required for study through that medium along with the study skills required for tertiary level study. Therefore the colleges' core foundations programme comprising of mainly English, but also basic Computer Literacy studies and Mathematics is undertaken by the majority of students entering the system, "in order to bridge the gap between the knowledge and skills acquired at secondary school and the knowledge and skills required to succeed at college" (Gallagher, 2007, p.62).

In response to a demand by government authorities to improve the quality of English language teaching in schools in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and simultaneously "Emiratise" and professionalise the teaching profession (Mograby, 1999; Clarke & Otaky, 2006), the colleges system's first teacher education programme commenced in 2000. Yet despite two other teacher education programmes operating at the time in the country's universities, the four year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) – Teaching English to Young Learners/English Teaching in Schools degree, was developed in collaboration with and certified by the University of Melbourne. It offered a new opportunity to "produce a cadre of excellent national teachers" as well as "promoting professional opportunities for women at the same time" (Clarke & Otaky, 2006, p.114-115). In this programme, Teaching Practice was placed at the centre of the B.Ed., with students spending a total of 155 days in school placements throughout the 4 year programme. It continues to be taught at all six Women's Colleges across the UAE (Al Ain, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah and Sharjah),

and with some 360 trainee English teachers enrolled, is the Education Division's largest programme.

The structure of the B.Ed. curriculum itself is divided into four strands over the four years: English Language Studies; Education Studies (the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing, of which the EDUC 250 reading course is examined in this thesis); Teaching Practice and Complementary Studies including courses in Social Studies, Children's Literature, Media Studies, Special Educational Needs, Information and Communication Technology and Educational Management. Drawing on contemporary understanding of the knowledge base of second language teacher education, the programme design mirrors Richards' six domains of content for second language teacher education including theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical reasoning and decision making, and contextual knowledge (Richards, 2001, p. 1, in Gallagher, 2007, p.82). It also reflects Roberts' syllabus for initial language teacher education programmes including content knowledge of the target language; theoretical knowledge about language structure and use; contextual knowledge of the curriculum and schooling; pedagogic skills and immediate enabling skills (Roberts, 1998, pp.101-124, in Gallagher, 2007, p.82). As this programme is concerned with the preparation of non-native speakers of English, a core element includes applied linguistics (knowledge of the target language, how it is organised and learned), which according to Yates and Muchisky (2003) is critical; theories of second language acquisition (drawing on sources such as Lightbown and Spada, 1999); and Curriculum and Syllabus design (drawing on sources such as Richards, 2001) for its knowledge base of second language teacher education. The programme also seeks to scaffold students in the development of reflective practice (Wallace, 1991; Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Zeichner and Liston, 1996); and in conducting classroom-based action research during their final year of the degree (Wallace, 1997; Burns, 1999).

Drawing on the work of Vygotsky (1978, 1986), the B.Ed. programme has a Social Constructivist orientation to its conception of learning and teaching (Gallagher, 2008), emphasizing the importance of culture, dialogue and context in understanding what occurs in society, and constructing knowledge based on this understanding (Derry, 1999; McMahon, 1997), the underlying principles of which are explored in Chapter Two. A key understanding in the development of the programme is that schools and schooling are the social and cultural contexts for teacher learning, and are crucial to establishing an effective teacher education

programme. As such, teaching is an activity that cannot be separated from the teacher as a learner or the contexts of schools and schooling in which it is done (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Richards and Pennington's (1996) call for increased links between the teacher education classroom and schools. A "phased introduction into teaching has been realized in this programme through the early and prolonged engagement of students in schools over the course of eight teaching practicum sessions during the four years of undergraduate studies" (Gallagher and Bashir-Ali, 2007, p.8). Therefore the B.Ed. programme, and in particular this case study, aims to be a catalyst for change in the Emirati education system in which progressive, yet realistic and contextualized reading methodologies are introduced into government schools, as more and more UAE national women take up positions as English teachers.

The B.Ed. programme is committed to continuous quality improvement, in alignment with the programme's external accreditation by the University of Melbourne, Australia while ensuring course aims, design, and learning outcomes are aligned with the College graduate outcomes (College system, 2006b). Curriculum leaders are appointed by Divisional Academic Teams (DATs) to design, develop and update curriculum for a programme or cluster of courses taught within that Division, along with collaborating with the course team on sharing and promoting best practices in order to develop suitable resources, learning materials and assessments (College System, 2005b). Recommended course updates consider course evaluation feedback from faculty and students, observational analysis and current trends in research and best practice. Revised course outlines are then presented to the DAT for review and approval.

However, while these quality assurance processes aim to maintain certain academic standards within the programme, the methodology courses are not specifically tailored to suit the needs of Emirati student teachers of English, nor do they specifically examine the pedagogical practices of teacher educators. This challenge has been recognized in the literature on teacher education for literacy teaching and programme review in other parts of the world (e.g. in Canada by Kosnik and Beck, 2008; in USA by Anders, Hoffman et al, 2005; in Holland by Korthagen and Lunenberg, 2004) and commonalities with this study include issues such as a lack of performance modelling by teacher educators, addressing too many topics without a sense of priority and teaching methods that cloud issues, confuse student teachers and are simply ineffective. This study aims to become more purposeful in the

construction of one of the courses that comprise the College system's B.Ed. – Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL)/ English Language Teaching in Schools (ELTS) degree – EDU 250.

## **1.2: Outline of the Reading Methodology Course, Purpose of the Study and Research questions**

“Working with Learners” (EDUC 250) is a second year B.Ed. Education Studies course, focusing on the teaching and learning of Reading and Vocabulary which was taken by the participants in this study. Developed in 2000, course designers were guided by the question: what do student teachers need to know about reading to teach it effectively in the context of language learning in UAE schools? EDUC 250 was first taught to the initial cohort of B.Ed. – TEYL / ELTS students when they entered the second year of the programme in 2001. The EDUC 250 course aims to develop students' own reading abilities as well as providing them with the skills and understanding necessary to teach reading to school-age ESL/EFL learners. In its original iteration, the course goals and objectives focused on the theories and complex processes involved in reading and student teachers examined bottom-up (decoding; phonics based approach) and top-down approaches (comprehension orientated approaches such as reading aloud) from a theoretical perspective, ensuring they had a basic knowledge of the complexity of reading in a foreign language.

The rationale for programme restructure and redesign stemmed from initial teacher educator observations in the pre-intervention stage as outlined in Chapter Three, revealing that student teachers know what reading is, but not necessarily how to teach it effectively in the context of an EFL Emirati environment. Therefore despite that fact that the course was accredited with the University of Melbourne, Australia, it was not contextualized for an Emirati context. This study therefore aims to investigate the *perceived impact of revising the reading methodology course for Year Two B.Ed. students upon their reading strategies used during teaching practice in foreign language primary school classrooms.*

Operating at both the course outline and delivery levels, the proposed revisions include incorporating EFL reading approaches into the methodology course outline that are relevant to an Emirati context, omitting reading approaches and techniques deemed to be unsuitable

for an EFL Emirati context and introducing the teacher educator delivery innovations of micro-teaching, modelling and problem-based learning. As the participants in this study derive from a behaviourist traditional Arabic system of primary and secondary education prior to entry into the B.Ed. programme, these three approaches aim to model, practice, problematize and reflect on EFL reading teaching in a non-threatening college environment. Using a Vygotskian (1962; 1978; Wells, 1999; 2001; Rogoff, 1990, 2003; Bodrova & Leong, 1996) constructivist approach to teacher education, as discussed in section 2.2., these changes aim to incorporate more concrete links between theory and practice, improve and review existing curriculum, revise teacher education delivery approaches and improve student teachers' understanding of what the teaching of reading involves in a foreign UAE primary school context. It also aims to improve Emirati student teachers' reading teaching abilities along with identifying differences in reading teaching styles.

The more specific research questions are:

1. What is the perceived and observed influence of a revised (Vygotskian social constructivist) teacher education curriculum upon student teachers' reading teaching methods during teaching practice in UAE foreign language classrooms?
2. What is the perceived and observed impact of reforming delivery in the College classroom, using the constructivist delivery innovations of performance modelling, systematic micro-teaching and problem-based learning upon student teachers reading teaching methods during teaching practice in foreign language UAE classrooms?
3. How do student teachers interpret the impact of teacher education pedagogy upon their prior beliefs, knowledge and practices, i.e. the 'apprenticeship of observation' and how does this impact their beliefs and 'knowledge' about teaching reading in an EFL Emirati context?

Research questions one and two are specifically based on the study's research focus which is to revise curriculum and delivery and introduce constructivist innovations into a teacher education reading course. However the researcher felt that there was also relevance in investigating the impact of teacher education experiences upon student teachers prior beliefs and knowledge. Stated differently, although applied pedagogy is the key focus of this research, we cannot dismiss the socio-cultural contextual influences of prior beliefs upon student teachers' reading practices. Question three will address this secondary issue.

Drawing on a review of literature in other contexts which is elaborated upon in Chapter Two, there is a growing sense that language teacher education programmes have failed to prepare teachers for the realities of the classroom (Crandall, 2000), recognizing that teaching is more than the accumulation of research knowledge about reading, because it is evident that giving more knowledge to student teachers does not necessarily make them better practitioners (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). This is magnified in an Arabic context where student teachers pass through a Western style of teacher education and then return to teach in their own culture (Eilam, 2002). Moving from a transmission, product-orientated perspective to a constructivist, process-orientated perspective, where student teachers are active participants in learning to teach (Crandall, 2000), the findings from this study could have important implications for recasting teacher education reading programmes in the UAE, by establishing the importance of building concrete links between reading theory and practice. The organization, relevance and applicability of college delivery and resources chosen, if contextualized, may equip students better for the realities of the EFL environment. This in turn may set new ground for enabling second language student teachers to develop as confident EFL reading teachers.

Teacher educators need to begin with the activity of language teaching and learning; the school and classroom context in which it is practiced; and the experience, knowledge, and beliefs of the teacher as a participant. Becoming a reading teacher is a life-long process; it is built out of and through experiences in social contexts. By creating opportunities for student teachers to observe, practice and problematise teaching using innovations such as modelling, micro-teaching and problem-based learning, it may better shape and contextualize teacher education experiences for student teachers in UAE schools. By re-conceptualizing both content and delivery within this methodology course, the research therefore attempts to contribute to filling a gap in existing literature.

The rest of this chapter outlines the socio-cultural context in which the case is situated, indicating six contextual factors that influence the development of this revised teacher education reading methodology course. It begins with the socio-political and economic context.

### **1.3: The UAE Socio-Political and Economic Context**

The UAE is a federation of seven emirates known as the Trucial States – Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Fujairah, Ras Al-Khaimah and Umm al-Quwain. Derived from a group of tribally organized Arabian sheikhdoms and established in 1971, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a young, wealthy, progressive Islamic country located on the southern shores of the Arabian Peninsula. Ranking at the top of the Arab world along with three other Gulf States, (United Nations Development Programme, 2002, p. 26) in terms of life expectancy, adult literacy, educational enrolment ratios, and gross domestic product per capita, it has transformed itself from a “sleepy, undeveloped backwaters” (Davidson, 2005, p.1) into a wealthy oil producing Gulf country. Its population increased forty fold over fifty years, with a current population of approximately around 4.041 million, of which only 27 per cent are UAE nationals (Kostoulas – Makrakis, 2005, p.501). The expatriate community includes a significant number of other Arabs (Palestinians, Egyptians, Jordanians, Yemenis, Omanis) as well as Pakistanis, Indians, Iranians, Filipinos and Western Europeans. The majority of UAE nationals are Sunni Muslims with a minority of Shi’a Muslims. Most Arab foreigners are Muslim, although Hindus and Christians constitute a small proportion of the population. Politically, the rulers of the country are a hereditary royal family.

The geopolitical location of the UAE is a primary aspect to the consideration of its socio-political and economic context. As this study is being written, the Middle East is under acute surveillance from the Western world as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to overshadow politics in the region. Although such conflict is seen to inhibit security and development in the entire region either directly or indirectly (Arab Human Development Report, United Nations Development Programme, 2002, p. 1) to date, there has been no connected acts of terrorism in the UAE and therefore remains a peaceful and secure country at this time.

Thirty eight years old, “the country has undergone, and continues to undergo, a profound transformation within a mere three decades from an undeveloped, impoverished, barren, tribal land into a wealthy, modern, urban country” (Gallagher, 2007, p.45). Still a developing country in many respects, yet in socio-economic terms, the country has one of the highest per capita income levels in the world due to its oil and gas industry. While predicted to last for at least another hundred years, more recently banking, finance and tourism have contributed to its revenue. Influenced by forces of globalization and internationalism, its cities have a

gleaming collection of glass-fronted office blocks and towers, yet at a closer look there are examples of “ornate filigree work that makes its architecture distinctively Islamic” (Gallagher, 2007, p.45). In the suburbs, houses, mansions and palaces can be seen. The infrastructure and development of the country is funded by the government and all inhabitants, both local and expatriate pay no income tax. State-funded education at all levels is free to Emirati citizens, which as stated earlier comprises just 27% of the country’s population. However, non-Emirati expatriate citizens (73% of the population) attend fee-paying private schools which are on a sliding scale, with the fees increasing with the grade level of the student. Annual tuition fees vary greatly, ranging from £400 in Asian schools to between £2,120-£4,900 for International, British and American schools. Therefore while the contemporary ethos is multicultural, Emirati citizens are privileged relative to expatriates.

Since the discovery of oil in the 1970s, the country’s dramatic economic and social development has been achieved by visionary leadership and expatriate knowledge and labour (Reed, 2001). In the past ten years, internal political and economic forces within the region, encouraged by forces of internationalism and globalization have been calling for reform at many levels in Middle Eastern society, particularly focusing on greater investment in social capital, education, teacher training, curriculum development and technology (Davies, 1999; Caldwell, 2003). The Emirati government wants to develop a progressive Westernized country and a global economic player. This they have already achieved, yet producing a more effective school system will be more of a challenge.

#### **1.4: Traditions, Transformation and Emiratisation**

The Emirates became self-governing in 1971. In opposition to the former colonial presence during the postcolonial era (1971 onwards), Gandhi, (1998) noted that there was increased nationalism. It was in this context that Kazim (2000) argues that the UAE’s collective identity was created in a country that held a large expatriate population and at the same time aware of external influences of globalization. Today, integral to the politico-economic scene in the UAE is “ongoing disputes between those wars of globalization, wishing to preserve the socio-cultural status quo based on an oil economy, and those arguing for pro-globalization policies, who seek to liberalize and diversify the economy” (Clarke, 2008, p.47). However, the UAE, like other Gulf states (Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar) is rapidly changing where “aspects of traditional Bedouin culture co-exist with the immense changes begin wrought by

the forces of globalization and the wealth brought about by the development of the oil industry” (Clarke, 2006, p.225). National historian Heard-Bey highlights that within the move towards progress and modernization, young Emirati nationals cling to their traditions in an attempt to preserve their identity:

Nationals of a new generation now take in their stride what seemed unimaginable to their parents. Recently built family homes display in their architecture and furbishment the most modern amenities and an astonishing variety of luxuries both from East and West. The urge to preserve their identity while also sharing the uniformity of a lifestyle which is defined in terms of affordability results in clinging tenaciously to outward signs of identity, which in a less multinational environment might have been allowed to disappear.

(Heard-Bey, 1996, p. 419)

Similar to other Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) countries (Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait), the UAE aims to develop a globally competitive national workforce (Barber et al, 2007). However, as stated earlier, Emirati nationals comprise of only 27% of the population within the UAE and concern about the dependence on expatriate labour at varying levels has led to a process of Emiratisation whereby a proportion of jobs, paid at a higher salary level than expatriates are reserved for UAE citizens.

In the context of education, the majority of primary school teachers are other Arabic speaking expatriates (Egyptian, Syrian, Jordanian, Palestinian). “Not only is it a major financial and logistical outlay to recruit teachers from overseas annually, but there are also concerns about the effects on national children of being taught predominantly by non-nationals” (Gallagher, 2007, p.47). The linguistic and cultural distance between Emirati learners and Arabic expatriate teachers has long been a concern in the UAE EFL classroom, despite a reliance on their skills for many years (Syed, 2003). Also these expatriate teachers are less likely to critique existing systems and initiate change as they are given short-term contracts (Al-Banna, 1997). Many of them have no teaching qualifications, are now vulnerable to the UAE’s move towards Emiratisation, or nationalism of the workforce which aims to:

Protect and preserve the indigenous culture that has defined the Emirates and to assure continued social coherence in the face of an overwhelming influx of foreign participants from other cultures. This is best achieved through a public school system staffed by well-qualified UAE national teachers”

(Mawqood, n.d., p.14)

The number of national teachers in primary schools is predicted to reach ninety per cent by the year 2020 (Gallagher, 2007, p.47). The college system's Bachelor of Education degree in Teaching English to Young Learners, which is the subject of this case, is an indication of this move towards Emiratisation and fundamental to the improvement of teacher quality and fulfilment of national goals, which is discussed further in section 1.7. However with the national intent of gradually replacing expatriate English teachers in government schools, with qualified Emiratis on a higher pay role, it is not surprising that there are tensions between the same expatriate Arab teachers who supervise Emirati student teachers during their teaching practice placements. There is evidence of such socioeconomic disparities across all sections of Emirati society, yet to date there have been no public displays of discontentment in education, although Asian building site labourers have begun to protest their working conditions in Dubai. In education, this is heightened by a 'pedagogical gulf' between expatriate teachers' 'traditional rote-based methods' (Clarke, 2006, p.226) and Emirati student teachers' attempts to move towards more 'progressive approaches' involving active, student-centred learning, as is discussed in Chapter Five.

### **1.5: The Role of Women**

Despite rapid societal changes, there is no escaping the limitations on women's lives in the UAE, the subject of which has attracted attention and scrutiny from the West. In the eyes of many outsiders, the seclusion of Arabic women is the defining factor in casting them as oppressed. What remains 'a stumbling block to true equality' (Salloum, 2003, p.1) is the fact that they live in 'a male dominated society that still resists the idea of women thinking for themselves' (Richardson, 2004, p.432) and their personal status is determined by Islamic Law which narrows their career and life choices in comparison to men in many ways. For example, women must gain permission from their male family members to travel alone, drive a car and in some cases, enter the workplace, as is illustrated in the description of the participants in this study. While there is still a high unemployment rate among female school learners and graduates across the Gulf region (Lefrere, 2007, p.210), a career in teaching is one of the few careers acceptable to Emirati families due to the segregated female orientation of schools. Evidence of gender segregation is also seen in the current research setting which is located in an all-female campus of the college system. To date, there has been no success in setting up a B.Ed. programme in male college campuses, despite attempts, and the lack of local male role models as teachers in government schools is even more of a challenge in this

country than in other developed countries. Yet, similar to conclusions by Mernissi (1987, p. 142), informal conversations with the participating student teachers highlighted their beliefs towards seclusion and veiling as a source of pride and comfort, not of oppression. As women are encouraged to join the public workforce as teachers and contribute to the development of their country's evolving education system, the "cultural paradox of seclusion" (Gallagher, 2007, p.53) remains.

Yet the reality created by increased, yet limited opportunity for travel and further career opportunities is complex. The country's gender ideology is still based on a strong family role for women, thereby placing upon them a counter demand to remain true to their roles as wives and mothers. These paradoxical demands often placed on women throughout the Middle East are based on a combination of the teachings of Islam along with indigenous customs and traditions. Christina et al. (1999, p. 355) point out that "The educational experience of women in the Middle East is thus determined by the interplay between tradition and modernity". The ideal female is expected to be both 'traditional' and 'modern' (Mehran, 1999, p. 202), thereby contributing doubly, as it were, to their country.

Despite these limitations, Emirati women, such as the participants in this study are today in a stronger position in terms of receiving an education and developing careers than previous generations, many whose mothers and grandmothers didn't go beyond primary school education. Unlike the stereotyped image of Middle Eastern women, it is increasingly more accepted that Gulf women will be more self-sufficient, drive alone, travel outside their own country, be educated at college level and have the ability to contribute to their country's workforce. In fact the UAE is one of just fifteen countries worldwide and one of only two Gulf States where females outnumber males in formal education (United Arab Emirates, Ministry of Information and Culture, 2004, p. 213). This may in part be due to the support of the late Sheikh Zayed, referred to as 'the father of their nation', in which according to Soffan (1980, p. 61), "Women here have not had to struggle for equal rights to education as they have in many other Arab Muslim states; it was handed to them on a silver platter." However, as sociologist Mouza Ghubash states, "Even with all the progress made in women's conditions, their achievements in education, social care, health and the availability of modern technology, the role of women is much more insignificant than it should be in our present society" (Ghubash, 1997, p. 283).

Nevertheless, as changing government policies move towards Emiratisation of the school system, Emirati female teachers of English, such as the participants described in Chapter Five are a necessary part of transforming education in this country.

Ten years ago the idea of confident young Emirati women, dressed in traditional black abayas and headscarves, would stand before classes of 30 young boys expertly teaching English was just a dream.  
(Costigan, University of Melbourne, 2008)

As the first generation of qualified local teachers, they are confident, enthusiastic and hardworking young women, determined to make a difference in government primary schools upon graduation. Ironically, the fact that schools are gender segregated, ensures that not only can women choose to work as teachers in female-only schools but also that supervisory positions, such as school principals and co-ordinators that might otherwise have remained reserved for males, can now be occupied by women (Gallagher, 2007, p.54). As their voices are being heard, it is hoped that this will extend their identities beyond reasons, other than becoming essentialised.

## **1.6: Language**

Having discussed the socio-political, economic and cultural context, along with the move towards Emiratisation and female participation in the workplace, the next aspect of the context of this case is the linguistic environment, focusing on the role of English in the UAE.

The UAE has adopted a linguistic dualism, to accommodate globalization by adopting English as the language of business, internationalism and modernism, while Arabic is associated with religion, tradition and nationalism (Findlow, 2006; Kasim, 2000). The country's booming oil economy has attracted multinational companies and the growth in tourism, has led to a situation where competency in English is perceived to be prestigious and essential for participation in the global knowledge economy. This position is similar to the comparable location, Singapore, in which "English is the neutral language of global communication, of business and technology, the pragmatic choice of the people of Singapore" (Pennycook, 1994, p. 245).

However, "English is not merely a neutral medium of interracial communication and modern technological and commercial knowledge, but it is also the bearer of cultural and often

imperialist values” (Pennycook, 2003 cited in Gallagher, 2007, p.51). Therefore a key challenge to the UAE is how to accommodate the dualistic demands of the Arabic language coupled with national and religious identities, alongside globalization, global English (Canagarajah, 1999, p.76) and sometimes neo-conservative Christian missionary values (Pennycook, 2003). Karmani (2005, p.101) offers a solution by exploring “language education policy and planning solutions that are locally based and help maintain and indeed promote Arab-Islamic values...(while) expanding the hugely important role and contribution of bilingual Arab teachers of English”. In fact, this thesis is being written on the cusp of a likely future trend towards bilingual primary education.

Similar to the teaching of English in the wider Asia Pacific region and with reference to government schools in comparable locations such as China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam, Nunan (2003) noted that the age at which English becomes a compulsory subject has shifted downwards in recent years due to the perceived economic importance of English as a globalized language. Unlike its neighbouring country Saudi Arabia, in which agitation about the encroachment of the English language in the region was expressed by an anti campaigner in a newspaper report, saying “Teaching English to youngsters endangers Islamic identity and culture and accelerates Westernization of the society” (Gulf Today, 19 August 2002), in the UAE, there appears to be no such agitation and English is taught as a mandatory foreign language for all students from Grade One (six year olds). However, despite the widespread use of English, the influx of non-Arabic speaking expatriates, the dominance of English language media, (Davidson, 2005), along with receiving English instruction for one hour per day, students in government schools are still not exposed to it to any significant degree during their primary school years (Ministry of Education, 1994). It does not appear to receive a privileged position in relation to other subjects in government schools. This coupled with behaviourist teaching methods, as outlined in Chapter Two by various authors (e.g. Taha-Thomure, 2003; Clarke et al, 2007; Barber et al., 2007) presents a major challenge for the development of English in the country. Hence the rationale behind shaping and contextualizing this study’s’ teacher education reading methodology course as a step towards the fulfilment of national aspirations of improving the quality of primary education, along with becoming a key global economic player.

The next section elaborates on the current UAE English curriculum.

## **1.7: The Nature of UAE Primary Education: Issues of Quality and Reform**

Another aspect to the examination of the context of this case is the place of this revised methodology course in relation to the country's primary education system. It wasn't until the mid 1960s that the first primary school opened in the UAE and teachers for the early schools were provided by neighbouring countries (Gallagher, 2007, p.52). Then in 1971, the UAE Ministry of Education was established. "Seemingly in a single generation students have gone from small, ill-equipped huts to laptop universities", Syed (2003, p. 338).

The UAE thus far has been a successful model and a leading force in Arab politics and economy, as discussed earlier. However, despite economic growth over the past thirty years due to an increase in oil wealth and although literacy rates have soared from 43% in 1975 in contrast to 89% in 2007 (UNESCO, the Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008, p.9) the quality of the UAE's education system has been severely criticized by both international sources (Loughrey et al, 1999; Guefrachi and Troudi, 2000; Clough and Nutbrown, 2001; Barber et al, 2007;) and local sources (Mograbby, 1999; Taha-Thomure, 2003; Syed, 2003; Mahmood, 2005; Clarke et al., 2007). Emirati government school classrooms echo with their "Teachers shouting and instilling fear in them rather than developing a love of learning" (Taha-Thomure, 2003, p.1). Tests are derived from an "inadequate textbook-bound syllabus and thus further reinforce poor teaching and learning strategies" (Loughrey et al, 1999, p.4) which might explain the UAE ranking of 112 out of 128 in primary education, in terms of instruction and enrolment as reported by Shuey in a Gulf News (April 14, 2007).

An external report commissioned by the UAE Ministry of Education on the status of English language teaching in schools found that "the system is currently failing to deliver appropriate levels of student attainment. The results of tests administered during the course of the evaluation ... constitute clear evidence of systematic underachievement." (Loughrey et al., 1999, p. 60) The English curriculum is in practice the course book 'New Parade' (Herra and Zanatta, 1997) and there appears to be no centralized system by which teachers gain a big picture view of the whole curriculum, resulting in teachers working in isolation. While the course books aims to follow a communicative approach, in practice the activities are too prescriptive and limit original input from teachers (Loughrey et al, 1999, p.36). Focusing on the teaching of reading, which is the focus of this study, students are encouraged to almost

exclusively use bottom-up strategies which focus on low-level decoding of words (Loughrey, 1999, p.36). When interviewed, ninety per cent of government school teachers perceived reading as a pronunciation exercise (Mustafa, 2002, p.77). Yet, despite an increased budget for education over the past twenty years, a reliance on rote learning and memorization, behaviourist teaching approaches coupled with a prescriptive and inflexible curriculum has remained (His Highness Sheikh Mohammed, 2007, Gulf News). His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan in a newspaper report (Al Nowais, 2004) outlined the following demands:

We want students to think creatively and not just memorize to pass exams. We want to develop their skills and we want students to be active partners in the educational process. I am very keen on revolutionizing the educational system and teachers have a huge role in achieving this process. They have to encourage students to learn and make them love the subjects they are teaching. We want to test students differently based on a system that evaluates their skills and not what they have memorized.

It was to address such issues and build on significant improvements in UAE education that Vision 2020 was developed by the UAE Ministry of Education and Youth, an ambitious (48 billion dirhams) plan to reform government school education by:

embedding continuous quality improvement as a “strategic Pillar” in the practices of UAE schools, reflected in increasingly effective teaching, appropriate methodologies and rigorous evaluation processes  
(UAE Ministry of Education and Youth, 2000).

Integral to this reform movement is the professionalization of teachers and the reconceptualization of its pedagogy from a teacher-centred “choice and presentation of the content” towards a more student-centred “planning and organization of learning opportunities’ approach to learning” (Mawqood, n.d., p.6). Informed by the theory of modernization (Machpherson et al, 2007), policy makers have linked educational development and modernization with English. However, while it is currently taught as an isolated subject, there is a likely future trend for it to be integrated across other content areas, including Maths and Science.

Constituting the first comprehensive nation-wide move towards improving education in the UAE, schools in the same Emirate as College X have begun to partner themselves with some of the world’s leading educational institutions such as the Singapore National Institute of Education (NIE); Centre for British Teachers (CFBT); New Zealand’s ‘Cognition’ company in

an attempt to create “a unique laboratory for educational innovation” (Barber et al, 2007, p.40). Schools and principals are encouraged to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes essential to whole school reform. However, while implementing and interpreting the Emirate’s Education Council’s (ADEC) new centralized curriculum, along with adhering to the strategic directions and policies of the UAE Ministry of Education and listening to advice from expatriate expertise, to date there has been no research conducted on the initial impact or extent of the development.

While it is too early to judge the success or failure of the proposed changes, Nicks-McCaleb (2005) and Barber et al (2007) question the lack of planning, strategic focus, objectivity and transparency about the performance of schools and the speed at which the proposed reform initiatives are being implemented, which may subsequently be abandoned in favour of the next new trend. Also based on informal observations by the present researcher while mentoring student teachers in government schools in 2009, the objectives of the reform movement appear to be somewhat vague, are being individually interpreted by different consultant groups present in the schools and ironically remain “top-down” in which certain teaching practices are being imposed on teachers from above.

This highly centralized, rigidly controlled system was identified fourteen years earlier by Gardner and Abu Libde (1995; in Gallagher, 2007, p.53) as being a potential factor in paralysing the entire school system and still holds true in 2009. Also recognized by Mograby in 1999 “there is no doubt that the current primary education system is unable to sustain future development, cope with change and realize desired national goals” (p.228). Educational reform is a long-term endeavour in any country (Barber et al, 2007) and a challenge which the UAE has just begun to recognize.

If we want to opt out of fundamentalism, poverty and inefficiency we need to start reshaping schools and teaching practices and we need to start now. It’s time for a wake-up call. We cannot afford to lose yet another generation.

(Taha-Thomure, 2003, p.1)

Within this wider reform movement, the present study attempts to begin the process of teacher development, towards improving the provision of reading instruction provided in government primary schools and thus increasing the profile of reading and subsequent reading skills for EFL Emirati students. By preparing professionally qualified reading teachers

for positions as agents of change, a fresh blend of praxis unique to the UAE may need to be created, combining both behaviourist and constructivist methods. This coupled with combined knowledge, skills and contextualized knowledge from teachers, principals, teacher educators and Ministry of Education policy makers is essential to country-wide reform and growth. The next few decades will be crucial to the development of EFL education in the UAE.

## **1.8: Teacher Education**

While much attention is being paid to the reform of primary education, as indicated above, the quality of teacher education models in the Gulf remain insufficiently critiqued. Both international (Barber et al, 2007) and local (Al-Sharaf, 2006; McNally, 2002) sources agree that the quality of teachers is a key factor in any effective school system. Therefore the recognized role of teacher education in producing qualified, innovative teachers has led to the urgent need to invest in teacher education programmes in the UAE (Gardner, 1995; Syed, 2003; Gallagher, 2007). As recognized by the UAE Ministry of Education and Youth:

Radical change in teaching/learning concepts, practices, means and styles will be effected...The focus will shift from teaching to learning, from the teacher to the learner, from memorization to creativity, reflection, imagination and innovation: To attain this objective, continuous training for teachers and supervisors will be provided to change the traditional roles they play into more effective roles to promote, develop and instil the culture of innovation which is a societal ambition.

(UAE Ministry of Education and Youth, 2000, p.87)

There are currently four tertiary providers of English language teacher education in the UAE, all dedicated to the nationalization of the teaching workforce. The largest and longest-standing teacher education provider is at a government university, which was set up in the 1970s, consisting of over three thousand Education undergraduate students, the majority of whom are female nationals. When the English Language Teaching in Schools degree, that is the subject of this case study, was being set up in 2000, both internal and external UAE sources expressed concerns about the quality of the university's pre-service English language teacher education degree programme (Gallagher, 2007, p.55). Internally, Gardner and Abu Libde, (1995, p. 307) criticized the quantity of the student teachers, their academic abilities in comparison to other university students and the quality of the teaching practice

provision provided. Externally, Loughrey et al. (1999, p. 53) criticized the university's pedagogy stating that:

Training at the university appears to be rather traditional and devoted to Linguistics rather than to Education. Although roughly 80% of students on the BA in English enter teaching, their course has only one module directly related to education. .... Moreover the practical teaching module has included relatively little classroom practice.

These student teachers - essentially English literature graduates - go on to take up positions as teachers in schools, having received limited pre-service education and teaching practice opportunities. With an increasing emphasis in language teacher education programmes worldwide on “the dialectical relationship between ongoing school-based experience and theoretical knowledge” (Gallagher, 2007, p.56), this theoretical model of teacher education, de-emphasizing pedagogic competence in favour of linguistic competence is somewhat outdated (Freeman and Johnson, 1998; Korthagen et al., 2001). However, despite this linguistic orientation, in 2005 the Washington-based Centre for Quality Assurance in International Education accredited its College of Education (Gallagher, 2007, p.57).

There are two other tertiary providers of indigenous English language teaching – a North-American based state university with campuses in the country's two major cities and a Singapore-based teacher education private college in the same Emirate as College X, which was set up in 2007. Contrary to this study's language teacher education programme in which student teachers specialize in the teaching of English, in both systems described above, in the university student teachers graduate in a range of school subject specialisations, including English language teaching, while the private college student teachers graduate with a generalist primary teaching qualification. Both colleges provide postgraduate certificate programmes (PGCE) and intensive in-service professional development for principals and teachers in government schools. While teaching practice occurs only in the final semester of the university's undergraduate teacher education programme, the new Singapore-based education college is similar to the highly practice-oriented language teacher education programme that is investigated in this case study. However, a primary difference surrounds the fact that the new programme aims to produce large numbers of student teachers, while the current programme produces a small number of student teachers and as such adopts an elitist approach to teacher education which can sustain innovative teacher education practices and facilitate extensive scaffolding. The fourth teacher education programme, which is the subject of this case is outlined in section 1.7.

Teacher education provision in the UAE still remains underdeveloped, despite the fact that there are now four undergraduate teacher education providers. Also, there is no national college of teacher education, nor is there a national council for teacher education. The only dedicated English language pre-service teacher education programme in the tertiary colleges system includes the current Bachelor of Education in English Language Teaching in Schools. All other models have moved towards either a generalist model of teaching or a subject-based model to include a Maths and Science specialism. The next few decades will be crucial for the ongoing development of teacher education in the UAE.

### **1.9: Outline of the Study**

This study draws on the above theorists either directly or indirectly for theoretical support and insight throughout the case. It is concerned with describing and interpreting the influence of college pedagogy upon the developing reading teaching practices of Emirati student teachers, largely from the student teachers' perspectives. It seeks to outline an initial understanding of the phenomena of the study by outlining the theoretical context, followed by a discursive analytic inquiry using a hybrid approach that provides a deeper insight into the socially produced meanings generated. The detailed outline of the study is as follows:

#### **Chapter 1**

This chapter has examined the socio-political, cultural and economic context in which the case is situated, along with a discussion of the B.Ed. degree, reading methodology course and purpose of the study. It integrated six contextual factors that influence the development of this revised teacher education reading methodology course including the UAE socio-political and economic context; traditions, transformation and Emiratization; the role of women; the role of language; UAE Primary Education and Teacher Education.

#### **Chapter 2**

This chapter reviews theories of effective initial teacher education, moving from behaviourist to constructivist approaches and connecting theory to practice; the power of prior reading experiences upon teacher identity and the potential impact of Vygotskian teacher education delivery innovations upon student teacher practices (modelling, micro-teaching and problem-based learning). The key sources in the theoretical literature derive from a wide range of influences including:

- The studies of constructivist teacher education in Kennedy (1990); Freeman (1993); Richardson (1997); Korthagen et al. (2001); Crandall (1998; 2000); Darling-Hammond (2000); Russell (1997; 2001); Kane (2002); Cameron and Baker, 2004; Van Huizen (2005); Lunenberg et al, (2007).
- The social constructivist theories of Vygotsky, (1962; 1978); the application of Vygotsky's theories within the field of teacher education for language and literacy teaching in the work of Wells (1999; 2001); Tharp and Gallimore (1988); Moll (1990); Rogoff (1990, 2003) and Verity, 2005; the pedagogy of assisted performance in Bodrova & Leong (1996); self-study for teacher educators in Samaras, (2003) and the interpretation of Vygotsky's theories in applied linguistics by Lantolf and Thorne (2006).
- The studies of performance modelling in Loughran (1996) Russell (1997); Jay, 2002; Korthagen & Lunnenberg, 2004; Anderson (2005) and Lunenberg et al, 2007; systematic microteaching in Klinzing & Folden (1991); Calderhead (1991); Al-Methen (1995); Wilkinson (1996); and problem-based learning in Jarvis et al. (1998); Lunderberg & Scheurman (1997); Glazer (2001) and Van Huizen et al. (2005).
- The studies of second language teacher education in Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Richards (1990;1996); Johnson 1996b; Zeichner and Liston (1996); Nunan (1989; 2003); Richards and Lockhart (1994); Wallace (1991).
- Teacher identity and the apprenticeship of observation, especially Lortie (1975); Kennedy (1991); Freeman (1994; 2002); Britzman (1991); Johnson, 1999; Danielewicz (2001); Collinson (2004)
- The socio-cultural context and pedagogic trends in English language teaching in the Gulf in Mograby (1999); Mustafa (2002); Taha-Thomure (2003); Clarke (2005); Clarke et al (2007); Gallagher (2007); McNally et al (2002); Syed (2003); Richardson (2004); Barber et al (2007); Clarke and Otaky (2006); Loughrey et al. (1999); Machpherson et al (2007).

### Chapter 3

This chapter outlines the perceived need for shaping and contextualizing the EDUC 250 curriculum from the perspectives of student teachers and teacher educators in the pre-intervention phase. With the aim of better preparing student teachers with the skills and strategies necessary to teach reading in UAE government school classrooms, it describes the accommodations that were made to the course outline and delivery innovations introduced (performance modelling, systematic microteaching and problem-based learning).

**Chapter 4**

This chapter outlines the study's case study approach, stages of inquiry, sampling procedures and data collection tools using focus groups, observations, online discussions and documentary data in order to detail how this data addresses the study's research questions. It explains the analytical methods used and outlines a hybrid approach using both deductive and inductive methods to facilitated the management and analysis of theoretical ideas.

**Chapter 5**

This chapter analyzes the data gathered to support the perspectives of the key participants and provide a foundation for the discussion of the research questions in Chapter Six. It outlines three levels of analysis that provide a cumulative understanding into the main aspects and dimensions, relating to the construction of Emirati student teacher identities and the perceived influence of college pedagogical experiences upon developing reading styles. Three themes of 'becoming EFL student teachers' have synthesized the analysis including 'Contrasting the traditional behaviourist reading paradigm within the college constructivist reading paradigm'; 'Transformational teacher education pedagogy' and 'Becoming agents of change through reconstructing conceptions of practice'.

**Chapter 6**

This concluding chapter summarizes the study's findings and offers insights into how this localized Vygotskian constructivist-based contextualized EFL model of teacher education reading pedagogy that emphasizes systematic microteaching; problem-based learning and performance modelling can better prepare Emirati student teachers to enact pedagogic change in the government Emirati school system. It discusses how constructing such a paradigm from a singular case is paradoxical, yet when integrated with other similar studies from the region, can contribute towards providing a greater understanding of a Vygotskian constructivist teacher education paradigm in a foreign language UAE context. By extending the range of possibility for English language teacher education, this study recasts conceptions of how Emirati student teachers learn to teach, taking into consideration both the context in which it is done and the pedagogy by which it is done (Freeman and Johnson, 1998). The chapter also notes the study's limitations, along with outlining directions for future research in an emerging location.

## Chapter 2 - Literature Review

### Part One

#### 2.0 Teacher Education: The Worst and the Best Solution in Education

The essential feature of teaching is its uncertainty and unpredictability. Teaching cannot be directed by formal theory, lockstep national syllabi or centralised procedural policies yet remain responsive to both student insights and misconceptions (Shulman, 2004, p. 444). Moreover, as educational goals increasingly emphasize higher order thinking and reasoning and student collaboration around real problems, the education of teachers must emphasize their development of flexibly powerful pedagogical understanding and judgment. This set of conditions not only defines the difficult conditions for teaching; it also identifies the reasons why the education of teachers represents a challenge of the first magnitude (Shulman, 2004, p.444).

International research has begun to identify the significant impact of teachers on the learning of children (Hattie, 2002) and as a consequence teacher education pedagogy is gaining new attention (Goodlad, 1999; Lunenberg et al, 2007). Some writers maintain that teacher education pedagogy has a limited impact on classroom practice (Lampert & Ball, 1999) other writers such as Kennedy, (1999) attribute an apparent lack of impact to aspects of ineffective teacher education, other than pedagogy, such as the design of programmes. In the public discourse about teacher education, there is a tendency for people to denigrate the efforts of teacher education (Cameron and Baker, 2004, p.14). Programmes are too long, too short, too theoretical, not theoretical enough and too reproductive of the status quo. As Fullan (1993, p.105) points out “teacher education still has the honour of being simultaneously the worst problem and the best solution in education.”

There is a growing awareness, however, that initial teacher education programmes do indeed make a contribution to the teaching skills of teachers, especially when teacher educators have a solid foundation in pedagogy and subject matter (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Rice, 2003; Grossman, 2005; Lunenberg et al, 2007). Pedagogical experiences provided in the college classroom therefore have the potential to positively influence student teachers’ beliefs, knowledge and subsequent teaching practices. However, no one pedagogical

approach is likely to sufficiently prepare student teacher for the realities of the classroom (Grossman, 2005, p.452), given the complex and multidimensional nature of learning to teach. If, however, teacher education classrooms become practical environments in-and-of themselves, where practice is theorized and theory is practiced as it questions practice (Segall, 2001, p.226), then the act of teacher education may become a “valued-added” endeavour that can be linked to both student teacher learning and school improvement (Cochran-Smith, 2000).

Traditionally, teacher education has encompassed a range of pedagogical approaches, ranging from traditional lectures to problem-based learning. The rest of this chapter provides insights into a plethora of pedagogies used in teacher education that reflect two major traditions: Behaviourism and Constructivism. It also reports on the power of prior beliefs and experiences in developing a professional identity, along with the documented experiences most likely to support EFL student teachers’ development and subsequent teaching practices. As conceptions of teaching practice in the present Middle Eastern context still reflects traditional behaviourist approaches to teacher education, the first section below identifies the nature of teaching within this tradition.

## **2.1 Behaviourist Approaches to Language Teacher Education**

Despite numerous approaches to language teacher education including the traditional craft model, the personalistic model, the inquiry model, the applied science model, the reflective model (Zeichner, 1983; Wallace, 1991; Roberts, 1998), and the realistic model (Korthagen et al., 2001), the behaviourist model has remained the most prevalent model of teacher education delivery worldwide (Lesniak, 1996; Freeman & Johnson, 1998) This may be due to the fact that teacher education programmes often operate under the assumption that teachers need discrete amounts of knowledge, in the form of theories and methods that can be applied to any teaching context. “Learning to teach” is therefore viewed as learning about teaching in one context (the teacher education programme), observing and practicing teaching in another (during teaching practice), and finally developing effective teaching behaviours as a graduate teacher. From this perspective, the locus of teacher learning lies in “on-the-job immersion into teaching and not on the processes of professional teacher education” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998 p. 399).

With its background in the early 20th century, a key tenet of behaviourism is that all learning is observable behaviour that takes place through the establishment of habits (Lightbrown and Spada, 2006) and as the result of an individual's response to stimuli (Russell, 2002). In the behaviourist teacher education classroom, this involves a process of acquiring 'truths' that may reside outside student teachers' own previous knowledge. Here the teacher educator is a transmitter of education theory, while student teachers are passive recipients of theoretical knowledge with few opportunities for interaction, dialogue and problem-solving in real life contexts (Mandl, Gruber, & Renkl, 1996). Classroom activities may include responding to questions that are either right or wrong, moving from lower-level tasks to higher-level tasks, receiving positive reinforcement, taking notes from a lecture, reproducing what has been learnt and subsequently undertaking an exam to test newly acquired knowledge (Scheurman, n.d.). A behaviourist teacher education paradigm, according to Cannella & Reiff (1994) is therefore didactic and memory-orientated. Influenced by Watson (1929) and Skinner's operant conditioning (1948), observation, imitation, practice, feedback on success and habit formation forms a basis for learning (Berk, 2006). However, in denying the existence of an active mind that thinks, reasons, questions and experiments (Lightbown and Spada, 2006), behaviourism may underestimate the student teachers' contribution to their own development.

One of the biggest concerns about implementing behaviourist approaches into the college classroom is that its success may be dependent on the modelled behaviours of teacher educators, many of whom don't often practice what they preach or function as a model for the teaching practices they seek to promote (Korthagen & Lunnenberg, 2004), as highlighted further in part three of this literature review. If, as Smith (2003, p.41) asserts, learners are "more likely to do what we do than what we tell them to do", then the success of student teachers' newly acquired teaching habits may be somewhat dependent on the teaching competence of their teacher educators.

It is the nature of experiences provided in teacher education that will determine whether the understandings student teachers arrive with are those with which they depart

(Segall, 2001, p.239)

However, as behaviourist teacher educators use a top-down lecturing approach that tends to control the dissemination of information to student teachers, the environment and pedagogy that shapes students teachers' subsequent behaviour can be rigid and fixed. This may reduce the potential to enhance the learning processes of student teachers (Lunenberg et al, 2007).

Yet, while there is little research that provides insight into the perceived benefits of teacher-centred paradigms including direct instruction, lectures and behaviourist pedagogy (Russell, 2002), large group lecture formats contribute to institutional efficiencies, and pedagogy involving repetition, reinforcement and consequences are appealingly simple to implement and master in the teacher education classroom.

In a Middle Eastern context, the research literature reflects a negative portrayal of behaviourist style English language pedagogy from both international and local sources (Suliman, 2000; Mustafa, 2002; McNally et al, 2002; Shannon, 2003; Taha-Thomure, 2003; Clarke et al, 2007; Barber et al., 2007; Beatty et al, 2009). Reminiscent of behaviourist education in Dickens's (1854) *Hard Times*, the memorization approach (Salama, 2007; Barber et al., 2007) predominant in both schools and universities in the UAE posits that:

Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon facts: nothing else will ever be of any service...

(Dickens, 1854 p.1)

Dependent on rote learning and memorization, Clarke, (2005) draws a correlation between students in the UAE and that of 19<sup>th</sup> century England. He claims that students within this paradigm are empty vessels “ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them” (Dickens, 1854 p.1). Outdated curricula and methodology, poor student motivation, high stakes testing, under qualified teachers and underperforming students, all describe the UAE government school system (Gallagher, 2007, p.123). Similarly, as highlighted in Chapter One, when the current B.Ed. course was being set up in 2000, the existing university teacher education provider was criticized by international sources such as Loughrey et al. (1999, p. 53) for its traditional behaviourist style pedagogy. Ten years on, the benefits for student teachers of prolonged immersion in such a controlled environment are still questionable.

The next section moves away from the idea of ‘lecturing’ to a group of passive student teachers towards the idea of student-centred, active ‘learning to teach’ involving discussion, exploration and analysis, with the guidance of the teacher educator.

## **2.2 Moving to a Constructivist Approach to Teacher Education**

Internationally, there is a growing sense that language teacher education programmes have failed to prepare teachers for the realities of the classroom (Crandall, 2000; Wells, 2001;

Colby and Atkinson, 2004). This is magnified in an Arabic context, where student teachers pass through a Western style of teacher education and then return to teach in their own culture (Eilam, 2002). The focus has begun to shift in teacher education programmes, from what teachers do, to how and why they do it. It is now recognized that teaching is more than the accumulation of research knowledge about language, because it is evident that giving more knowledge to teachers does not necessarily make them better practitioners (Eraut, 1994; Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Crandall (2000) notes that over the past number of years, there is a tendency for teacher education programmes to shift their focus from a transmission, product-orientated perspective to a constructivist, process-orientated perspective, where student teachers are active participants in learning to teach, rather than passive recipients of transmitted knowledge. By challenging behaviourist approaches to teaching and learning in the college classroom, which is not always integrated with prior knowledge and mainly accessed for assessment purposes (Richardson, 1997), constructivist approaches, in contrast, are considered to produce deeper understanding and therefore greater internalization and reflection (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). This is recasting conceptions of who language teachers are, what language teaching is, and how language teachers learn to teach (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

Constructivism in teacher education has therefore been heralded as a more natural, relevant, productive, and empowering framework for instructing teacher education students (Cannella & Reiff, 1994; Jones, Brader-Araje, 2002). Knowledge is acquired through involvement with content instead of imitation or repetition (Kroll & LaBoskey, 1996) of theories and teaching strategies. However, constructivist teacher education generally reflects two major traditions – the cognitive and social reconstructionist traditions (Cannella & Reiff, 1994; Richardson, 1997). Programmes influenced by Piaget's (1971) developmental tradition attempt to teach student teachers how to teach by promoting the role of spontaneous self-discovery along with direct instruction in theory or practice. With no opportunities for discussion or problem-solving, it has the potential to contradict approaches student teachers are intended to employ in their future classrooms (Oldfather et al., 1994). Other programmes, such as the one in this study, are influenced by the Vygotskian (1962; 1978; 1986) social reconstructionist perspective on teaching and learning, which Kozulin (2003, p. 15) describes as a “radical reorientation of learning theory from an individualistic to a socio-cultural perspective”.

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals.

(Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57)

In social constructivist teacher education settings, social interaction helps student teachers deconstruct their own prior knowledge and beliefs, understand how these understandings evolved, explore the effects they have on actions and behaviour, and consider alternative conceptions that may be more serviceable in teaching. Learning activities are characterized by active engagement, problem-solving, reflection on practice, critical analysis and structured dialogues, which may be later transferred to school classrooms. Here, the teacher educator is not a “dispenser of knowledge” (Abdal-Haqq, 1998, p.1), rather a guide, facilitator and co-explorer who encourages student teachers to question, challenge and formulate their own ideas, opinions and conclusions. “Correct” answers and single interpretations are de-emphasized and student teachers use their ideas to construct their own understandings or knowledge through the interaction of what they already know and believe (Cannella & Reiff, 1994; Richardson, 1997). Emphasizing contextual, social and cultural factors, this perspective involves social structures beyond the college classroom, including schools; previous learning experiences; the cultural environment; language, and technology (Bodrova and Leon, 1996; Vadeboncoeur, 1997; Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Mercer, 2000) as important for the development of teachers.

However, teacher educators need to balance the acknowledgement of learning theories, factual knowledge and individual learning with the need to model constructivist methods in teacher education courses and practice placements. Roberts cautions against the pitfall of regarding one paradigm, such as constructivism as the only viable theoretical framework for teaching and learning as “teachers’ learning needs are complex and multidimensional, too complex to be met by designs based exclusively on single paradigms or dichotomies” (Roberts, 1998, pp. 117-118). Prospective teachers should be therefore exposed to varying perspectives, beyond constructivism and given opportunities through activities such as poster presentations, debates and micro-teaching, to develop the discretion needed to choose most appropriately, depending on the teaching context.

As the interests of this study are influenced by the Vygotskian social constructivist tradition, the next section explores the principles of a Vygotskian orientation to teacher education.

### **2.2.1: Social Constructivism within Teacher Education: Key principles of a Vygotskian Orientation**

Similar to second language teacher education, as highlighted by researchers such as Freeman and Johnson (1998; 2004), a Vygotskian (1962; 1978) social constructivist approach prioritizes “knowing how to teach over knowing the disciplinary knowledge” (cited in Gallagher, 2007, p.79). The interests of Vygotsky’s theories within the field of second language teacher education has coincided with “a certain shift of emphasis in Western psychology itself from behavioural process studies in the laboratory to such socio-cultural phenomena as informal and classroom learning, first and second language acquisition, job-related problem solving, practical intelligence and so on” (Kozulin, 1998, p. 33). This perspective, as Wells (2001) noted:

opens a path forward out of the fossilised argument between ‘progressivists’, who favour a learner-centred approach to education, and the ‘traditionalists’ who favour a return to teacher-centred classrooms, by placing emphasis on the con-construction of knowledge by more mature and less mature participants engaging in activity together  
(cited in Gallagher, 2007, p.90).

While terms such as socio-cultural theory (Tharp and Gallimore 1998; Lantolf, 2005; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006), socio-cultural approach and apprenticeship (Wertsch, 1985; 1995; Rogoff, 1990; 2003), and socio-historical psychology (Moll, 1990; 2000) are used by neo-Vygotskian educationalists to interpret Vygotsky’s theory of teaching and learning, in this case the term ‘social constructivism’, is used to refer to a Vygotskian pedagogical approach to language teacher education, as advocated by Wells (1999, 2001). Learning within this approach is a social process involving dialogic enquiry, constructed through interaction between the learner, other learners and the environment, and focuses on both what is learnt and how it is learnt. It has influenced early childhood education and mainstream schooling in the last decade in Australia through the work of Cairns (1998); in America through the work of Bodrova and Leong’s (2001) *Tools of the Mind* UNESCO project; in the UK through the work of Wells (1999, 2001) and in Canada, through the work of Mercer (1995, 2000) both focusing on language and literacy education. The interrelated principles of guided participation and assisted performance; scaffolding and the Zone of Proximal Development and the role of language are examined in the following paragraphs, along with emphasizing the role of peers and teacher educators in the social processes of learning to teach.

In the Vygotskian, (1962) social constructivist perspective, learning precedes and leads development and therefore the quality of teacher education pedagogy is crucial for subsequent intellectual and pedagogical development of student teachers. Neo-Vygotskians such as Rogoff (1990, 2003); Wertsch (1995) and Rueda and Monzo (2002) view learning as an apprenticeship in thinking in which knowledge is co-constructed between the teacher educator and student teachers. Through guided participation and meaningful collaboration, novice teachers are “acculturated into a community of practice by first observing and participating on the periphery” (Gallagher, 2007, p.91). From this perspective, the learning and teaching relationship in teacher education is viewed as assisted performance, between novices and experts, in which an ‘instructional conversation’ (Tharpe and Gallimore, 1998) replicates the informal pedagogy of real-life learning and teaching involving instructing; modelling; questioning and feeding back. This perspective also involves the image of ‘scaffolding’ (Wood, et al., 1976) – using the metaphor of a building site, student teachers are assisted with what they are not able to do alone and co-construct knowledge with more experienced others, such as teacher educators (Huong, 2003, p. 32). The difference, according to Moll, (1990) between assisted performance and unassisted performance is the zone of proximal development which Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) defined as:

the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

While student teachers’ unassisted ability is assessed in traditional exams, the social constructivist perspective emphasizes assessment of their assisted performance (Gallagher, 2007, p.92). Section 2.5.2 elaborates further on scaffolding, the zone of proximal development and assisting student teachers’ learning through constructivist delivery innovations and again in Chapter Five, which analyzes the impact of scaffolding Emirati student teachers’ learning through performance modelling, systematic microteaching and problem-based learning. A secondary principle of a Vygotskian social constructivist orientation for this case study involves the central role of language and dialogue in cognitive development (Wells, 2001, p. 32), which Resnick et al., (1997) see as interdependent:

Talk and social interaction are not just the means by which people learn to think, but also how they engage in thinking ... discourse is cognition is discourse ... One is unimaginable without the other.

(Resnick, et al, 1997, p. 2)

Mercer (1995, p.64) identifies the role of language as a pedagogic tool in what he coined “the guided construction of knowledge” in which

an effective teacher provides the kind of intellectual support which enables learners to make intellectual achievements they never would accomplish alone; and one way they do so is by using dialogue to guide and support the development of understanding.

While learning in the social constructivist teacher education classroom occurs through participation, dialogue and problem-based learning, as highlighted earlier, the majority of research into the role of language in learning has been conducted in the school classroom (Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Gibbons, 2002; Lee and Smagorinsky, 2000; Mercer, 1995; Wells, 1999). Chapter Five, reveals the dialogic nature of online and focus group discussions as Emirati student teachers learn how to teach EFL reading.

Despite an increased interest in a Vygotskian perspective in preschools and schools worldwide, as recognized by Gallagher, (2007, p.95-96), a paradigm for teacher education has yet to be based on this tradition even within general teacher education. Moreover, while Vygotsky’s teachings are increasingly influencing SLA theory through the work of Kininger (2002), Lantolf (2000; 2005), Swain (2000), Van Lier (2000), Thorne (2005); Zuengler and Miller (2006) and Johnson (2006), this has not yet spread to practices in second language teacher education. In fact, some of the renowned second language teacher education researchers such as Richards and Nunan (1990); Wallace (1991); Richards (1996); Johnson (2000); Trappes-Lomax and Ferguson (2002) make little or no reference to Vygotskian theory. Despite this gap, Vygotskian-influenced social constructivism have featured in the work of Roberts (1998), Donato (2000); Hawkins, (2004), Bailey (2006) and in the present second language teacher education programme in the UAE by Gallagher (2007), the latter which was described in Chapter One.

### **2.2.2: Socio-Cultural Practices of Teaching**

The context within which student teachers practice teaching has a powerful impact on their reasoning (Johnson, 1999) and within the socio-cultural approach, learning to teach is situated and therefore social. School experience is not merely a context of acquiring craft skills; it is also a place where student teachers acquire implicit professional norms governing

acceptable thought and behaviour expected of teachers. Gaining knowledge of the school's philosophy, determining what the students will be expected to know and articulating to students, parents and school personnel how they intend to equip students with the necessary skills are all part of gaining knowledge of the teaching context. Learning how to teach involves consideration and accommodation of the social context (Roberts, 1998). It also means knowing the politics of the school life, knowing the chain of command, curricular policies and procedures. For example, in the context of this study, student teachers discovered early in their teaching practice placements that many of the UAE government schools had a dress policy consistent with Muslim beliefs that forbids make-up, accessories and inappropriate dress.

Teaching practice can be seen as an opportunity for student teachers to “develop creative and thoughtful approaches to teaching within a supportive and knowledgeable collaborative context” (Haigh and Ward, 2004, p.4). However, in reality not all school experiences facilitate the development of ‘creative and thoughtful approaches’, nor the motivation to think critically about alternative practices. Therefore student teachers cannot be assumed to learn what would help them to be good teachers in their particular socio-cultural context, unless there are “opportunities to explicate one’s knowledge of teaching, to develop observation skills, to learn to talk about teaching in productive ways, to clarify what learning to teach means, and to analyze dilemmas of teaching” (Feiman-Nemser 1998, pp.72-73).

Within this social context, individual student teacher development is inseparable from working relationships (Roberts (1998, p. 7). Therefore a critical role in socio-cultural situated teacher practice is that of the school mentoring teacher. Much international research tends to be critical of their contribution to the development of student teachers. For example, Feiman-Nemser (1998) concludes that typical supervision practices emphasis emotional support, technical proficiency and practical advice, rather than helping student teachers to think critically about their teaching decisions. Sometimes student teachers assume too much responsibility too early, with the risk that they would emphasize classroom control rather than student learning. Ovens’, (1996) study found that student teachers conformed on the surface to the expectations of their mentoring teachers to ensure positive evaluations, but did not necessarily learn from them. Some mentoring teachers’ views may also contradict with education programme expectations in that they may emphasize modelling of craft knowledge rather than communicating reasons for their teaching practices. There is therefore a need for

stronger partnerships between the teacher education institution and the school mentoring teachers, possibly in the form of providing professional development opportunities.

In the context of this study, static, traditional rote-based methods used by Arab expatriate mentoring teachers (Syed, 2003; Clarke, 2006; Clarke et al. 2007) may limit young Emirati student teachers' opportunities for risk-taking and creative reading approaches, while on teaching practice placements. However, Roberts (1998, pp. 44-45, cited in Gallagher, 2007, p.96) points out that this conflict must not be viewed as a barrier to be overcome, or as something to which lip service is paid, but as the base from which student teachers will develop. It is within this socio-political and cultural context in the UAE that teacher educators play a powerful mediating role, between encouraging indigenous agents of change who espouse constructivist reading approaches and at the same time encouraging sensitivity towards expatriate Arab teachers' who use traditional methods. To add to this concept, the next section emphasizes the importance of preparing student teachers to teach content and delivery, appropriate for a UAE situated teaching context.

### **2.2.3: Towards Contextualized Pedagogy**

Although the Western system of education is the predominant system worldwide, there are large variations on its impact in different “cultural, religious, linguistic, and societal circumstances (Grigorenko, 2007, p.182). Similar to the UAE, other Gulf countries including Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia have drawn on expert advice from Western countries such as the USA, Canada, the UK and Australia to inform their education programmes (Al-Sharaf, 2006). However, while cultural dissonance may provoke reflection and change (Gopinathan, 2006), both international researchers (Holliday, 1994; Nunan, 1989; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992 and Braine, 1999) and UAE researchers (Eilam, 2002; Syed, 2003; Richardson, 2004) have cautioned against “the transplantation of particular language teaching methodologies from one context to another; typically a communicative approach to language teaching and typically from Western to non-Western contexts” (Gallagher, 2007, p.16). Therefore, transferring Western educational pedagogy to a foreign culture may be problematic, unrealistic and short lived, as evidenced in the implementation of a cross-cultural in-service teacher education programme in Ethiopia by McLaughlin (2000, p.1) who claims that:

the use of expatriate teachers in any country has inherent disadvantages: yet another of those foreign ‘experts’ jetting in, then leaving just as quickly, with little or no time for follow-on. At the best of times, introducing new ideas in teaching can be seen as abrasive and domineering but if many of these were developed with NS contexts in mind, there might well be conflict.

While the priority to develop socio-culturally appropriate materials and pedagogy for EFL Emirati learners was recognized over twenty years ago by al-Faruqi, 1986, ten years later by Asraf, 1996 and recently by Syed (2004) to date a lack of research and knowledge base has resulted in ever-changing school-based curricula imported from abroad, that is neither culturally appropriate nor contextually appropriate i.e. that neither addresses the cultural and traditional aspects of UAE life such as life in the desert, nor contextually-specific aspects such as weather and lack of four seasons; the multicultural nature of life in the UAE and English as a foreign language taught as an individual subject in government schools as opposed to an immersion system. Additionally, Richardson, (2004, p. 415) working in the present research context noted that

Islamic beliefs and values of the society do not readily lend themselves to the transfer of Western teacher education concepts and models...I also recommend that supervisors and curriculum writers be made more aware of the cultural influences on such concepts as reflective practice so that the curriculum is more culturally grounded...

With the rapid scope of educational advancement in the country, driven by historical, political, cultural and economic factors, the “notion of standards, or quality, has been missing – or at least lagging” (Syed, 2003, p.339). Similar to Kuwait, Al-Sharaf (2006) comments on internal teacher education programmes as being disconnected from the external government schools and the UAE Ministry of Education. While a contextualized project by Gopinathan (2006) reviewed the establishment of a teacher training institute in the same Emirate as College X, using an imported Singapore teacher education model, it was later decided to begin developing a more indigenous form of teacher preparation that would respond to contextual and cultural conditions. As this programme is still in its infancy, its impact is still unknown. However, within the present research context, which draws upon Vygotsky’s social constructivist theory and Korthagen’s (2001) realistic model of teacher education, the move towards reshaping and contextualizing curriculum and pedagogy of a reading methodology course in the country’s largest tertiary College system, is a step towards addressing the challenge of preparing Emirati student teachers for the realities of the Emirati environment. By integrating the prescribed UAE government school curriculum, incorporating indigenous

prior knowledge and college-driven Vygotskian constructivist pedagogies, a more balanced, sustainable, contextualized school-based Arabian model of reading teaching education may be created. Chapter Three elaborates on contextual and curricular constraints of the original reading methodology course, despite its broadly socio-cultural Vygotskian orientation to learning and teaching.

### **2.3: The Interaction of Theory and Practice**

It has long been recognized, that the development of concrete, relevant links between theory and practice throughout teacher education programmes are important (Bruner, 1986; Lave, 1988; Korthagen et al. 2001), including contemporary approaches to second language teacher education (e.g. Richards, 1996; Wallace, 1991; Zeichner and Liston, 1996 and Freeman & Johnson, 2004). While practical experience, including such activities as peer observations, micro-teaching, problem-solving and internships, has long been a part of most language teacher education programmes, these experiences are often too few and not sufficiently focused on the realities of the classroom (Crandall, 1996). Drawing on the work of Bruner (1986) and Vygotsky (1978), a number of language educators (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Crandall, 1994; Johnson 1996b; Richards, 1990; Korthagen et al, 2001) recommend that more extensive and intensive practical experiences be integrated throughout the teacher education programmes, providing student teachers with greater opportunities to link theory to practice and to receive support from and learn from experienced teacher educators. Decontextualized theory fails to consider the multi-dimensionality and unpredictability of the EFL classroom environment (Bailey and Nunan, 1996). In addition,

People will hardly, if ever, give up old, well-tested knowledge for new knowledge if the latter is merely handed down as a theory. Theoretical knowledge will remain particular, non-integrated and bound to special social settings but will not become part of an individual's integrated knowledge base.

(Lind, 2001 p.6)

However, Eraut (1989), Furlong (1990) and Holligan, (1997) argue that theoretical studies give students opportunities to identify their fundamental values. An explicit understanding of the theoretical foundations of learning may indeed be essential for becoming an effective EFL teacher and should help student teachers interpret and criticise their observations and experiences. The teacher-education environment must therefore give careful attention to the conditions that can promote a fruitful interaction of practice and theory, action and reflection to developing future teachers.

Although pedagogical knowledge, including knowledge of learning, teaching, methods, and curriculum are more frequently found to influence teaching performance and often exert stronger effects than subject-matter knowledge (Ferguson & Womack, 1993), it seems logical that pedagogical skill would interact with subject matter knowledge to increase or decrease teacher performance. Based on this idea that theory and practice have an equal and interrelated place in teacher education, the realistic approach was developed at the Utrecht University in Holland (Korthagen et al., 2001). The programme structured as an alternation in blocks, between school and college attempts to optimize the integration between theory and practice. There is frequent “commuting” from experience to reflection, aimed at the development of “theory with a small (t)” (Korthagen et al., 2001) involving perceptual knowledge, that is personally relevant and linked to concrete contexts as based on experience. Theory with a capital (T) plays a more important role in the reorientation period, which promotes conceptual knowledge, generalized over many situations (Kessels & Korthagen, 1996; Korthagen et al, 2001). This pedagogical approach builds on the student teachers preconceptions about education (Wubbels, 1992) as they shape their perceptions about teaching and learning. Similarly, in the context of this study, teaching and learning are viewed from a constructivist perspective in which EFL Emirati student teachers construct understand from experiences, using their already existing frameworks and incorporate both theory with a small (t) and capital (T) into their professional thinking. Elements of Korthagen’s (2001) realistic approach to teacher education, in which the role of the teacher educator is to determine ways to help student teachers to become realistic reading teachers can be seen in Chapter Five, p. 190.

Highlighted in Part One of this chapter is a qualitative shift in epistemology which “abandons the requirement that knowledge “represent an independent world” (Scheurman, n.d. p1) and accepts the constructivist premise that knowledge “represent”... what we can do in our experiential world. However, despite the documented benefits of social constructivist settings for student teachers’ academic, affective and social growth and opportunities for innovation, teacher-centred paradigms that restrict student teachers’ active involvement in the learning process have been more prevalent as a simple mode of delivery (Goodlad, 1984; Kaufman, 1996; Lesniak, 1996; Wells, 2000, 2001; Daniels, 2001), especially in the Arab world (McNally et al, 2002; Taha-Thomure, 2003). As teaching practices are often shaped by previous learning experiences (Johnson, 1992), including the present research context

(Richardson, 2004; Clarke, 2005), it may be unrealistic to expect student teachers to initiate constructivist settings in schools if their prior experiences, including teacher education experiences, do not include constructivist-based experiences (Kaufman, 1996, p.40). The next section explores the powerful influence of pre-teacher education experiences.

## **Part Two:**

### **2.4: Student Teachers' Beliefs, previous learning experiences and teacher identity**

The international research literature highlights an increasing interest in the development of teacher identity and teacher cognition, most notably by authors such as Britzman (1991); Kennedy (1991); Danielewich (2001) and Day et al. (2005); in the TESOL literature by Johnson (1999); Borg (2003) and Freeman (2002, 2004) and in a UAE context by Clarke (2005; 2008), from which this study draws upon. The effects of combining personal histories, learning experience and context in the construction and reconstruction of identity seems to be disputed in the research literature. Some researchers (e.g. Nias, 1989; Beijaard, 1995) claim that teachers have a stable identity based on core values, beliefs and practices. Others (Cooper & Olson, 1996; Reynolds, 1996; MacLure, 1993) claim that teachers' identities are unstable, "their temporary stability likely to be affected at any time by either their own 'biographical projects', change in their working environments or a combination of the two" (Day et al., 2005, p.611). Integral to the development of teacher identities relates to childhood histories, memories of school and cultural context (Beijaard, 1995; Woods et al., 1997; MacLure, 1993), despite the fact that upon entering teacher education courses, student teachers may begin to question previously held beliefs about teaching and learning. Their identities are constructed, reconstructed and deconstructed through an ongoing process of interpreting past and current educational experiences, where their "identities are neither intrinsically stable nor intrinsically fragmented" (Day et al., 2005, p.601). In effect, "they are creating their world while also being shaped by it" (Cooper and Olson, 1996, p. 83) and constructing their beliefs and values about the kind of teacher they aspire to become in their personal, contextual, cultural and political circumstances. Central to this particular case is how Emirati student teachers beliefs systems and previous learning experiences shape their current teaching identities and subsequent reading teaching styles. Chapter Five analyzes the voices of these student teachers, thereby providing the reader with an insight into what

they believe, know and practice in the EFL reading classroom. The following sections give an overview of related literature.

### **2.4.1: The Power of Prior Reading Experiences**

Teacher education programmes are not the only influence on becoming a teacher of English. Student teachers do not arrive at college as empty vessels waiting to be filled with theoretical knowledge; they are individuals with a wealth of prior knowledge, personal values and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and shape what they do in classrooms. As Kennedy (1991, cited in Freeman, 2002, p. 6) states “teachers, like other learners, interpret new content through existing understandings and modify and reinterpret new ideas on the basis of what they already know or believe”. This forms their professional identity which “... incorporates the past and the future in the very process of negotiating the present” (Wenger, 1998, p.74). Collinson (2004) refers to this as “biographical baggage”.

Developing an identity as a reading teacher is a long process of socialization, involving school experiences (Lortie, 1975). The attitudes of student teachers are forged during their experiences as students, long before they arrive at a teacher training college for formal training as a teacher (Lortie, 1975; Florio-Ruane & Lensmire, 1990). Grossman (1990) argues that what teachers know about teaching is largely socially constructed out of the experiences and classrooms from which they come. Based on memories as students, as language learners themselves, their beliefs and reflections about teaching are instrumental in shaping the type of teacher they become (Busher, 2005). Referred to by Lortie (1975, p.61) as the “apprenticeship of observation”, this marks teachers’ socialization as students throughout their schooling, as a significant influence on their teaching practices. However, their previous learning experiences may provide them with a deep, though not necessarily accurate sense of what it means to be a developing reading teacher. In this way, “personal experiences, especially teachers’ own experiences as students, are represented as important determinants of how teachers think and what they do” (Porter and Brophy, 1998, p.76). For example, Emirati B.Ed. students enter college with years of exposure to traditional behaviourist state-developed reading instruction including a focus on accuracy of reading, reading comprehension, direct translation, intensive reading skills and exam-based reading. The widely reported poor quality of this instruction along with instilling fear in students and promoting accuracy of choral reading to the detriment of making meaning accessible (Suliman, 2000; Mustafa’s, 2002; McNally et al, 2002; Shannon, 2003; Taha-Thomure, 2003;

Clarke et al, 2007; Barber et al., 2007; Beatty et al, 2009) has a lasting impact on how student teachers define themselves as readers and developing reading teachers.

However, these memories are asymmetrical, since they formulate a conception of reading teaching based on perceptions as students rather than as teachers (Lortie, 1975).

They (students) are not privy to the teacher's private intentions and personal reflections on classroom events. Students rarely participate in selecting goals, making preparations, or post mortem analysis...It is improbable that many students learn to see teaching in a means-ends frame or that they normally take an analytic stance toward it... What students learn about teaching, then, is intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical.

(p.62)

Initial knowledge from previous learning experiences is therefore unlikely to be the most useful or reliable when it has to form a base for classroom decisions (Calderhead, 1991). Student teachers may possess conceptions or misconceptions about general teaching issues, for example about pupils, about social and emotional issues, that will take precedence over subject related beliefs, particularly when they are required to act spontaneously in the classroom. They may have assumptions about how students learn based on their own learning styles and strategies, and a bias towards certain types of instructional materials with which they became familiar. Student teachers' knowledge is therefore mainly experiential, as something that is socially constructed out of the experiences and classrooms from which they have come and in which they teach. It models and shapes their educational thinking and therefore the type of teacher they become (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; Johnson, 1999). How student teachers actually use this expertise and knowledge in the classroom is subjective, socially negotiated and continually changing.

Constructing the new reading teachers of the present-future may therefore be an extremely challenging task for the teacher educator. There is an immediate opposition between the 'new' teacher, who uses 'new' or 'modern' teaching methods and approaches, against the 'traditional' teacher using 'traditional methods' and approaches in the EFL classroom. It also places student teachers in a compromising position between themselves and the teachers they are and will be working alongside in the future. Clarke, (2005, p.143) found that all the participating EFL Emirati student teachers in his study drew a sharp divide between the past and the present/future, entailing a rejection of the past in favour of the present. As one student teacher put it "I just... threw out everything I had about teaching from the past and I just acquire what I have...what I'm learning now and what I'm doing at schools" (Clarke,

2005, p.143). Many students in his study acknowledged the influence of past teaching approaches, while insisting that they had moved beyond these approaches: “I had always thought...However in the first few months of B.Ed...”; “...most of us started...however now...”; “I never thought... however now...” and:

In the first stage I viewed teaching as a matter of imitating other experienced teachers...Now I know that learner-centred classes are the best....

When I started teaching I used all the ways I was taught within the schools, such as the teacher speaks all the time and the students listen...Now I feel like a different person...

(Clarke, 2005, p.143)

“The emphasis in these constructions is on a clean break with the past rather than a more evolutionary change or developmental growth in understanding” (Clarke, 2005, p. 143). In this way, teachers’ knowledge is characterized as internal to the teacher, recognizing not only teachers’ prior experiences but their personal values, and individual purposes as being related to their professional knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; James, 2005). This view argues that what teachers know about teaching is inseparable from who they are as people and what they do in their classrooms:

..as (our) lives unfold new situations and contexts are interpreted, understood and subjectively incorporated as experiences. Eventually the production and transformation of identities can be seen as a result of this lived process.

(Buch, 1999, p. 52)

This suggests the notion of ‘self’ as a complex and multidimensional, dynamic system of representation that develops over time (James, 2005, p.7). Grossman (1990) argues that teachers’ knowledge about teaching is therefore mainly experiential, as something that is socially constructed out of the experiences and classrooms from which they have come and in which they teach. Based on memories as students, as language learners themselves, their beliefs and reflections about teaching are instrumental in shaping the type of teacher they become (Busher, 2005).

#### **2.4.1.1: Former Teachers as Role Models**

For most student teachers, the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie, 1975, p.61) encompasses two types of memories: memories as students themselves and memories of

their former teachers. What these teachers did and said and how they approached teaching and learning unconsciously formed the basis of their initial conceptions of themselves as teachers. They influenced the “foundation of their reasoning” and acted as the justifications of their initial teaching practices (Johnson, 1999, p.19). These memories seem to have a lasting impact on the kind of teacher they aspire to become, be it from positive or negative reasons. In the UAE, the oppression of the predominant behaviourist style of formal schooling in which former teachers limit students’ learning, is emphasized by Taha-Thomure, (2003, p.1):

Teaching in the UAE – and all the Arab world – still centres around the teacher, despite talk about modernizing education. Teachers are looked at as bearers of knowledge and transmitters of information – an image that has never benefited students nor will ever produce a learned society. Most teachers in the Arab world still engage in teaching techniques that are based on yelling, shouting, giving students unintelligent pieces of homework and lecturing from behind a desk with rows of students just staring at them to the point that sometimes students become indistinguishable from their desks.

It is memories such as the above that student teachers in the present study bring to their teacher education classes, as highlighted in Chapter Five. A previous study by Clarke, (2005, p.149) found that student teachers describe former teaching practices observed during their own schooling in which learners were ‘fed information’:

... my way of viewing children has been changed. I viewed them as being fed with information, because this was my situation, when I was in school. Whereas now I view learners as explorers who actively make sense of the world...

Contrasting the views of former teachers in schools to the above student’s view of children after studying child development, she consciously decides on the kind of teacher she would like to become or not to become, as the case may be. Another student claimed:

Well, you see, traditionally, they would look at children, who are as... as empty vessels. But uh...from what we learned here, children are like uh...like mysterious...they’re actually geniuses locked in small children.  
(Clarke, 2005, p.149)

These examples show that student teachers are beginning to recognize the complexity of teaching and learning from their teacher education experiences, which contrasts with the views espoused by former teachers who were ‘traditional’ teachers. In fact, previous

experiences of behaviourist teaching, seems to have been so widespread to be taken as given among student teachers. Their former learning experiences were robotical, mechanical and based on rote learning. The following comment was typical:

Your issue made me really sad because it reminded me of the days where in some subjects we memorized things without having any idea or understanding of these things...some teachers think that students are machines...they don't think of the students as humans who have needs and interests.

(Ibid, p.147)

The use of machines as a metaphor for students, suggests the school environment as a factory, which is reminiscent of behaviourist education in Dickens's *Hard Times*. The majority of the former teachers that students recalled from their childhood memories were remembered with fear and/or resentment because of their dominant voices and frequent use of corporal punishment, rather than for any pedagogical inspiration they provided.

I remember my first English teacher. She really was horrible. She always shouted at us. Even the good students she always shouted at them and hit them. She didn't consider if they were good or bad. She always was angry, upset. Because of that I really hate her.

(Clarke, 2005, p.146)

Another student made the point that "this was not a matter of the 'odd 'bad apple' or teachers having the occasional bad day, but rather this was the common pattern among teachers in UAE government schools across the whole school year" (Ibid):

I might sympathize with them if they were only bad for the one day or one week, but not for the whole year. Not giving anything and always in a bad mood and always punishing students and always shouting. That's not a good excuse.

(Ibid)

Both example studies by Taha-Thomure, (2003) and Clarke (2005) in a UAE setting show that Emirati student teachers' 'apprenticeship of observation' is grounded in powerful episodic memories of former teachers' shouting and instilling fear in them rather than developing a love of learning. It could therefore be essential for teacher educators to have student teachers examine the values embedded in such role models in order to avoid that their narrow view of teaching influence their own teaching approaches in an unconscious way and limit the instructional reading practices that they are willing or able to consider. As evidenced in Clark's study (2005), this may be facilitated through the use of Web CT technology including an email discussion forum, where the emphasis is on reflection and 'reasoning teaching'

(Johnson, 1999, p.1). Alternatively, it could be facilitated through focus group discussions, brainstorming activities, peer-reviews, micro-teaching, performance modelling and problem-based learning activities, as advocated in the current study.

Student teachers need to become aware of their own beliefs and value system in order to be willing to accept or reject new pedagogical approaches, as offered by teacher education programmes. However, the powerful influence of role models, such as former school teachers cannot be dismissed. The impact of observation and interpretation which lasted throughout student teachers' previous schooling, provides the only human example of what teaching represents. Therefore, student teachers' former teachers' examples of behaviourist teaching may still play an influential role in the professional formation of shaping student teachers' educational thinking and behaviour in the here-and-now of classroom practice, which are often unconscious or partly conscious (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; Johnson, 1999), yet instrumental in shaping the type of teacher they become (Busher, 2005).

#### **2.4.2: Inter-teaching Tensions: Promoting Reflection on Student Teachers Educational Beliefs**

The way in which student teachers conceptualize themselves as teachers and develop explanations for their own classroom practices tend to be filtered through their beliefs. Goodman, (1988, p.121) characterizes beliefs as "intuitive screens" that act as a filter through which teachers interpret reality and make sense of new information about teaching:

Once students (novice teachers) entered the programme, these intuitive screens gave them an orientation point from which they made sense out of the activities and ideas presented to them. When exposed to new ideas or experiences, students tended to act first on an intuitive rather than an intellectual level. No matter how logical or sound the idea seemed, if it directly contradicted a students' intuitive screen, it was usually rejected.

Once beliefs are formed, teachers tend to "read" situations; interpret new information; and build explanations around those beliefs, regardless of whether such explanations are accurate or not (Pajares, 1992). Therefore, student teachers' beliefs and past experiences as learners may conflict with the images of teaching that are promoted in teacher education programmes (Freeman and Richards, 1996). These beliefs and preconceptions may be inflexible and resistant to change unless an awareness of that prior learning is developed and opportunities for practical experiences and reflection upon those experiences are provided

throughout the programme (Freeman and Richards, 1996). Kennedy (1991, p.9) argues that if student teachers' beliefs are to shift at all, they must have something to shift to:

Teachers need to be provoked to question their experiences and to question the beliefs that are based on those experiences. Provocation is most likely to occur in conjunction with vivid portraits of alternative models of teaching and a stimulus that focuses teachers' attention on the difference between this example and the teachers' tacit model of teaching

Teacher education courses may try to encourage deep level processing and accommodation of subjective theories to novel insights. Experiential opportunities such as peer-observation, micro-teaching, problem-based learning and reflection on practice can help student teachers move from a philosophy of teaching and learning developed as a learner to a philosophy of teaching, consistent with their emergent understandings of the language learning and teaching processes. This is what Freeman (1994, p.5) refers to as "inter-teaching". Moving between what students have learnt in the past, are currently learning in their studies and teaching practice placements involves conscious and unconscious learning that help make connections between content being taught and students' prior experiences and knowledge.

However, students won't be able to incorporate new theories and teaching approaches into their core set of knowledge and competencies unless they change or give up some of their basic convictions and habits (Gardner, 1990). As McIntyre and Hagger (1992) claim:

Development' takes what is there as a valuable starting point, not as something to be replaced, but a useful platform on which to build. To do so is to recognize not only that teachers do have valuable existing expertise but also that, if teachers are forced to choose, they will usually revert to their secure established ways of doing things. The metaphor of 'building on what is already there' is not, however, satisfactory because it suggests adding on something separate to what is there, something extra on top. The concept of development, in contrast, implies that whatever is added, whatever is new, will be integrated with what is there already, and will indeed grow from what is there.

(p.271)

Therefore, this process of accommodation (Piaget, 1973) or deep level processing (Marton & Saljo, 1976) is complex, must come from within and is often accompanied by feelings of anxiety and fear. To cope with this fear, students need to be strongly motivated to learn, incorporating into their teaching a particular theory or teaching approach that is important for them. Although some teacher educators believe that such motivation can be established through extrinsic pressure or rewards (exams, grades), for the process of assimilating familiar

knowledge, extrinsic motivation does not seem to be sufficient when real understanding and accommodation is the aim of the teaching-learning process (Lind, 2001). In the cultural context of this study, for enhancing accommodation of learned behaviourist behaviours to novel constructivist based knowledge and practice for Emirati student teachers, the methodology reading course was redefined to contextualize new learning, promote reflection on existing belief systems and be exposed to effective teacher education pedagogy. This involved observing modelled reading practices in the college classroom, rehearsing mini-reading lessons in microteaching sessions and managing dilemmas through problem-based learning. Using these innovations, the promotion of self-awareness, communication and understanding of teaching reading in an EFL context may create a stronger motivation for learning, thereby shifting in belief systems and knowledge.

However, shifts in knowledge do not necessarily result in shifts in practice, even if one desires it, it is far from easy to implement new ways of working in the classroom (Prestage and Perks, 2001). “New experiences and received theories may therefore only contribute to (“remain as”) learner knowledge and not be transformed into teacher knowledge” (Aubrey, 1997 cited in Dickinson et al., 2004 p.1). It is recognized that teachers can espouse particular knowledge and beliefs, yet still employ classroom practices that contradict these (Woods 1979). Eilam’s (2002) study in Israel shows that external behaviours of Arabic student teachers are rooted in cultural beliefs and previous learning experiences are instrumental in shaping how they interpret what goes on in their classrooms. As Arab students bridge the culture of the university with the culture of their own communities (Al-Haj, 1999; Richardson, 2004), carrying out cognitive operations such as relating theory to practice may be more demanding than expected, especially when beliefs may contradict those promoted in a Westernized institution. It is therefore a challenging role for teacher educators in an Arabic context to not only incorporate prior knowledge into its curricula but to harness and shift different forms of knowledge and practices and ensure that changes are reflected in students’ teaching practices. This study targets this through three constructivist approaches - modelling, systematic microteaching and problem-based learning.

### **2.4.3: Limitations of the ‘Apprenticeship of Observation’: Challenging Prior Beliefs and Experiences**

Certain dimensions of the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ are tacitly embodied in student teachers’ classroom practices (Johnson, 1999, p.22). This may be revealed through reflection

on lesson planning, chosen learning activities, teaching style, interaction patterns during the lesson or interpretation of classroom learning. While the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ enables student teachers to function immediately in classrooms, it can also limit them to teaching the way they were taught. Therefore moving beyond their prior beliefs and practices is an important step in the developmental process of learning to teach. However it may be more challenging than expected, as highlighted by Johnson’s study in which two teachers describe the difficulties they experienced in overcoming their apprenticeship of observation, having watched themselves teach on videotape:

It’s been really frustrating to watch myself do the old behaviours and not know how to “fix it” at the time. I know now that I don’t want to teach like this. I don’t want to be this kind of teacher, but I don’t have any other experiences. It’s like I just fall into the trap of teaching like I was taught and I don’t know to get myself out of that mode. I think I still need more role models of how to do this, but it’s up to me to really strive to apply what I believe in when I’m actually teaching.

(Johnson, 1994, p.446)

I desperately want their experiences in my class to be meaningful and useful: that is something I rarely experienced as a student. But, I’m the teacher here and I’m supposed to teach them something, right? One part of me wants to let them just take off, because that’s when they really express themselves, but then I think about my responsibility as a teacher, and have to pull back and make sure we are going somewhere. Inside I know learning goes on regardless of what I do, in fact, maybe in spite of what I do, but I also feel like I have this huge responsibility to my students, to teach them something, so I find myself slipping back into that traditional teacher-mode.

(Ibid)

Both teachers had powerful images of their experiences as students and memories of their former teachers. The first teacher found herself teaching as she had been taught, despite the fact that she did not want to teach this way. The second teacher realized that engaging students in meaningful self-directed communication was beneficial. However, her strong image of what a teacher should do, involving teacher-directed instruction prevented her from moving beyond this point. The apprenticeship of observation retained “a powerful grip over how they were taught” (Johnson, 1999, p.23) and both teachers needed to realize the limitations of their subjective interpretation of their apprenticeship of observation in order to move beyond their current teaching approaches.

How student teachers interpret new theories, experiences and teaching approaches is subjective and reflective of their inner selves. In an English language teacher education

programme in Hong Kong, similar to that of the present study, Richards and Pennington (1996, p. 188) found that student teachers were “likely to base their teaching more on their previous experience, which they have in common with other EFL teachers and students in Hong Kong, than on their teacher education course”. While it remains to be seen whether this is similar for the present study, the apprenticeship of observation still acts as:

an indelible imprint on most teachers’ lives and minds, influencing their knowledge, their reasoning, and their teaching practices. It forms the basis for how teachers conceptualize their knowledge and practice, a basis that is in all likelihood incomplete and insufficient for the development of robust reasoning teaching.

(Johnson, 1999, p.23)

However, Mitchell, (2001) found that although student teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning are informed by experiences prior to teacher education, all students modified their beliefs in some way during the course of their education studies. Three major shifts in terms of belief development about characteristics of a good early childhood teacher were identified: the move from an emphasis on caring to one on educating; from a focus on homogeneity to heterogeneity; and from a sense of spontaneity to one of predictability. Final year student teachers’ ideas were informed by socio-cultural theories of learning and highly valued the role of exploration and play. In addition, Fox, (2000) identified that student teachers expect their teacher educators to teach in ways that promote responsiveness to their prior knowledge and experience. However, sometimes there is a quick “washing out of progressive attitudes” (Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1981, in Korthagen et al., 2001, p.40) after student teachers have left teacher education colleges. This may be caused, somewhat, by too little awareness on the part of the teacher educator of the conceptions student teachers hold on entering the programme.

The story of how beginning student teachers experience programmes of teacher education begins with who they are and what beliefs they bring to education (Wideen et al,1998), as highlighted in Part Two of this chapter. While acknowledging the power of prior knowledge and experiences in teacher learning, teacher education programmes, such as the one in this study, need to confront the difficulty of the theory/practice divide, the suitability of chosen delivery approaches along with addressing the need to contextualize teacher learning for the realities of the classroom environment in which they are placed. Differences in learners, curricula, programmes, policies and materials, and the socio-cultural context in which teachers are likely to find themselves in calls into question any set of ‘best practices’

appropriate for all contexts or any attempts to transfer the knowledge and practice from teacher education programmes directly to teaching (Crandall, 2000). Whatever balance is struck, without recognizing prior beliefs and influences, student teachers will be unlikely to modify those beliefs and come to understand and implement changes in practical situations in a way that will lead to sustained professional development (Prestage and Perks, 2001; Cameron, & Baker, 2004). Part three below review the potential impact of teacher education pedagogy upon student teachers' teaching practices.

The next section considers the impact of constructivist teacher education delivery approaches for improved student teacher learning.

## **Part Three:**

### **2.5: Impact of Teacher Education Delivery Innovations upon Student Teacher Practices**

Teachers initially construct their understandings of classroom practice through various forms of experience (Kennedy, 1992), of which their prior school experiences play a major role. Therefore, what teachers learn in their teacher education programmes will most likely be filtered through their prior experiences and pre-existing beliefs, which act as intuitive screens (Goodman, 1988) through which they view themselves as teachers and make sense of their own teaching.

Researchers have examined, among other areas, how beginning and experienced teachers organize their knowledge and beliefs (Clandinin, 1986; Joram & Gabriele, 1998). However, the specific mechanisms by which student teachers construct new understandings of classroom practice through the knowledge, understanding and practices of teacher educators have not been closely examined (Cameron and Baker, 2004), let alone in an EFL Arabic context (Clarke, 2005). All initial teacher education reports, according to River's (2006) calls for "more research on initial teacher education, such as the examination of different approaches to teacher education and how these are reflected in the practice of newly graduated teachers" (p.35).

Reflecting the two major traditions of Behaviourism and Constructivism as discussed in part one of this chapter, this rest of this chapter provides insights into the documented impact of

the teacher education pedagogies of performance modelling of teaching strategies; problem-based learning and systematic microteaching upon student teacher subsequent teaching practices. It also reports on the constructivist principles of scaffolding, guided participation and assisted performance and ways in which the teacher educator can support EFL student teachers' development and subsequent teaching practices. Below, the first section identifies the 'improvement of practice' problem.

### **2.5.1: Are Student Teachers Taught As They Are Expected To Teach?**

Seen primarily as the inculcation of knowledge and skills, the potentially powerful effects of teacher educators' teaching styles on student teachers' practices have mostly remained unrecognized and unexamined to date, (Korthagen et al, 2001, Kane, 2002; Russell, 2001; Lunenberg et al, 2007), let alone in an Arabic context (McNally et al, 2002;Taha-Thomure, 2003). At the heart of this issue is what Kennedy (1999, p.3) called "the improvement of practice problem". How do the activities of teacher education enable teachers to get better at what they do? If the aim of teacher education programmes is not simply to transmit explanations of teaching but to support teachers-in-training in developing their own understandings and practices, then the issue of how teacher educators conceptualize the knowledge and practices that they seek to develop in student teachers is a critical one.

Aiming to improve teacher learning, the role of the teacher educator is seen to develop "the pedagogical content knowledge to assist student teachers to develop curriculum understanding" (Cameron & Baker, 2004, p.33). However, the teacher educator should engage student teachers in different contexts of teaching, including those that are sheltered and involve limited risk, like micro-teaching or guided practice or those involving monitored apprenticeships or team teaching in the school environment (Fosnot, 1989; Freeman, 1989). Other contexts may challenge previous conceptions of teaching and learning, as in problem-based learning. Through the interaction, reflection and critical thinking involved in problem-based learning, students actively resolve complex problems in realistic teaching situations (Glazer, 2001). Reflecting on their teaching styles in a simulated, controlled college context enables student teachers to focus on particular aspects of teaching, without the complexities of the classroom situation such as time pressures, the scope and content of the matter being covered and the management of students. However, as the existing literature demonstrates (Bass & Chambless, 1994; Payne & Manning, 1991; Crandall, 1998; Hudson-Ross and Graham, 2000; Jay, 2002; Putnam and Borko, 2000; Lunenberg et al, 2007), these simulated

delivery approaches are not commonly practiced in teacher education, let alone in an Arabic context (Davies, 1999) and therefore inconsistent models of best practice are expected from student teachers. This prompts the reconstruction of the role of the teacher educator, in which modelled teaching practices in the college classroom are those intended for student teachers to engage in themselves (Blume, 1971; Dolmans et al, 1996; Holmes & Kaufman, 1994). When student teachers are taught as they are expected to teach, using “learning activities that are similar to ones that they will use with their students” (Bransford et al, 2000, p.204), they are encouraged to examine, through critical reflection, how the instruction they are receiving embodies what they are learning about teaching (Freeman, 1993).

Charlesworth, Hart, & Burts (1991) researched the negative correlation between teacher beliefs and actual classroom practices. Explanations such as pressure from principals and pressure to prepare students for standardized tests were highlighted. Another explanation that has not been fully examined is that “Pre-service teachers are not comfortably familiar with how the theories apply to actual instruction” (Anderson, 2005, p.91). While the teacher educator cannot control the methods of instruction that are modelled for student teachers while on Teaching Practice, he/she has the power to model and mentor the understanding of the application of theories presented in the college classroom. However, teacher educators don’t always practice what they preach and function as a model for the teaching practices they seek to promote. Sometimes embedded is the subtle message of “Do as I say, not as I do”. If as Cameron & Baker, (2004, p.14) report that teacher educators are said to work in ivory towers, removed from day-to-day realities of classroom teaching and to be out of touch with classroom delivery, then the potential to enhance the impact of teacher education pedagogy on the beliefs and practices of student teachers may be limited (Lunenberg et al, 2007). Pedagogical approaches in teacher education may need to begin addressing the need to help future teachers translate theories about learning into actual teaching practices in schools.

One reason for the neglect of effective role modelling in teacher education could be that the expectations about, and the evaluation of the performance of teacher educators often focus on aspects other than their practice, such as research output or curriculum development (Korthagen & Lunenberg, 2004). This can make it difficult for teacher educators to explicitly focus on their own teaching behaviour upon the learning of student teachers. Additionally, as Loughran (1997) points out, modelling implies vulnerability and highlights incompetence, and

teacher educators, who are often seen as experts, play the complex dual role of teacher and teacher educator. Korthagen, Loughran, and Lunenberg (2005) elaborate on this when they say:

Teacher educators not only have the role of supporting student teachers' learning about teaching, but in so doing, through their own teaching, model the role of the teacher. In this respect, the teacher education profession is unique, different from, say, doctors who teach medicine. During their teaching, doctors do not serve as role models for the actual practice of the profession i.e. they do not treat their students. Teacher educators, conversely, whether intentionally or not, teach their students as well as teach about teaching

( p.111)

This dual role of teacher educators is overlooked as a key factor shaping teachers' beliefs and practices (Lunenberg et al, 2007, p. 3). The way teacher educators model the promotion of certain views of learning may be more important in shaping student teachers' behaviour than the content of the lessons. This view concurs with Russell (1997, p. 46), who states, in reflecting on the way he teaches teachers, "How I teach IS the message". Another reason for the neglect of effective role modelling in teacher education may be the fact that the traditional apprenticeship model of teacher training gained a reputation of teacher educators trying to shape their student teachers' behaviour through behaviourist methods, such as imitation (Lunenberg et al, 2007, p.13). However, even if teacher educators modelled 'appropriate' methodologies to be accommodated by their student teachers, the likelihood is that employers would still attribute blame to teacher educators when teachers faced difficulties in the classroom.

Despite the above, little is known about the question of whether teacher educators nevertheless succeed in acting as role models for their students and whether they do so consciously. What teacher educators know and believe about students, learning and teaching, must also affect the way in which they deliver their lectures or tutorials, which in turn effects the transmission of knowledge and student teacher learning about teaching and learning. In order to improve the impact of teacher education to develop new visions of learning, teacher educators need to begin teaching student teachers as they are expected to teach. Chapter Five examines the influence of one teacher educator's delivery methods in moving student teachers from learning about teaching reading in a foreign language Middle eastern context to learning how to teach in that context.

## **2.5.2: Scaffolding Student Teachers' Learning through Constructivist Delivery Innovations**

Some teacher educators believe that student teachers learn in a similar way to that of children – through scaffolding learning and providing opportunities for hands-on experiences in an interactive supportive environment (Rogers & Sluss, 1996; Colby and Atkinson, 2004). However, while scaffolding learning is perceived to be effective in primary schools, at the university level, few opportunities are provided to scaffold similar learning and serve as model teachers (Colby and Atkinson, 2004 cited in Gallagher, 2007, p.95).

Drawing on the work of Bruner (1986) and Vygotsky (1978 cited in Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002), constructivist delivery innovations such as microteaching, modelling and problem-based learning emphasize scaffolding as targeting instruction towards tasks that student teachers just about know how to do. The teacher educator, who is a more experienced partner, helps student teachers to achieve what is just out of their reach. Instruction is “scaffolded” in that students are supported over time, with support being gradually removed as learners become more independent with the targeted skills. As Vygotsky (1956, p. 278) underscored:

Instruction is good only when it proceeds ahead of development. It then awakens and rouses to life those functions which are in a stage of maturing, which lie in the zone of proximal development. It is in this way that instruction plays an extremely important role in development.

Vygotsky argues that as instruction leads to new knowledge and skills, students move to a new level of understanding in which they become aware of their own thinking. In this way, the Vygotskian approach to teacher education is one of ‘assisted performance’ (Vygotsky, 1978, p.87). As highlighted in section 2.2.1, the area between “maximally assisted performance and independent performance lies varying degrees of partially assisted performance” (Bodrova & Leong, 1996, p.35), is known as the zone of Proximal development (ZPD). This conception of the ZPD is assistance that is intentionally provided by the teacher educator.

Although instructional scaffolding is indicative of ‘good teaching’ (Leigh Lange, 2002), it is a term that is often used inaccurately to refer to any type of help provided to learners (Verity, 2005, p.4):

Hints, glosses, keys, graphics, definitions, lists of possible answers, suggestions for how to proceed, blanks, instructions, and the dozens of other ways that teachers have of helping learners accomplish tasks do not necessarily represent scaffolding.

Therefore the term should be:

limited to describing the cognitive support given to a novice learner to reduce the cognitive load of the task. To scaffold a task is to take over the part of a task that is cognitively beyond the learner, so that he is free to focus on what he can do independently

(Verity, 2005, p.4)

However, within teacher education, if the scaffold is removed too quickly, student teachers may feel unprepared, lack conceptual understanding, have limited teaching abilities and feel “their lack of background knowledge” (Jay, 2002, p.10). It may be in circumstances like these, that student teachers do not have the confidence to ‘try out’ unfamiliar methods of teaching and revert back to the comfort of their childhood memories. In the context of this study, where student teachers have been accustomed to being ‘spoon-fed’ by their previous teachers in primary and secondary schools using behaviourist methodologies (McNally, 2002; Clarke, 2005), the concept of ‘scaffolding’ can be problematic for them. Student teachers may mistake a gradual removal of the scaffold for a lack of commitment on the part of the teacher educator. Also, they may not possess the confidence to take control of their own learning and continue to over rely on the scaffold (Richardson, 2004). The teacher educator may therefore need to be cautious of over assisting student teachers, at the risk of dependence rather than independence being fostered. However, in light of the developmental process of becoming a teacher (Fuller, 1969), it may be an essential component of constructivist methodologies to make scaffolding a part of the culture of learning to teach. Teacher educators therefore play an important role in strategically scaffolding, supporting, instructing and socializing student teachers and reflecting this culture at its best.

The rest of this chapter will examine the contribution of performance modelling, microteaching and problem-based learning as positive scaffolds for developmentally appropriate student teacher practices, involving guided participation, assisted performance, collaboration and reflection - practical experiences that are often too few and not sufficiently focused on the realities of the classroom (Crandall, 1996; Eilam, 2002; Mahmood, 2005), as highlighted earlier in section 2.2.

### **2.5.2.1: Performance Modelling of Teaching Strategies**

Defined as “intentionally displaying certain teaching behaviours with the aim of promoting student teachers’ professional learning” (Lunenberg et al, (2007, p.589), in teacher education, how teacher educators teach is as important as what they teach (Wilson, 1990; Widden et al, 1998; Lunenberg et. al., 2007). Student teachers may learn about teaching by example as much as through the content and activities presented, “Particularly in methods classes, where the subject matter and pedagogy most closely resemble that which students in the class will most likely someday teach” (Wilson, 1987, in Jay 2002, p1). However, performance modelling is not commonly practiced nor recognized as a teaching method in teacher education (Anderson & Armbruster, 1990, Lunenberg et al, 2007), let alone in an EFL Arabic context, despite the fact that more than thirty years ago, Blume (1971) investigated the idea that ‘teachers teach as they are taught, and not as they are taught to teach’. While little research exists that describe its use, the literature that does exist suggests that modelling is an effective strategy in teacher education (Bass & Chambless, 1994; Payne & Manning, 1991; Stover, 1990; Jay, 2002; Lunenberg et al, 2007).

Based on a small body of available literature, four forms of modelling were identified by Lunenberg et al (2007, p.597) as potentially shaping student teachers’ beliefs and practices, despite contextual differences between universities and schools: implicit modelling of attitudes; explicit modelling; explicit modelling and transfer to student teachers’ own teaching practices; connecting exemplary behaviour with theory. They found implicit modelling to have little impact on student teachers’ subsequent teaching practices, as if explicit attention was not drawn to chosen teaching approaches, student teachers’ preconceptions about learning and teaching remained largely unchanged. However, during explicit modelling of teaching strategies, student teachers “not only hear about and read about teaching, they experience it” (Lunenberg et al. 2007, p.589) and a message is communicated to them about what is important in teaching. Involving the use of examples, it can be a way of learning what a strategy or concept is and how it can be used. Teaching and learning can be viewed from multiple perspectives and expand pedagogical repertoires for both the student teachers and teacher educator. Demonstration lessons as such create a shared experience for the class to discuss, especially when followed by a ‘meta-commentary’ (Wood and Geddis, 1999) and discussion of the applicability of a particular strategy to a foreign language context. The teacher educator may discuss his/her thinking behind the lesson, using the example lesson as an opportunity to connect the approach back to theory or to expose the underlying

rationale using the ‘think aloud approach’ (Loughran, 1996). However, Lunenberg et al. (2007) state, that student teachers often do not extensively learn from the examples of their teacher educators, because they do not recognize those examples. However, if student teachers are invited backstage (Grossman, 1991) as in the concept of cognitive apprenticeship (Collins, Brown & Holum, 1991) in which they can dissect, discuss and reflect on the meaning of this modelling and how it can scaffold their own teaching practices, then student teachers may be better able to recognize those examples and shape their own practices accordingly. Anderson, (2005) found that moving from implicit demonstration of theories of cognitive constructivism to explicit demonstration of science instructional approaches developed positive dispositions towards teaching practices that encourage exploration, collaboration, and individual student teacher responsibility. Similarly, Jay (2002) modelled the concept of scaffolding on both implicit and explicit levels within an English methods course in college and as a strategy for use in secondary English classes. His study revealed that students felt that they learn in the absence of modelling and found it was limiting as a way of learning to actually put the modelled strategy to use. This may be especially true if teacher educators lack the knowledge and skills needed to explicitly model in a productive, demonstrative way (Lunenberg et al. 2007). Also teacher educators’ fear of vulnerability and failure often results in a lack of modelling (as highlighted in section 2.5.1), despite the fact that failure is a part of learning, even for teacher educators. However, if change is to occur, “it is not enough for teacher educators to advocate changes that they have not achieved in their own practices” (Russell, 1997, p.199).

The third form of modelling involves explicit modelling and transfer to student teachers’ own teaching practices. However, despite teacher educators’ efforts to discuss pedagogical choices with student teachers, there is no guarantee that student teachers will teach as they have been taught in their teacher education course. In fact, Loughran (1997) and Jay, (2002) alerts us that demonstration lessons and performance modelling within teacher education are only a starting point for designing lessons and shouldn’t be “a blueprint”. “When students are ready, they should teach in personalized ways”. Therefore, if student teachers are to learn and become confident with new ways of teaching, they must be able to accommodate new images and understand them in meaningful ways. The fourth form of modelling involves connecting exemplary behaviour with theory, a key issue in teacher education previously discussed in section 2.5.1. Again, there is limited research on how teacher educators themselves can connect theory to practice and Lunenberg et al. (2007) found that teacher

educators tend to dismiss public theory and rely on their personal theories instead, which can result in student teachers reinventing the wheel. Yet Smith (2001,) states:

Good teacher educators are reflective in their own work, working at a meta-cognitive level in their own teaching by explaining their actions in words in relation to why and how they teach as they do. This is articulation of the tactic knowledge of teaching, as it is a way to bring tactic information to the awareness of the learners (...) and (thus) to bring practical experiences to a theoretical level (pp.11 and 13-14).

While the constraints of modelling outlined above suggest that it remain one strategy among those that teacher educators employ, its advantages suggest that it should be incorporated as a viable instructional pedagogy. “The importance of modelling is magnified when pedagogy contradicts the images formed in pre-service teachers’ minds from years of schooling” (Jay, 2002, p. 1). For example, Emirati student teachers are unlikely to have experienced as learners the instructional strategies they are taught to use as teachers (Clarke, 2005; Gallagher, 2007). If they rely on previous knowledge and behaviourist learning experiences to inform their learning as teachers, learning new or constructivist ways of teaching may be an incredible challenge in teacher education coursework and teaching practice (Clarke, 2005), especially if example constructivist practices are not modelled in the college classroom. Therefore in the UAE College classroom, lesson demonstrations of constructivist EFL reading approaches such as shared reading, may create “images of the possible” (Shulman, 1987, p.10) for Emirati student teachers of English, who have not been previously exposed to such methods, either as learners or as student teachers while on teaching practice placements in government schools (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al, 2007). While this places an uneven onus on teacher educators in this context, if Emirati student teachers are to design active, engaging reading classrooms in the future and move away from archaic behaviourist methods of teaching, then explicit performance modelling of EFL reading approaches in teacher education courses may be necessary to “change observers’ behaviour, thought patterns, emotional reactions, and evaluations” (Bandura, 1986 in Jay 2002, p13). However, in an Arabic context, the danger lies in student teachers uncritical mimicking of lessons, while unconsciously reverting to behaviourist learning strategies of memorization, to which they are familiar. This may also reinforce Richardson’s (2004) notion of the incongruity of transferring Western educational pedagogy to an Eastern values systems, as highlighted in section 2.2.3. However, as highlighted earlier by Loughran (1997) and Jay, (2002) demonstration lessons are only a starting point for designing lessons and shouldn’t be copied. Therefore, if Emirati student teachers are to become confident with new

ways of teaching, they need to connect their learning experiences within teacher education with their own teaching orientation. It's time to give modelling its rightful place in the UAE teacher education classroom.

Chapter Five examines the perceived impact of explicit modelling of EFL reading strategies by the teacher educator/researcher in the present study upon the reading teaching practices of Emirati student teachers while on teaching Practice Placements.

### **2.5.2.2: Systematic Microteaching**

Some teacher educators believe that the introduction of microteaching training is based on the shortcomings of the traditional education programmes, (Klinzing & Folden, 1991), where “learning to teach” was viewed as learning about teaching and observing and practicing teaching during teaching practice. Thus, the majority of teacher learning lay in “on-the-job immersion into teaching and not on the processes of professional teacher education” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, see section 2.1.). Yet despite its introduction in the 1960s by Allen (1964), limited opportunities have been given to observe and practice particular theories and specific skills in simulated college contexts, such as microteaching (Crandall, 1998; Grossman, 2005). Although many variations of the original approach exist, the essential components of breaking down teaching into manageable chunks through hands-on teaching experiences in cycles of planning, teaching, reflecting on and revising lessons (Fernández, 2005) remain. Using a systematic approach to learning to teach, student teachers consciously develop basic teaching skills prior to beginning their teaching practice placements (Wilkinson, 1996).

While the theoretical underpinnings of microteaching have not been specified in the research literature, its original model seemed to be aligned with the behaviourist model in an attempt to analyze lesson demonstrations and “use behaviour modifications in teacher education (Perlberg, 1987 cited in Grossman, 2005, p.431). However, microteaching can be far more complex than this and many teacher educators have now moved towards a more constructivist model that incorporates team teaching, dialogue, feedback and reflection (Grossman, 2005), which are seen to be important for student teachers’ professional development. Student teachers not only learn through a critical analysis of their own performances, but also through peer feedback. Drawing on Heyorth’s (1981) EFL study

conducted in Hong Kong almost thirty years ago, this study aims to give Emirati student teachers the confidence to teach through the medium of English, by encouraging them try out among peers, essential reading approaches and related strategies that may be used in teaching practice placements in Emirati primary schools.

Besides being an effective innovation for professional growth, microteaching, as a tool for reflection, helps student teachers scrutinize their own teaching and discover their strengths and weaknesses. Using Schön's (1983; 1987) model of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, student teachers are involved in reflection, while simultaneously doing and subsequently reflecting 'on' their teaching styles at three levels: description; dialogue and critical analysis. This simulated controlled college context enables them to focus on particular aspects of teaching, without the complexities of the classroom situation such as time pressures, the scope and content of the matter being covered and the management of students. Through microteaching, student teachers are able to "pursue self-initiated, self-directed, and self-observed growth" (Wahba, 1999, p.1). This growth occurs due to student teachers' abilities to criticize their own work, either positively or negatively. While most forms of reflective microteaching involve the use of videotaping student teachers' examples of teaching, in the context of this study videotaping was not used due to student teachers' cultural and religious beliefs (Richardson, 2005). This may make it more difficult for peers and teacher educators to make explicit examples of teaching and harness and influence student teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning.

The impact of microteaching may be no greater than other conventional teacher education methods (Winitzky and Arends, 1991 cited in Grossman 2005). For example MacLeod (1987) found that observing modelling of a specific skill may be as powerful as the actual practice of microteaching. However, similar to the limitations of teacher educator modelling, in which demonstration lessons are only a starting point for designing lessons, Calderhead (1991) suggests that scripted lessons during microteaching practice is only intended to offer possible frameworks within which to work. When students are ready, they should personalize teaching methods and develop individual styles of teaching. However, improvising and experimenting with teaching methods means that student teachers may be exposed to unwanted criticism by their peers or teacher educator, which is problematic in an Emirati context where the Arab-Islamic culture values accuracy, perfection and uncertainty avoidance (Richardson, 2005). Student teachers' fear of their failure being observed and commented on by others may stifle

their creativity and innovation, resulting in 'loosing face' and a collapse into their comfort zones of behaviourist methodologies. Also, if as Richardson, (2005, p.432) claims that Arab students prefer prescriptive learning environments where they are "directed along a single path", then facilitation of improvised microteaching may produce anxiety and disengagement, especially amongst the less able student teachers. However, if considered a positive experience in which constructive criticism improves practice, then it could aid the gradual development of professional expertise and minimize the risk of failure in the EFL primary classroom.

Most research on microteaching took place in the 1960s and 1970s and while recognizing that it is not the same as regular teaching, its merits have been documented by many educators (Copeland, 1982, MacLeod, 1987; Klinzig and Folden, 1991; Flick and Lawrence, 1993; McIntyre, Byrad and Foxx, 1996; Wilkinson, 1996; Bok, 2002; Dickinson et al's, 2004), to a lesser extent in an EFL bilingual context (Heyworth, 1981) and more recently in a Gulf context by Al-Methen (1995) in terms of empowering Arabic student teachers who lack the privilege of teaching practice experiences. Al-Methen's (1995) study, conducted at Kuwait University found that that 72% of student teachers and 78% of supervisors felt that microteaching helped student teachers in more diverse teaching methods including improved transitions, providing students with imperative feedback, monitoring student progress, making the best use of available resources, giving clearer instructions, responding appropriately to student inquiries, greater voice control and connecting learning to previous experiences. Unlike the Kuwaiti College context, Emirati student teachers in the current research context have ample opportunities to practice their teaching skills in 'real' situations, incorporating thirty weeks of teaching practice over the course of a four year degree (Gallagher, 2007). However, unfortunately, as stated in the introduction, those practical experiences are not necessarily beneficial or positive in terms of improving reading teaching practices, especially when pressurized by mentor school teachers to use behaviourist approaches and teach according to "the book." (Clarke et al, 2007). However, if viewed as a promising alternative to teaching practice placements (Metcalf et al., 1996), then over a period of time the college delivery approaches of systematic microteaching, combined with performance modelling and problem-based learning may somewhat compensate for this gap and produce improvements in EFL teaching skills. Drawing on Dickinson et al's, (2004) model of observation, rehearsal, teaching and reflection, Chapter Five discusses the perceived impact of implementing a

systematic approach to microteaching on the reading teaching practices of Emirati student teachers, an area that has been absent from the research literature.

### **2.5.2.3: Problem-Based Learning**

If creating 'conflict' in the classroom is viewed as a beneficial way of working with pupils, it would seem reasonable to adopt similar procedures with student teachers. Widdowson (1997, p.121), states that teacher educators tend to be solution-orientated, with the "implication that teachers are to be given specific instruction in practical techniques to cope with predictable events...". However teacher-education is problem-orientated, with the implication of "...a broader intellectual awareness of theoretical principles underlying particular practices" (ibid). While problem-based learning (PBL) is not new as an instructional strategy in the teacher education classroom and may in fact have its origins with Dewey at the turn of the century (Menon, 1997), contemporary teacher education emphasizes the explicit use of inquiry-based approaches (Van Huizen et al. 2005) which are being used by an increasing number of teacher educators worldwide (McInnis, 2000). In problem-based learning classrooms, student teachers actively resolve complex realistic teaching problems in the context of an unfamiliar situation, thereby helping them to understand the utility of a particular concept or study (Glazer, 2001). Learning is active, integrated, cumulative, and connected. The group interaction or collaborative reflection involved in problem-solving is considered highly important in the process of developing theory with a small (t). Through the interaction, process skills such as critical thinking, enquiry skills, situation analysis, reflective practice skills and problem solving skills are stimulated (Little, 1996). Together, the group members develop their own 'language of practice' which equally emphasizes 'knowing how' and 'knowing that' (Glen, 1995, p.90). In this way, principles of problem based learning are firmly placed within social constructivism in defining and developing the concepts of experiential and social learning (Jarvis et al., 1998).

As problem-based learning questions traditional behaviourist perceptions of learning and teaching, in which students acquired inert knowledge that was not transferable to real life problem-orientated contexts (Mandl, Gruber, & Renkl, 1996, see p.8), it reconstructs the role of the teacher educator and allows interaction to be the principle mediation between student teachers and defined learning objectives (Dolmans et al, 1996; Holmes & Kaufman, 1994). As a mechanism for enabling student teachers to engage in collaborative dialogue in a far more personal and meaningful way, they need to be challenged beyond their zone of proximal

development (ZPD). This zone, according to Vygotsky, (1978) scaffolds student teachers' learning and helps them reach a higher level of functioning (Berk & Winsler, 1995) for example, moving from describing a classroom organizational problem to realistic critical analysis of its causes to identifying possible solutions. In this way, the teacher educator needs to constantly nudge student teachers to move along on the developmental pathway towards more complex problem-solving while emphasizing reasoning, higher order thinking skills, analysis and teamwork. However, teacher educators do not tell student teachers what to do or demonstrate how to solve classroom problems, rather pose question that request justification and explanations for their conclusions. However, as highlighted in section 3.2.1.1. on performance modelling, Emirati student teachers have little experience of this kind of learning and therefore may expect the teacher educator to provide solutions rather than come up with their own solutions. This raises Richardson's (2004) notion of the incongruity of transferring Western educational pedagogy to an Eastern values systems. Nevertheless, if Emirati student teachers are to become confident with solving EFL classroom problems, they need to become individually accountable, develop reasoning, critical reflection and group processing skills.

Problems therefore need to be realistic, relevant to the experiences of student teachers and their contexts and problems that they want to solve (Kolodner, 1993). Problems may have several interrelated parts, lending themselves to multiple interpretations or solutions and at the same time promoting argumentation and peer criticism. By acquiring feedback along the way, student teachers can recognize their misconceptions and refine their knowledge and related teaching strategies before summarizing and analyzing their findings. However student teachers do not always have to be solving problems, as long as they are learning through the process of reflecting on realistic scenarios and developing the skills necessary to function in a variety of circumstances, outside of the college classroom. Drawing on Schön's (1983; 1987) model of reflection-in-action, this growth is important for their development as reflective practitioners.

Related cooperative learning pedagogies including case discussions that encourage student teachers to discuss, reflect on and analyze a particular case. Case-based discussions can deepen student teachers' content knowledge about what to teach (Barnett, 1991), as well as their practical knowledge about how to teach. It was found that "repeated discussions of complex cases containing classroom dilemmas enabled pre-service teachers to find new

problems, rethink ideas, consider others' viewpoints and embed theoretical concepts from the perspective of the most recently completed area of study" (Lunderberg & Scheurman, 1997, p.783). However, Spiro et al., (1991) argue that a single case used to demonstrate a theoretical concept or pedagogical principle can lead to misinterpretations when over-generalized and argue that multiple-cases be used to treat the same principle "as a landscape that is explored by 'criss-crossing' it in many different directions" (p.178). As such case studies tend to be illustrative in nature, often leading to teacher educator explanations rather than student teacher issues-based discussions, which is central to problem-based learning. While few teacher education courses do not incorporate problem-solving activities of some kind, such as case analysis, adopting a systematic approach to problem-based learning is rare (McPhee, 2002).

As an alternative paradigm for designing curriculum and pedagogy (Van Huizen et al. 2005 p.267), inquiry-based approaches such as problem-based learning provide a safe environment for student teachers to consider alternatives, where they have time and space to consider all the issues embedded within an instructional situation. While it should not replace teaching practice placements, it does provide student teachers with opportunities to construct and use their own knowledge about teaching in situated and interpretative ways. For example, discussing and even authoring cases relevant to an Emirati primary classroom creates opportunities for student teachers to think and talk about what they know and don't know within the context of teaching reading in an EFL environment. This brings value to their experiences and perspectives and encourages them to characterize EFL teaching as a continuous process of problem-solving.

## **2.6: Emergent Themes and Research Questions**

In conclusion, the conceptual framework has reviewed learning theories underpinning initial teacher education, moving from behaviourist to constructivist approaches; the power of prior reading experiences upon teacher identity and the potential impact of particular teacher education delivery innovations upon student teacher practices.

Three key themes emerge from a review of related literature. Firstly, literature on Vygotskian constructivist teacher education points to the significance of providing student teachers with opportunities to learn through scaffolding, guided participation and assisted performance. Although it was recognized that Vygotskian teacher education programmes are not the only

influence, they can have a positive influence on the socialization process of becoming an English teacher.

Secondly, the current research literature is somewhat modest on engaging productive teacher education approaches such as modelling, problem-based learning and systematic microteaching for improving student teacher learning, especially in an EFL Gulf context. In particular, the way teacher educators model views of learning and accompanying teaching approaches has emerged to be potentially more important in shaping EFL student teachers' teaching styles than the content of the lessons themselves. This is a theme that has been largely neglected to date and particularly in an Emirati context. Chapter Five examines the perceived influence of revising curriculum and delivery in a UAE teacher education institution, upon student teachers' reading teaching behaviours during teaching practice in UAE primary schools.

Thirdly, the powerful influence of prior knowledge, behaviourist learning experiences and a non-reading culture emerges as being a contextual barrier to the development of teacher learning in a UAE context. How student teachers define themselves as readers and developing reading teachers therefore has implications for contemporary teacher education in a UAE context. With years of exposure to traditional behaviourist state-developed reading instruction, student teachers will be unlikely to modify teaching practices, unless an awareness of those prior beliefs and influences is developed. Chapter Five addresses the question of whether or not the current study's student teachers are empowered to set the direction of their own learning and accommodate teaching practices modelled or experienced during their teacher education course to suit particular EFL settings, or whether they revert back to the comfort of behaviourist approaches, as observed during their apprenticeship of observation.

The following three research questions arising out of the literature review will further guide this study:

1. What is the perceived and observed influence of revising teacher education curriculum upon student teachers' reading teaching methods during teaching practice in UAE foreign language classrooms?

2. What is the perceived *and observed impact* of reforming delivery and introducing *constructivist* instructional innovations (*performance* modelling, *systematic* micro-teaching and problem-based learning) upon student teachers reading teaching methods during teaching practice in *foreign language UAE classrooms*?
3. How do student teachers interpret the impact of teacher education pedagogy upon their prior beliefs, knowledge and practices (i.e. the ‘apprenticeship of observation’) and how does this influence their beliefs and ‘knowledge’ about teaching reading in an EFL Emirati context?

Questions one and two are specifically based on the study’s research focus which as stated in Chapter One, is to determine the impact of a revised teacher education methodology course for Year Two B.Ed. students on their reading approaches used during teaching practice in foreign language classrooms. However the researcher felt there was also relevance in investigating the impact of teacher education experiences upon student teachers prior beliefs and knowledge. Therefore, although applied pedagogy is the core focus of this research, this study has also considered the socio-cultural influences of prior beliefs upon student teachers’ reading teaching practices. Question three will address this issue.

The next chapter outlines the pre-intervention and intervention phases of the study. It shows the perceived need for shaping and contextualizing the EDUC 250 course from the perspective of student teachers and teacher educators and gives an overview of the course delivery and curricular changes made.

## **Chapter 3 - Pre-Intervention and Intervention**

### **3.0: Introduction**

The analytical focus of the pre-intervention stage focuses on the preliminary research findings, generated from course evaluations and teaching practice observations, prior to the introduction of a curriculum review initiative.

### **3.1: Pre-Intervention: Analyzing the Perceived Need for Reshaping and Contextualizing the EDUC 250 Course**

In preparation for the 2006-2007 academic year, the EDUC 250 “Working with Learners” course (College System, 2006a) was extensively redesigned. The impetus for undertaking this came out of College system’s Programme Quality Assurance (PQA) process, based on course evaluation responses from student teachers and teacher educators involved in the course, along with observational analysis during teaching practice placements. These processes revealed certain elements in the course which needed to be addressed.

#### **3.1.1: Course Evaluations and Observational Analysis**

The original EDUC 250 course’s primary focus on first language reading theories – giving student teachers a broad overview of what reading is, discussing the theories of bottom-up, top-down and interactive approaches to reading – was identified as a key issue (College System, Teacher Educator Course Evaluations (TECE), 2006c). Secondly, concern was raised about exposing student teachers to a range of reading theories or methodologies and expecting them to apply their theoretical knowledge in EFL classroom settings, with limited opportunities for practice prior to in-school experiences (College System, TECE, 2006c). Thirdly, teacher educators noted that first language approaches such as ‘emergent literacy’, ‘guided reading’ and ‘the whole language approach’ appeared to have little place in current UAE government school English language classrooms due to timetable constraints and curriculum boundaries (College System, TECE, 2006c).

The EDUC 250 course was perceived by student teachers as informative and interesting and they appreciated being exposed to first language reading approaches which they could implement in their private school placements (College System, Student Teacher course evaluations (STCE) 2006d). However, they requested more time be given to the analysis of EFL reading approaches in a UAE context, where reading instruction consists of only one

period per day (College System, STCE, 2006d). Comments included “We need to learn more about approaches that work in an EFL environment”, “More practice is needed on teaching reading itself” and “We need more useful books that describe different EFL reading approaches in a simple way” (College System, STCE, 2006d). Other student teachers reported a gap between theory and practice and felt that they gained a fuller understanding of reading approaches by “trial and error” during their teaching practicum rather than from the course itself (College System, STCE, 2006d). They perceived the course to have an overload of assignment tasks, rather than a core focus on learning how to teach reading in an EFL context. Overall, they felt that the course could have better prepared them with skills and strategies necessary to teach reading in UAE English language classrooms (College System, STCE, 2006d).

Similarly, feedback from the course team (teacher educators who taught the course in 6 UAE Colleges in 2005-2006) highlighted the theoretical foundation for this course and the need for more practical knowledge on how to teach reading in an Emirati context. The course team highlighted that:

Many of the readings required extensive scaffolding and quite a lot of teacher input. Practical examples and hands on activities to explain theories and concepts are necessary in this course for EFL student teachers to make sense of and develop an ability to apply theories in practice.

(College System, TECE, 2006c)

It was noted by teacher educators during observational analysis that student teachers often presented a series of unrelated micro activities that weren’t connected to the overall reading approach being used. They also had difficulties differentiating between reading methods, in choosing appropriate activities before, during and after reading, and in organizing specific approaches in the classroom during teaching practice placements (College System, TECE, 2006c). Student teachers’ competence in how to teach reading was seen as secondary to being able to write a theoretical essay as an assessed task:

Students need to be more aware of the differences between reading approaches. However, the time allotted only enables us to transmit a limited understanding of each approach. Therefore the theoretical overview needs to be reduced.

(College System, TECE, 2006c)

At the delivery level, faculty approaches tended to be teacher-directed and theoretically-based due to time constraints and course delivery requirements. This meant there was a

discrepancy between what teacher educators wanted to emphasize to their student teachers and what they actually emphasized:

The students have limited knowledge or practical experience on how to teach reading. Therefore they require extra time for what we would perceive as known strategies or processes through one's own personal experiences as a child being taught reading. They need to be competent in the teaching of reading before they graduate and unless more time is given this will not happen.

(College System, TECE, 2006c)

Teacher educators felt that fundamental teaching skills needed to be strengthened in the course.

### **3.2: Intervention: Reshaping and Contextualizing the EDUC 250 Curriculum**

To help address these concerns, accommodations were made to the course outline including introducing and analyzing approaches to the teaching of reading e.g. reading aloud, shared reading, choral reading, look-say, phonics instruction, reader's theatre and sustained silent reading. Evaluating their applicability to the teaching of reading in a foreign language context and maximizing opportunities to practice the teaching of reading in a foreign language context was introduced through teacher education delivery innovations such as microteaching, modelling and problem-based learning (College System, 2006a). In particular, microteaching was requested by the team to become an integral part of the course in order to "give students the confidence to "try out" different approaches in a non-threatening environment and give them experience in applying theory to practice" (College System, TECE, 2006c). This introduction of weekly college delivery innovations constituted grafting a new approach onto an existing system.

Other suggestions included connecting the course more closely with the concurrent teaching practice course which has a reading focus, thereby giving the students "the experience in how to organize different reading approaches and adapting these to fit the 'New Parade' English course book used in UAE primary schools" (College System, TECE, 2006c). A recommendation was made to remove the classroom management component of the course and incorporate it into the teaching practice course (College System, TECE, 2006c) – not because the team did not think this wasn't important, but because sufficient time could not be devoted to this area within the EDUC 250 course (College System, TECE, 2006c).

Based on this feedback and in consultation with the Divisional Academic Team (DAT), the EDUC 250 Curriculum Management System outline (College System, 2005a) was substantially revised for the following academic year 2006-2007 (College System, 2006a). While the theoretical overview was maintained, the new course outline tried to incorporate a balance between a theoretical and practical perspective. It aimed to address the question of “what do student teachers need to know about reading to teach it effectively in the context of language learning in UAE schools?” Table 3.1 outlines the major curricular changes made to the EDUC 250 course as part of the intervention of this study.

**Table 3.1: Summary of Curricular Changes made to EDUC 250 course outline**

Original Course	EDUC 250	Revised Course	EDUC 250	Pedagogical rationale for changes made (if applicable)
Examine bottom-up, top-down and interactive models of reading.		Examine bottom-up, top-down and interactive models of reading.		Theoretical overview maintained
Theoretical emphasis of some first language reading approaches such as guided reading, phonics and look say.		Introduce and analyze approaches to the teaching of reading, (as observed during teaching practice placement in English medium schools), and evaluate their applicability to the teaching of reading in a foreign or second language setting e.g. reading aloud, shared reading, choral reading, look-say, phonics instruction, reader's theatre, sustained silent reading and guided reading.		Previous to this, it was observed by teacher educators that student teachers had difficulty understanding the differences between reading methods and often struggled to implement them effectively during teaching practice.
Evaluate the reading readiness perspective, emergent literacy and whole language approaches to teaching reading based on first language literacy approaches.		Examine the language experience approach, which draws on learners' own experiences, and evaluate its effectiveness in teaching reading in a foreign or second language		More appropriate for EFL learners; makes print meaningful and culturally appropriate; gives confidence to EFL learners – oral recounts of personal experiences written down by the teacher.

Original Course	EDUC 250	Revised Course	EDUC 250	Pedagogical rationale for changes made (if applicable)
Develop activities during Teaching Practice.		Develop and implement activities for pre-, while-, and post- reading in the foreign or second language classroom through ongoing reflective micro-teaching sessions throughout the entire course.		Incorporate microteaching as a central component, to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Activities tried and developed before teaching practice.
Assessment: Design and create a display that promotes Literacy development.		New assessment, involving a mini-lesson, where student teachers demonstrate appropriate strategies and activities for a chosen reading approach to EFL learners.		In preparation for teaching practicum, student teachers get a chance to practice teaching reading. Student teachers create a display during Teaching Practice.
		Development of a new lesson plan proforma designed for reading.		More explicit integration with the B.Ed programme's Teaching Practice courses.
		Examine the need to develop students' awareness of the conventions of English print and text and compare these conventions with Arabic		To develop an awareness of differences between English and Arabic conventions.
Demonstrate intensive reading skills by using text attack skills in class reading of the course's academic texts throughout the semester. Understand through using them, the skills of setting a purpose for reading, accessing new vocabulary, skimming and scanning, prediction and summarizing.		In addition to intensive reading skill approaches noted, also examine and apply, in the context of in-class reading of academic and other texts, the KWL teaching strategy (Ogle, 1986) to aid comprehension: What do I already Know about the topic before reading? What do I Want to find out? What have I Learnt?		Setting a purpose for academic reading.
Classroom management		Incorporated into other courses within the B.Ed programme		Recognized to be of critical importance for effective teaching.

To support the introduction of the revised reading course in each of the six colleges, teacher educators were supplied with sample lessons and activities for use during modelling and micro-teaching sessions. An online WebCT site was also set up as a UAE-wide course management tool to archive relevant resources to support each goal in the form of PowerPoint presentations, guided readings, sample reading lessons for different approaches, online stories, leaflets on the teaching of reading, summary sheets, vocabulary banks, recommended websites and extended academic readings (College System, 2007c). The ‘suggested work plan’ including content, methodology, readings and details of assessments were updated (College System, 2007d). To enhance the delivery of the course, approaches such as systematic microteaching, problem-based learning and performance modelling were recommended, along with suggestions for implementation in the college classroom. In addition, a number of teleconferences were organized to introduce the course, collect inter-college feedback and to facilitate moderation sessions. However, it must be noted that due to the fact that six teacher educators were responsible for teaching this course across the six Emirates, individual implementation, styles of teaching and emphasis were not explicitly accounted for, except in College X, as outlined in Data Analysis Stage 2, p.158. However, it was possible to analyze student teacher and teacher educator perceptions of the impact of curricular changes, as evidenced in Data Analysis Stage 1, p.143.

### **3.2.1: The Intervention: Revising EDUC 250 Course Delivery Approaches**

The following sections outline how the teacher educator/researcher/curriculum leader specifically scaffolded student teachers’ learning using the delivery innovations of performance modelling, systematic microteaching and problem-based learning in the revised EDUC 250 reading course.

#### **3.2.1.1: Teacher Educator Performance Modelling of Reading Strategies**

As highlighted in the conceptual framework, teacher educators serving as role models and “intentionally displaying certain teaching behaviours with the aim of promoting student teachers’ professional learning” (Gallimore & Tharp, 1992 in Lunenberg et al, 2007 p.589) has been largely neglected to date, including the present Emirati research context (McNally et al, 2002). However, in the revised EDUC 250 course, the teacher educator explicitly modelled various reading approaches, including both interactive such as shared reading, reading aloud and reader’s theatre and behaviourist models such as choral reading, round robin reading, look say and the phonics approach. Additional approaches such as guided reading were

modelled and analyzed for its practicability and appropriateness for an EFL government school environment. Through explicit performance modelling, a message was communicated to student teachers about what the teacher educator perceived to be important in EFL reading teaching. Particular attention was given to conventional strategies such as intonation, animation, use of props, pointing, predicting; questioning in the three stages of pre, while and post-reading stages and how to involve and maintain students' interest in the reading process.

The teacher educator's promotion and enthusiasm for reading was also implicitly modelled, highlighting to the student teachers the importance of modelling positive beliefs and attitudes towards reading and motivating EFL students to read for pleasure. However, the teacher educator/researcher also drew explicit attention to her pedagogical choices, using the 'Think Aloud Approach' (Loughran, 1996). Similar to what Wood and Geddis (1999) call meta-commentary', each session began by giving the reasoning behind the structure of the lesson, for example modelling the objective of each lesson and making connections with the previous lesson. This 'thinking aloud' was not always planned for in advance and often revealed the thinking of the teacher educator, pedagogy used and student's learning in the 'action present' (Loughran, 1996 in Lunenberg et al, 2007). Sometimes the teacher educator asked student teachers to write a sketched lesson plan for a lesson demonstrated. Afterwards, it would be checked against the original and compared.

While maintaining the theoretical content in the revised EDUC 250 course by emphasizing top-down, bottom-up and interactive reading theories, each reading approach was introduced using group discussions on revisiting what and how student teachers were taught themselves as students in primary and secondary school. Precisely because of its external, verbal nature, this introduction was used as a starting-point for developing awareness of existing personal perceptions and attitudes about reading and reading teaching, and for making them explicit. This confrontation between a public and a personal interpretation of meaning to teaching led to a personalized orientation and a commitment to a conception of teaching that was both publicly and personally meaningful (Van Huizen et al, 2005, p.283). It helped link their previous knowledge as formed during their 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie, 1975) and at the same time begin the process of accommodation (Piaget, 1973), towards novel knowledge, without feelings of anxiety and fear of teaching in front of their peers. Continual teacher and student teacher modelling of cognitive processes for each of the four strategies -

predicting, questioning, clarifying, summarizing - was an integral part of the modelling process at this stage.

The EDUC 250 course drew on the findings of another study conducted by Hyland and Hyland (2007) which focused on the impact of teacher educator performance modelling of the reading process using electronic books upon student teachers' teaching methods during teaching practice placements. By modelling the use of e-books using various reading approaches such as shared reading, choral reading and reading aloud, particular attention was given to interactive strategies for involving young EFL learners in the reading process - animation, use of sound effects, pointing using a laser pen, hyperlinked vocabulary, hidden hotspots in images to elaborate on the setting or character and gradual revelation of text. The lively and attractive features of e-books, including voices, sound and dynamic visuals, were reported by both student teachers and teacher educators in course evaluations and focus group discussions to be a powerful means of supporting second language literacy development, as modelled in the college classroom. Student teachers reported that EFL learners were mainly engaged in the story and they were able to sustain their interest for longer periods of time (Hyland and Hyland, 2007). Also highlighted were potential contextual challenges, such as lack of relevant electronic resources in order to address particular pedagogic difficulties. Suggestions made were recorded in the student teachers' teaching journals. This in turn helped them to "integrate the larger theoretical ideas with their practical knowledge by reflecting on practical situations" (Oonk 2001, p.10).

Other technological models included the use of online vodcasts (The Guardian's Teachers' TV, 8.5.08) to enhance the delivery of the course, stimulate student teachers' interest in the teaching of reading, expose them to different classroom environments and teaching quality and also demonstrate examples of best practice from around the world. Through this technological observation process student teachers evaluated such practices using an evaluation sheet, similar to that adopted by supervisors when training and evaluating student teachers while on teaching practice placements. Additionally, a few home-grown contextualized videotapes (College X, 2007c) of Emirati student teachers teaching while on Teaching Practice Placements were divided into a series of clips and accompanying response activities were created so as student teachers could examine example approaches and strategies in the EFL Emirati government school context. It must be noted that those

student teachers videoed were girls who had received written permission from their families to be photographed.

All modelled sessions were followed by a 'meta-commentary' (Wood and Geddis, 1999) of the applicability of a particular approach/strategy to a foreign language Emirati school context, in which the teacher educator made an attempt to help student teachers translate the behaviour that was modelled to their own teaching. The teacher educator also made explicit her own previous teaching practices when teaching young EFL Kuwaiti learners, by drawing attention to examples of what worked and didn't work. In this way, she modelled reflection using the 'think aloud approach' (Loughran, 1996) and rethought the connection between teacher education practices, classroom based practices and public theory. This tying together in the 'action present' of her own thinking, the pedagogy used and the student teachers' learning was not always planned for. Each session usually ended with a brainstorming activity surrounding related topics such as "10 ways to create a conducive environment for reading development'.

### **3.2.1.2: Systematic Micro-Teaching in the College Classroom**

As stated on p.68, Crandall (1998) notes that traditionally, limited opportunities were given to observe and practice particular theories and specific skills in simulated contexts, such as microteaching. However, in this revised course, systematic reflective microteaching and observation of microteaching sessions were scheduled weekly in order to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Reading activities were tried and developed before Teaching practice placements and student teachers were required to come to class prepared - with draft lesson plans, chosen books and accompanying resources.

The microteaching cycle followed was based on Dickinson et al's, (2004) model of observation, rehearsal, teaching and reflection, as highlighted in the conceptual framework. However, the teacher educator added two extra stages to the cycle i.e. planning and re-teaching which spanned across two weeks. During week one, student teachers would plan a reading lesson using a selected EFL approach, based on a chosen textbook for a particular grade. Using the customized template (Appendix 3), student teachers began sketching an accompanying lesson plan, outlining objectives, language focus, strategies and activities for pre-, while-, and post- reading stages in the foreign language classroom.

In the second stage, student teachers observed vodcasts showcasing Year Four Emirati student teachers delivering reading lessons. The rationale behind this was to provide student teachers in Year Two with examples of ‘real’ Emirati EFL reading teaching by more experienced student teachers. It not only raised their awareness of the developmental process of becoming an EFL student teacher but provided models of reading teaching by members of their own community. It also acted as a scaffold to microteaching, which was to follow. The third stage involved rehearsal, in which student teachers were divided into pairs, one involved in peer observation, participation and feedback and the other practicing teaching as based on their planned reading lesson. The teacher educator guided, monitored, facilitated and reviewed individual teaching and encouraged links between theory and practice. After ten minutes, the teacher became the reviewer and vice versa. Occasionally, volunteer student teachers engaged in micro-teaching of reading lessons in front of the entire class and were given immediate peer and teacher educator feedback.

The fourth stage involved reflection on practice (Schön (1983; 1987; Albrecht and Carnes 2006), where microteaching pairs gave each other constructive oral feedback, followed by whole class reflection based on mini-lessons. Consideration of relevant theory and research was included at this stage, thus connecting practice to theory by justifying how chosen reading approaches, related strategies and activities supported reading development in a Foreign Language Setting. Whole class reflective feedback was summarized by the teacher educator. on a flip chart but more commonly using the Microsoft Office programme ‘OneNote’. Additionally student teachers could contribute, comment on and discuss their feedback in real time using collaborative software on their tablet computers where their contributions would be automatically saved on each other’s computers, thus providing a record for individual reflection and review at a later stage. Similar to a study conducted by Freeman, (1993), in which teachers learned to express their ideas about teaching and learning through the shared professional discourse of an in-service programme, student teachers in this study gained greater control in shaping their classroom practice through reflective dialogue, following the teaching of mini-lessons.

Unlike Dickinson et al’s, (2004) model of microteaching, the teacher educator in the present study encouraged student teachers to re-teach the same reading lesson, incorporating adaptations in the following week’s micro-teaching session. This was further extended into

Teaching Practice Placements, where student teachers were required to teach nine lessons, two of which were to be repeated lessons.

Initially, student teachers were self-conscious about performing mini-lessons in front on their peers, as observations are characteristically used in teacher supervision and evaluation (Zhang, 2003). However, once they were reassured that it was an opportunity to ‘try out’ reading methods and techniques, in preparation for their teaching practice placement, they fully immersed themselves in planning for, teaching and discussing specific aspects of reading instruction. At the same time they were constructing or reconstructing understandings of reading teaching and learning. They moved from being self-conscious to being conscious of self.

Unsurprisingly, the researcher found that she learnt much more about student teachers’ beliefs from watching them rehearse and teach mini-lessons, than from just listening to them talk about teaching. As Calderhead (1991) suggested in the conceptual framework p.69, if student teachers’ conceptions of teaching and learning are to be harnessed and influenced, these conceptions must be made explicit and subjected to critical evaluation in the college classroom. Mini-lessons were peer and teacher reviewed, highlighting particular pedagogic difficulties or potential contextual challenges in a ‘realistic’ EFL situation. Limitations of the lesson plan in offering a suggested framework within which to work was emphasized, along with the idea that, if followed rigidly, a learning opportunity presented in the present may be lost. Suggestions made were recorded in the student teacher’s teaching journal, for future reference. Mini- lessons and scripted lesson plans during microteaching became a scaled-down representation of authentic teaching, designed not only to improve practice but to challenge student teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning.

### **3.2.1.3: Problem-based learning – Creating a Disturbance in the College Classroom**

In the revised EDUC 250 reading course, problem-based contextualized learning tasks were incorporated into the revised course to make it more interactive and relevant to an EFL Emirati environment. Additionally ‘what if’ scenarios were used to give student teachers experience in the issues involved in reading on a daily basis in an EFL setting. Problem cards highlighted and addressed known student teacher difficulties and misconceptions such as: “You have a problem with a few students you teach who refuse to read aloud in class. When

you ask them to read, they tell you in Arabic that they don't know how. How would you deal with this situation?"

Problem case situations most referred to by student teachers surrounded the area of classroom management issues relating to the teaching of EFL reading. Issues of organization, time constraints, poor attitudes towards reading; student humiliation, mixed ability reading groups, lack of reading resources, the use of Arabic in the English classroom; lack of parental support, school policies promotion of behaviourist reading approaches such as textbook choral reading, overemphasis on assessment of reading were also among those discussed. The difficulties and misconceptions student teachers revealed in these situations did indeed regularly create the desired 'disturbance'.

Problem-based simulations in the college classroom therefore provided an opportunity to not only address realistic classroom based problems in an Emirati context but to encourage student teachers to become reflective practitioners (as emphasized by Schön, 1983) and experiment with interactive reading approaches while engaged in teaching practice experiences. The researcher/teacher educator hoped that by providing a shared language and context within which to work on these issues, student teachers would be less likely to fall back on the sorts of behaviourist reading approaches that they experienced as students themselves. If as Cobb et al (1990) suggest that, accepting aspects of classroom practice as problematic is crucial as a prerequisite for teacher change, by exemplifying styles of reading teaching which were usually outside their previous learning experiences, as such represent alternative approaches for working with EFL students' reading difficulties. This reconstructed the role of the teacher educator and allowed interaction to be the principle means of encouraging student teachers to view teaching as a continuous process of problem-solving (Holmes & Kaufman, 1994).

### **3.3: Conclusion: Discussing the Perceived Need for Curricular Changes**

The pre-intervention phase analyzed the perceived need for shaping and contextualizing the EDUC 250 curriculum from the perspectives of student teachers and teacher educators. As evidenced in course evaluations and subsequent teaching practice observations, both teacher educators and student teachers had a desire to move from a theoretically-based curriculum to a more constructivist-based contextualized curriculum where student teachers

could evaluate particular reading approaches in terms of their application to an EFL UAE context.

Increasing effectiveness in teacher education pedagogy, with the aim of better preparing student teachers with the skills and strategies necessary to teach reading in UAE government school classrooms, therefore led to the current intervention to reform curriculum and delivery in the EDUC 250 course. In the original course, student teachers had difficulties in differentiating between reading methods, in choosing appropriate activities before, during and after reading, in organizing specific reading approaches in the Emirati classroom and in applying their theoretical knowledge to actual EFL classroom settings. Teacher educators therefore felt that student teachers' teaching skills needed to be strengthened in the course, thereby making the teacher education process a more 'valued-added' endeavour that could be linked to both student teacher learning and school improvement (Cochran-Smith, 2000, conceptual framework, p.35).

Both teacher educators and student teachers advocated curricular changes that increased student teachers' practical knowledge on how to teach reading in an EFL context, thereby incorporating theory with a small (t) into the college curriculum (Korthagen et al., 2001, as discussed on p.36 of the conceptual framework). By introducing teacher educator delivery innovations such as micro-teaching, modelling and problem-based learning, it aimed to incorporate more concrete links between theory and practice in the college classroom. Consequently the EDUC 250 course was modified for the academic year 2006-2007 to address the perceived weaknesses in the original curriculum and revise both content and delivery in the course. This study investigates the perceived impact of this revised (Vygotskian social constructivist) reading methodology course for Year Two B.Ed. students upon their reading strategies used during teaching practice in foreign language primary school classrooms.

The next chapter positions the study of 'the impact of a revised teacher education methodology course for Year Two B.Ed. students on their reading approaches used during teaching practice ' within a methodological framework. It show how the study's research questions may be operationalised and aims to produce a principled nexus between theory and methodology, methods, tools and techniques used in the collection and analysis of data. More specifically, it provides an overview of the processes and methods of data collection

employed in the research and as such “acts as a bridge from questions to reasonable answers” (Freebody, 2003, p. 68).

## Chapter 4 - Research Methodology, Data Collection and Tools

### 4.0: Introduction

This chapter positions the study of ‘the impact of a revised teacher education methodology course for Year Two B.Ed. students on their reading approaches used during teaching practice in foreign language classrooms’ within a methodological framework. This aims to produce a principled nexus between theory and methodology, methods, tools and techniques used in the collection and analysis of data. More specifically, it provides an overview of the processes and methods of data collection employed in the research and as such “acts as a bridge from questions to reasonable answers” (Freebody, 2003, p. 68).

The research questions this thesis seeks to answer are:

1. What is the perceived influence of a revised (Vygotskian social constructivist) teacher education curriculum upon student teachers’ reading teaching methods during teaching practice in UAE foreign language classrooms?
2. What is the perceived and observed impact of reforming delivery in the college classroom, using the constructivist delivery innovations of performance modelling, systematic micro-teaching and problem-based learning upon student teachers reading teaching methods during teaching practice in *foreign language UAE classrooms*?
3. How do student teachers interpret the impact of teacher education pedagogy upon their prior beliefs, knowledge and practices, i.e. the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ and how does this impact their beliefs and ‘knowledge’ about teaching reading in an EFL Emirati context?

Given the inevitably political nature of all research (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002), issues of reliability and validity relating to aims and claims of the research and to the researcher’s position as an insider researcher also need to be addressed

## 4.1: Epistemology

This study was based on specific epistemological and ontological assumptions about the production, interpretation and reportage of data. The interpretative constitution of reality, which this study espouses, puts the researcher in the position of constructing, rather than uncovering, knowledge. Within this epistemological orientation, all claims for a singular, correct way of representing experience are challenged and replaced by more modest claims to situated interpretations of experience. Scheurich and Young (1997) note that “people live inside a culture, not above it and live inside the terms and ways of a particular social history” (p.141). Knowledge is socially constructed and therefore partial and situated.

Indeed the cultural situatedness of epistemology compromises the likelihood of research being able to make any foundational truth claims, (Scheurich and Young 1997; Stronach & McClure, 1997; St. Pierra and Pillow, 2000a). In a socially constructed reality, where multiple perspectives are valued, it is impossible not to reconstruct knowledge by making it personal and subjective. Through cross-referencing different perspectives, emergent shared views can be strengthened. The interpretative paradigm emphasizes this production of meaning, focusing on tacit knowledge and naturalistic generalizations.

People cannot write from ‘nowhere’, nor totally reject ‘authority’, nor escape the responsibility to say ‘something’ (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002). As an interpretative case study, positioned within an instrumental, qualitative paradigm, this study aims to evaluate teacher education curriculum and delivery in the UAE, at one of the country’s main teacher education providers and to some extent to ‘problematise’ – the ‘taken for granted’ processes of teacher education curriculum and delivery in this context. Viewed from the perspective of student teachers and teacher educators, this kind of knowledge is subjective and therefore findings are presented through understanding their subjective interpretations. However, as Denzin (1994) argues, there can never be a final, exact representation of what was said or meant, as “description becomes inscription” (p.296). Therefore, the findings drawn from the analysis of data in interpretative studies present ‘truth claims’ rather than uncontested truths (Carspecken, 1996; Kvale, 1996; Hamston 2002).

The ontological, or social orientation of this research is underpinned by a belief in the complex and multifaceted dimensions of any social phenomena. This type of research stresses ‘the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between

researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry' (Denzin, and Lincoln, 1994, p. 4). The findings from the present case study are offered as a multi-dimensional portrait, or mosaic of the influence of college pedagogical experiences upon student teachers' developing styles of teaching reading and emerge from data triangulated, or cross-checked, against other interpretations of the data (Carspecken, 1996; Denzin 1994; Kvale, 1996; Merriam 1998). Importantly, the credibility of this study relies on shaping data collection methods and selecting appropriate methods of data analysis (Denzin 1994). The representation of instances enables the reader, as interpreter, to experience the complexity of the influences on developing EFL Emirati reading teachers and to develop an awareness of the tensions and shifts involved in 'becoming' (see Merriam, 1998).

## **4.2: Generalisability and Validity**

Generalisability refers to the extent to which the findings of one study is able to 'give' to other similar studies (Donmoyer 1990). As this study is context specific and institutionally based, automatic transferability to other teacher education contexts even within the Gulf region may not be possible. The participants' beliefs and teaching behaviours may represent only those surveyed, allowing us to gain insight into one specific situation and context. However, Mills, (2003) adds that qualitative researchers don't seek to define ultimate truths and therefore generalisability or replicability is not a priority. Nevertheless some researchers believe "it is possible to assess the typicality of a situation – the participants and settings, to identify possible comparison groups, and to indicate how data might translate into different settings and cultures" (Cohen et al, 2000, p.109). Referring to what Stake (1978) terms 'naturalistic generalisation', the present research findings may inform teacher education curriculum and instructional delivery in other institutions in the UAE and beyond. While there is tension within the discourse on case study research between the unique and the universal, it is the reader who has to ask, what is there in this study that can be applied to another situation, and what clearly does not apply (Walker, 1986, p.167).

As qualitative case studies tend to be "multifaceted, and highly contextual"; achieving reliability and validity in the traditional sense, is not feasible (Merriam, 1998, p. 206). However, this study's constructivist philosophical orientation on learning and teaching resonates with Kvale's (1995) and Merriam's (1998) concept of validity as being socially constructed. Using a craftsmanship approach, quality is controlled throughout the stages of

knowledge production by checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings (Kvale, 1995, p. 309) rather than a final inspection, as emphasized in quantitative research.

Maxwell (1992 cited in Huberman and Miles, 2002, pp. 37-64) identifies four types of validity in qualitative research: descriptive validity; interpretative validity; theoretical validity and internal construct validity. Firstly, descriptive validity, involving the descriptive accuracy of the research has been achieved in this case study by transcribing focus group interviews within forty-eight hours of recording them, recording observations in situ and individually referencing documents as they are referred to throughout the study. While descriptive validity is appropriate for both quantitative and qualitative research, interpretive validity characterised by Huberman and Miles (2002, p. 49) as “inherently a matter of inference from the words and actions of participants in the situation studied” only arises in qualitative research. Therefore the interpretation of this study’s data is constructed by the researcher on the basis of the participants’ accounts and the researcher’s observations. Threats to the study’s interpretative validity involve group think mentality (p.108) and the quality of student teachers’ responses in their second language (p.106; 126). Thirdly, theoretical validity, according to Maxwell (1992 cited in Huberman and Miles, 2002) goes beyond description and interpretation and addresses the theoretical constructions uncovered in the case. Fourthly, internal validity is concerned with the extent to which the research findings accurately represent what is being researched. In Merriam’s words (1998, p. 201) “Do the findings capture what is really there?” Two of Merriam’s (1998) suggested strategies for increasing internal construct validity have been employed in this case study: triangulation of data sources and multiple perspectives and clarification of researcher bias.

#### **4.2.1: Triangulation and Multiple Perspectives**

As researching the impact of curriculum development and the introduction of delivery innovations is social rather than scientific research, it seeks to elicit the meaning of events and phenomena from the point of view of participants. However, this style of research can be subjective and has been criticized for being anecdotal in that it is not based on critical investigation of all the data, but perhaps on a few well-chosen examples (Silverman, 2000, p.176). Therefore, whatever data collection procedure is selected, it should be examined critically to assess to what extent it is likely to be reliable and valid (Bell, 1999).

No single tool is likely to elicit all the information a researcher requires to explain a particular phenomenon (Johnson, 1994; Mills, 2003). Using a multi-method approach that cross checks the existence of certain phenomena by gathering data from a number of sources therefore increases the consistency of the data and subsequent findings (Mills, 2003). In this study, it was felt particularly appropriate to triangulate to validate research findings and arguments made from multiple perspectives. Triangulation of focus group interviews, online discussions, course evaluations and non-participant observations aimed to provide a 'richer' picture of the impact of the revised reading methodology course upon student teachers' reading practices. However, while using multiple methods increases reliability of data, qualitative case study research is open to different interpretations and there is no benchmark with which to establish the reliability of the research as it is seen in the traditional sense (Donmoyer, 1990; Merriam 1998). While the study itself could be replicated, it is unlikely that another researcher would produce outcomes similar to the case study presented here due to different perspectives, subject and pedagogical expertise and access to Emirati female student teachers.

The results of the present study have the potential to bring benefit to future student teachers, by improving standards of curriculum and instructional delivery, in an under-researched Middle Eastern teacher education context. However, validity issues relate to triangulation of research tools and ensuring participant anonymity, insider research and generalisability. Knowledge claims of the research and the researcher, the researched and research process are discussed by the notion of reflexivity below.

#### **4.2.2: Reflexivity and Being 'In' the Research**

While there are many interpretations of what researcher reflexivity means and several qualitative researchers have drawn up typologies of reflexivity (See, for example, Denzin, 1994, pp.295-308; Pillow, 2003 pp.175-196), for the purposes of this case study, reflexivity means making explicit the researcher's position along with the emerging understandings within this teacher education methodology course. Reflexivity therefore requires not only an awareness of the relationship between researcher and the research, content and reporting style but also vigilance against over-generalising and distorting the research 'subjects' voices.

Given that any researcher's position is to some extent situated and partial and particularly in the context of this study, the direct participation by the researcher was manifested on many

levels, beyond the status of 'outsider'. As co-ordinator of the EDUC 250 reading methodology course the researcher was clearly an 'interested' participant observer in this evaluative case study. In this way, the researcher's insider position may be seen as compromised in terms of disinterested critique and lead to a certain preciousness about the validity and reliability of interpreting responses (Silverman, 2000, p.186). However, Bakhtin (1986, p.126) offers support for the position of researcher/participant, arguing that all relationships are dialogic by nature and that all researchers enter dialogic relationships with participants irrespective of their methodological orientation.

Roles such as curriculum leader/developer of this particular course and researcher/ teacher educator similar to the dualism of teacher/researcher (Schön 1983, 1991) may be perceived in certain ways by student teachers, hence the possibility of students saying the 'right' answers or teaching in a way they knew was expected or desired by the teacher educator/mentor. Fine and Lather (1994) summarize this position, arguing that the concept of detachment is anathema to research as a social construction. The researcher is 'in' the research and 'of' the research (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). In order to counteract this potential 'distortion' of the truth, the online discussions and course evaluations were anonymous. During the face-to-face focus group interviews, the researcher/teacher educator adopted a conversational model which according to LeCompte and Preissle (1993) "is most likely to elicit the trust, confidence, and ease among respondents necessary for yielding elaborate, subtle, and valid data" (p. 101). The researcher/teacher educator assured the student teachers of the equal worth of all contributions, positive or negative feedback. This dialogic forum became symbiotic and synergistic and the student teachers became relational selves, rather than individual students (Burbules, 1993 cited in Hamston, 2002, p.92). The researcher's/teacher educator's encouragement of student teachers to be open and honest was a central feature of the design of this study, but the potential for negative comments to be made regarding either past or present influences was real. It was important therefore to ensure that trust, respect and sensitivity prevailed and that all participants, including the researcher, believed they had a role in establishing and re-negotiating the boundaries of the research. Finally, student teachers received a copy of the typed focus group discussions and therefore engaged in member-checking of their own comments.

Despite these precautions, it needs to be stressed that the researcher, the student teachers as 'subjects' and in fact the whole research process in this study, are all institutionally based.

This increased the likelihood of certain discourses, beliefs and teaching behaviours being evident in the data, while excluding others. Yet the alternative of representing subjects 'true' voices is something of an illusion. The idea of imposing the researcher's agenda upon research participants can be taken to patronizing extremes, where student teachers are perceived as passive cultural victims rather than skilled users of culture: (Holliday, 2002: 149)

### **4.3: Ethics**

The characterization of the process of conducting interpretative research as a “positioned opening for discussion” (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002, pp.203-210) is both an epistemological and an ethical issue. Therefore at a more obvious level a number of ethical considerations had to be borne in mind. The research was carried out with the informed consent of the college research ethics approval board, (Appendix 1) and subsequently all participants received an information and consent form (Appendix 2). Participants were assured that their anonymity was protected, within constraints entailed by factors such as the relatively small size of the overall student body. Also the primary college in which this case study is located has not been named, guided by the standard ethics requirement for educational institutions, although the city was named, to differentiate between the key college and other colleges within the nationwide system.

In an attempt to foster trust and engage in practices that actively empower participants at some level, student teachers were given a copy of the face-to-face focus group interview transcripts. However, Holliday (2002:160) citing Jenkins (1986: 223-226), claims that such attempts may just be a 'rhetorical con trick' and amount to 'bogus co-authorship' when in reality 'everything is in the hands of the researcher', while Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) emphasize the inescapable nature of the researcher-researched relationship and encourage authority and responsibility as researchers. However, this does not mean that all student teachers' responses are equally valid. The researcher still has ethical responsibilities to strive for honesty and epistemic loyalty (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999) while realizing that, as Mouffe argues that it is difficult to be completely satisfied that good choices have been made as “a decision in favour of some alternative is always at the detriment of another one... (Mouffe, 2000: 136-140).

This never-ending interrogation requires researchers to continually balance claims with an awareness of responsibility and authority. In the chapters that follow on data analysis and discussion, the researcher has tried to report an argument that is substantive, coherent and a sustainable version of the 'truth'. While the researcher has a great deal of influence on which data is reported and how it is reported (Fontana and Frey, 2000), the researcher has attempted to make only tentative claims.

#### **4.4: Methodology: Overview of Case Study Method**

The study described in this thesis is an evaluative, instrumental, qualitative case study. Case studies are the preferred strategy when how or why questions are being posed and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 1994, p.1). Qualitative research such as this study, focuses on the nature of the meanings generated within and from a study (Hamston, 2002, p.87). Meanings are then presented as 'truth claims' in which the reporting of any situation becomes an ethical interpretation of the researcher's way of seeing something, rather than a claim that 'this is the way the world is' (see Carspecken, 1996). An evaluative, instrumental orientation to qualitative research is motivated by concern about 'is what we are doing worthwhile?' (West-Burnham & O' Sullivan, 1998, p.121) and if not, how can we take action to improve it. While this study is a single case study, it draws upon the multiple exploratory case studies conducted by Lunenberg et al. (2007) into the effectiveness of teacher education practices in four Dutch education institutions. The case itself is used instrumentally to illustrate a particular pedagogical issue, such as the effectiveness of teacher education performance modelling. This was therefore deemed an appropriate paradigm for this study.

Case study research allows the researcher to create rich and holistic accounts of a complex phenomenon (Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg, 1991; Merriam 1998; Stake, 1995), around a single unit of study - the case (Yin 1994) – to describe, evaluate or interpret a particular social phenomenon (Hamston, 2002; Lancy, 1993, Merriam 1998). The researcher's interpretative energies throughout the research involves "spending substantial time, on site, personally in contact with activities and operations of the case, reflecting, revising meanings of what is going on" (Stake, 1995, p.242) and asking: "What is this a case of?" (Wilson and Gudmundsdottir 1987 cited in Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995, p.44) questions. The present research focused on content and instructional delivery of a *particular* reading methodology

course within a teacher education programme in the UAE. An intrinsic case study, such as this, seeks out emic meanings held by people within the case in an effort to *understand* the impact of the revised methodology course, if any, upon student teachers' reading practices in a UAE foreign language setting. Contextualized data was collected over a six month period and provided for a 'richly detailed portrait' (Hakim 1987 p.62; see also Lightfoot 1983 cited in Merriam 1998) of the student teachers' developing styles of EFL reading teaching.

The “uniqueness of each case study relates to the way in which the study is both shaped and contained by the social context it is located in, and to the nature of the relationships between the participants in the study and the social viewpoints of the researcher” (Hamston, 2002 p.88-89). This uniqueness limits the generalisability of the study to other 'cases', while at the same time helping to define the case under investigation (Merriam 1988; 1998; Yin, 1989,1994, Stake, 1980,1995). It is therefore important to describe the specific features of the present case study and to acknowledge the intricate social and cultural context in which it took place.

In the broadest sense, this case study was shaped, delimited and 'fenced in' (Merriam, 1998) by the unique historical, social and cultural context framing this study. The study is further delimited in that it focused exclusively on one methodology course, implemented in a third level institution in the United Arab Emirates with one group of student teachers. The study was further bounded through the application of concepts such as 'key players', 'key situations' and 'critical incidents' to the data (Cavanagh 1992; Hitchcock and Hughes 1995). In this way, the study could not make definite conclusions about the impact of the revised methodology course upon student teacher's reading practices as it was not possible to get inside the student teachers' heads to know exactly what they were thinking or feeling at the time of data collection. Nevertheless the student teachers' developing identities as reading teachers transcend the boundaries of the case. Bakhtin (1981 cited in Hamston, 2002, p.89) views context as bounded by time and place, yet, at the same time context is limitless. Although this case study was shaped by a particular time and place, past reading experiences link with present day teacher education experiences, and these accommodated meanings will move forward, into the future, in renewed form.

This case study is defined in terms of a bounded system that focuses on the particular, yet it incorporates an implicit ethnographic facet in terms of Hamston's (2002) depiction of

ethnography as involving the researcher in the everyday life of the key participants, as their teacher educator. Although this study does not analytically describe a culture (Gallagher, 2007), “central to the way in which ethnographers think about human social action is the idea that people construct the social world, both through their interpretations of it and through their actions based on those interpretations” (Hammersley, 2002, p.67). This partially ethnographic aspect is mirrored in the study’s pedagogical orientation - Vygotskian socio-cultural approaches.

The next section will discuss the sampling techniques of the study.

#### **4.5: Sampling Study’s Key Participants**

In making the design of the research more concrete, a sampling frame was developed to select the site and subjects capable of answering the study’s research questions. As the sample was selected by the researcher subjectively, purposive sampling strategies were employed to enhance understandings of the knowledge, beliefs and reading teaching practices of a particular group –Emirati female student teachers. This is what Patton, (1990) refers to as ‘homogeneous purposive sampling’ which facilitates dialogic forums, as employed in this study. As a central aspect of naturalistic research (Erlandson et al., 1993), purposive sampling emphasizes the production of meaning, tacit knowledge and naturalistic generalizations. As the study’s epistemological orientation is interpretative, the findings rest mainly on the perceptions of sixteen key participants who were undertaking the methodology course on the teaching of reading. Consequently, the analysis of the influence of teacher education pedagogical experiences upon developing reading styles provided in Chapter Five focused mainly on the perceptions of these student teachers. To increase the richness of information (Devers & Frankel, 2000) provided by this case, ‘intensity purposive sampling’ techniques were further employed (Patton, 1990) in order to facilitate documentation of the different emerging styles of reading teaching. Student teachers were therefore categorized into three groups (confident, reluctant and developing reading teachers) as based on observational analysis and Teaching Practice reports (Appendix 7). While all student teachers were inclined to voice their opinions openly, the developing and reluctant student teachers were not as coherent in English as the confident student teachers and their discussions often lack the elaboration, synthesis and critical analysis, evident in the confident student teachers’ responses. Therefore where there is consensus and repetition of ideas, the confident student teachers’ responses are presented in Chapter Five.

As highlighted previously in section 4.2.1., the complex relationship between research, researcher and researched has implications for how research is conducted and interpreted. The researcher's insider position as developer/co-ordinator/teacher educator of the reading methodology course, may be seen as compromised, increasing the possibility of students saying the 'right' answers or teaching in a way they knew was expected or desired by the teacher educator/mentor. Nevertheless, online discussion responses by secondary participants from across the College system were anonymous and therefore aided triangulation of the core data from the key participants. Details of secondary participants can be found in Chapter Four.

The following section outlines the specific ways in which data was collected for the purposes of this study.

#### **4.6: Data Collection: Contexts and Phases of this Case**

The case study data of the influence of pedagogical college experiences upon student teachers' reading practices was collected over a six month period, during the second year of the students' four year Bachelor of Education degree. Three principle research contexts generated and captured data for analysis – College X in one Emirate, five colleges in other Emirates within the College system and the primary school Emirati environment. The participant observations and semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted at College X, while online discussions and course evaluations involved participants from the entire six Women's Colleges. The observations were conducted at a variety of Emirati government schools. Observations and online discussions occurred mid-semester (weeks 10-14 of Year 2, semester 2), while the semi-structured focus group interviews and course evaluations took place at the end of the twenty week semester.

Phase One of the research involved a twenty week intervention of a revised reading methodology course, designed to better prepare primary school educators to teach reading in foreign language Emirati classrooms (7.5 hours per week). As highlighted in Chapter Three, accommodations were made to the course outline to include EFL reading approaches. Subsequent opportunities to practice these approaches and related strategies in the college

classroom were facilitated through microteaching, modelling and problem-based learning activities, as introduced on a weekly basis.

During the implementation of the revised methodology course, student teachers undertook a three week teaching practice placement in an English medium school, where they were encouraged to observe reading approaches adopted by experienced teachers of English and to assist them in all class activities. They also got an opportunity to plan for and teach reading to small groups of native English speaking children, based on some of the reading ideas observed and practiced during college tutorials and microteaching practice. This led into Phase Two of this case in the following semester when student teachers applied this practice in a government, EFL Emirati school setting over a two week period. Emirati student teacher's developing styles of teaching reading were observed, monitored and recorded throughout the teaching practice placement. Cross-case analysis focused on similarities and/or differences between three groups of reading teachers (confident, developing and reluctant reading teachers – appendix 11) as defined by competency based criteria and subsequently summarized in Teaching Practice Reports (Appendix 7).

Phase Three of the research involved evaluating interpretations of the intervention, following the twenty week reading methodology course. In order to document this ongoing construction of the student teachers' styles of reading teaching and the influence of their teacher education experiences upon this, a dialogic forum was created through semi-structured focus group interviews and online discussions. This was further triangulated through student teacher and teacher educator course evaluations across the College system. The following table provides an overview of data collection within the phases and contexts of the study and the tools and techniques employed to collect these data.

**Table 4.1: Phases for data collection and an overview of the tools, contexts and timeframe for each phase**

	<b>Phase 1: Intervention</b>	<b>Phase 2: Application</b>	<b>Phase 3: Interpretation</b>
<b>Description</b>	1. Rewriting and developing the course 2. Implementing curriculum review and delivery approaches (Microteaching, problem based learning and modeling)	A teaching practice placement during the college intervention of a revised reading methodology course where student teachers teach reading in Emirati government primary schools	1. The perceived influence of college content and delivery by student teachers using a dialogic forum. 2. Teacher educators (*6) and Student teachers (*90) evaluating course content and delivery
<b>Timeframe</b>	20 week Reading Methodology Course in Semester 2 Year 2	2 week teaching practice experience in Semester 2 Year 2	End of the 20 week Reading Methodology Course
<b>Context</b>	6 Women’s Colleges in the College system (90 student teachers)	UAE government schools (16 student teachers)	6 Women’s Colleges across the College system – Online Discussions (90 student teachers) ADWC-Focus Group (16 student teachers)
<b>Research Tools</b>	<b>Documentation:</b> Course Outlines Course evaluations (pre-intervention)	Non-participant observation <b>Documentation:</b> Teaching Practice Reports	Online Discussions Focus Group Interviews <b>Documentation:</b> Course Evaluations

Having defined the research methodology and target population along with describing the constructivist delivery innovations adopted, the question was to decide the best way to get the desired input from a number of sources. To achieve this, a variety of tools were used which allowed for triangulation of evidence, including non-participant observations student teacher participant observations, semi-structured focus group interviews; online student discussion forums and documentary analysis. In addressing the key research questions of this study, the research tools were the means by which the research could be operationalised (Johnson, 1994). The next section of the chapter discusses in more detail the specific ways in which data was collected for this case study, starting with online discussion boards.

**4.6.1: Online Discussions: Reading Identities Online**

As part of designing and developing the newly revised reading course (EDUC 250), and seeking to take advantage of the professional learning opportunities offered by information and communication technologies, the researcher created an online discussion forum.

In addressing research questions 1, 2 and 3, the online discussions amplified and reinforced the focus group interview data and course evaluations, giving prominence to all student voices. In these two, the emphasis was on evaluating curricular changes and delivery innovations introduced into the teacher education reading course. In the online discussions, the focus included evaluating how student teachers interpret the impact of teacher education experiences upon their prior beliefs, new knowledge and reading methods along with the impact of the apprenticeship of observation upon their developing styles of reading teaching. Drawing on the social construction of mind, language and discourse (e.g. Vygotsky, 1978; Voloshinov 1973; Bakhtin, 1986), this also maintained an emphasis on reflection and 'reasoning teaching' (Johnson, 1999) that forms an important element of the B.Ed. programme and more significantly in the revised EDUC 250 reading course.

The nature of the online mode provided student teachers with greater opportunities for reflection and depth of response, the written versus the spoken mode. "New technologies construct a totally new environment and this radically alters the way we use our senses and thus the way we act and react to things" (Carter, 1999: 321-322). Advocates of asynchronous online learning promote the use of online interaction between students and between students and teacher educators (Bonk and King, 1998; Le Cornu and White, 2000). Sustaining an articulate argument in a face-to-face focus group interview setting is challenging and pressurizing for many people, let alone in a foreign language. However with online asynchronous forums, EFL Emirati learners, such as the key participants in this study and those of a previous study conducted by Clarke (2005), have time to develop their thoughts and arguments (Jonassen, 1996) and statements of belief that are personalized and extended. As a form of communication, discussion boards have the potential within an EFL context to increase understanding of the subject matter, though such communication needs to be supported (Le Cornu and White, 2000) and structured (Schlagel, Trathen and Blanton, 1996). Bloomfield further argues that the dialogic nature of online discussions provide student teachers with opportunities for ongoing negotiation of identity that, drawing on Britzman (1991), she sees as fundamental to learning to teach (Bloomfield, 2000).

The online discussions were organized around nine topics, as summarized in Table 4.2 below:

**Table 4.2: A Summary of the Online Discussion Data**

Discussion	Main Focus	Colleges & Participants
Topic 1	Memories of past reading teachers	Six women's colleges participated in the Web CT discussion boards. Participation in each discussion topic varied.
Topic 2	Beliefs about how students best learn to read	
Topic 3	Beliefs about appropriate reading methods for EFL Emirati classes	
Topic 4	The impact of teacher education experiences in the EDUC 250 course upon prior beliefs	
Topic 5	The impact of teacher education experiences in the EDUC 250 course upon your understanding of the teaching of reading	
Topic 6	The impact of teacher education experiences in the EDUC 250 course upon reading practices	
Topic 7	Interteaching tensions - challenging prior beliefs and previous reading experiences	
Topic 8	In my reading classroom... It looks like...	
Topic 9	The type of reading teacher I aspire to become is influenced by...	

The online discussions (as did the course evaluations) enabled the researcher to gather data from a wider body of student teachers at each college, as compared to the focus group interviews and semi-structured observations which were conducted at College X only. Initially student teachers responded to the researcher's prompts and thereafter responded to postings of other students. Similar to course evaluation data generated at the end of the semester, student teachers were comfortable in discussing reading issues in an online anonymous forum. This freedom of speech in an unthreatening unanimous capacity, facilitated a difference that emerged between online discussions and semi-structured face-to-face focus group interviews. Nevertheless, despite this difference and despite the fact that, while institutionally situated, the online discussions comprised a collection of 'naturally occurring data', the same fundamental issues emerged in both sets of data. In fact, the data validated and triangulated the more deliberate nature of focus group interview data.

Many of the issues discussed by student teachers seemed to be written for a peer audience, although still conscious of their teacher educator as a potential audience. This is consistent with the observation of Bonk, Hansen, Grabner-Hagen, Lazer and Mirabelli, with regard to both synchronous and asynchronous discussion forums they researched in the context of a

pre-service teacher education programme: “The remarkable aspect of this interaction was that it was primarily directed at each other, not the instructor” (1998: 310). Some discussion threads were lengthier and more detailed than others, e.g. ‘memories of past reading teachers’ seemed to arouse a mixture of emotions in student teachers and influence the type of reading teacher they aspired to become. Student teachers positioned themselves as agents of change, bringing interactive reading teaching methods to Emirati classrooms, previously dominated by ‘traditional teaching’. Their identity construction as EFL reading teachers was clearly influenced by both past and present teaching experiences.

#### **4.6.1.1: Challenges of Conducting Online Discussions**

One must guard against over-representing the online medium as an ideal communicative, democratic forum. Below are challenges faced when conducting online discussions.

Firstly, the student teachers were told that although the postings were not assessed, they nevertheless were required to post at least one message and to respond to another student’s posting. However, in a non-assessment-based system of education, the risk of student teachers writing mechanical, superficial messages to satisfy the minimum requirement was high and as a result the value of the postings as research data would be tenuous. Similar to Clarke’s study (2005) conducted in the present research setting which also used online discussions, a surprising number (79) of student teachers responded to the message board with enormous enthusiasm. Many went beyond the minimum requirements and posted lengthy messages “as part of extended discussion threads that clearly evidenced genuine passion and commitment to the issues being discussed and debated” (Clarke, 2005, p.87).

Secondly, the data is institutionally situated, despite the unlimited nature of online discussions. It is therefore difficult to generalize findings beyond the college boundaries. The topics did direct them in particular ways almost by definition was going to be a vehicle for constructing the identities of a specific community. This was compounded by the fact that focus group students from College X took part in online discussions. However, this does not mean that it is necessarily not ‘genuine’ or ‘valid’ as data. Evaluating the validity of student teachers’ responses is not a scientific matter, free from subjectivity and bias. Despite this, student teachers’ posting were mainly intended for a peer audience, combining informal language with generally appropriate academic reading terminology.

Thirdly, student teachers were communicating in a foreign language. Occasional syntactical and grammatical errors, slight irrelevancies, awkwardness caused by word, idiom or register choice may have impeded explanation of thought processes. Nevertheless, discussions were expanded upon and seemed to be well organized with a clear and overall progression of ideas. This use of a written asynchronous online forum for reflection and discussion echoes with Kramsch and Lam's (1999) emphasis on the suitability of the written mode for fostering a secure and confident identity as foreign language learners of English.

Overall, despite the above constraints, the online discussion forums were clearly a relevant medium for communicating student teachers' beliefs about effective reading teaching drawn from past influences, and the subsequent impact of revising curriculum and delivery upon their own reading practices during Teaching Practice.

#### **4.6.2: Focus Group Interviews as a Forum for Developing Reading Identities**

The increased interest in using focus group interviews in social research in recent years has been attributed by Macnaghten and Myers (2004, p. 65) to a new interest in shared and tacit beliefs, that emerge in interaction with others in a local setting (Gallagher, 2007, p.32). As a deliberate intervention into the lives of this study's key participants – semi-structured focus group interviews provide a medium for engagement in professional dialogue and active construction of emerging reading orientations. Through discussion and conversation, past and present influences are highlighted.

The interviewer as a 'change agent' manages tensions arising from discussions, balancing objectivity, sensitivity and engaged involvement. (Scott and Usher 1999, p. 111) This balancing of tensions is a challenge for the interviewer when conducting semi-structured focus group interviews. The interviewer may therefore reflect on Kvale's (1996) metaphors for conducting an interview; that of a 'miner' or that of a 'traveller'. The miner tries to uncover deep truths that are subjective, while the traveller constructs meaning through a journey of conversation rather than something that is pre-existing that the interview tries to uncover. Both perspectives on the qualitative interview apply to this study as the interviewer had some pre-determined topics (p.104) while at the same time extended talk and interpersonal interaction was encouraged.

An immediate question that arises is why focus group interviews rather than individual interviews were chosen. The social aspect of the group interview, the potential for extended discourse and the increased number of participants enables the researcher to listen to the plural voices of others, reflecting a collectivistic rather than an individualistic view of research. “The plurality of actors involved in the focus groups makes the process of interviewing more active and dynamic, facilitating the social construction of meaning” (Madriz, 2000: 841). Also drawing on a previous study by Clarke (2005) in the current research context, focus group interviews with Emirati females not only places the interviewer in the minority, thus diminishing his/her dominance (Clarke, 2005) but encourages a culturally under-represented group of women to voice their opinions in an unthreatening environment. However, unlike Clarke (2005), the current researcher had the advantage of being the same gender as the participants, which in a traditional Muslim Emirati context could be seen as an advantage as participating women may feel less self-conscious and thus more comfortable in expressing themselves. Also as Krueger and Casey (2000, p. 21) conclude in relation to the focus group format “A group possesses the capacity to become more than the sum of its parts, to exhibit a synergy that individuals don’t possess”. The focus group interview itself provided a safe environment for participants where they can “share ideas, beliefs, and attitudes in the company of people from the same socioeconomic, ethnic, and gender backgrounds” (Madriz, 2000, p.835). It therefore allows the researcher to witness aspects of participants’ experiences and perspectives that would not be possible without group interaction (Morgan, 1997). Examples of this are instances when participants agreed, disagreed, asked questions and provided extended comments. Indeed, as Kvale notes, “... it is in fact a strength of the interview conversation to capture the multitude of subjects’ views of a theme and to picture a manifold and controversial human world” (Kvale, 1996, p. 7). This becomes powerful when the researcher is interested in accessing “more social psychological topics such as attitudes and decision making...(or) topics that are either habit ridden or not thought out in detail” (Morgan, 1997, p. 9,11). Of obvious significance for this study is the fact that it seeks to explore student teachers’ reading teacher identities, past and present influences on becoming an EFL reading teacher and their beliefs, attitudes and ‘worldview’ in relation to reading teaching practices. In triangulating this evidence with observational data and online discussions, qualitative focus group interviews not only facilitate exploration of ideas in real time, but allow for comparisons between a ‘collective’ voice and an ‘individual voice’.

However, the group interactions in a focus group are a source of both strength and weakness. Although a focus group discussion enhances the opportunities for participants to influence the direction and content of the discussion, they can be of “little use in bringing intensely personal issues to the surface” (Wilson, 1997, p.211). Also there can be a tendency for “group think” to emerge (Morgan, 1997; Krueger and Casey, 2000), especially in a Gulf context (Thomas, 2008) where ‘group think’ and ‘consensus’, ‘is culturally significant. As Richardson, (2004, p.433) states “Due to the tribal nature of Arab society, individuals typically subordinate personal aspirations for the good of the collective”. While Thomas, (2008, p.87) questions whether focus groups constitute a culturally sensitive method of data gathering in a Gulf-Arab cultural context, he concludes that they allow for “emphatic collection of deep data from the local context” emphasizing cultural values and behaviours that involve participation and interaction between group members in a supportive environment. In this study, threats to validity include the possibility that findings reflect one strong English speaking member of the group and not necessarily the whole group. However all participants involved were encouraged to contribute in order to avoid dominance by more confident members.

#### **4.6.2.1: Structure and Design of the Focus Group Interviews**

The focus groups were semi-structured with broad topics pre-determined and some questions pre-scripted. This enabled the researcher to pursue a specific topic, while at the same time offering scope for student teachers to elaborate on what was of importance to them. This procedure prompted the unexpected answer, allowing for development of thought and depth of response and hence added an extra perspective to the research. The questions were informed by reading of constructivism in teacher education; the preparation of reading teachers of English as a foreign language, pedagogical issues of reading teaching and methodological tensions created by the apprenticeship of observation. The outline of topics provided a link across the focus groups which were later compared. The focus group interviews occurred during semester four (Year Two, semester 2) of the students’ four year degree with student teachers from one college –College X.

Three focus groups were created with four to eight participants in each being the number most likely to produce optimal interpersonal dynamics (Krueger and Casey, 2000: 74). Unlike previous studies conducted in the present research context (e.g. Clarke, 2005; Gallagher, 2007), student teachers were assigned to a particular focus group according to reading

teaching ability during the previous teaching practice placement (Appendix 11) and included categories of 'confident', 'developing' and 'reluctant' reading teachers. This facilitated comparison of perceptions and abilities of developing reading styles later on. Student teachers were eager to participate and didn't seem daunted by the fact that their conversations were recorded. All the focus group discussions took place in the student teachers' classroom in college and meant that discussions took place in a familiar space, within which the student teachers were relaxed. However, similar to Clarke's study (2005), the college classroom was an environment where students were "used to being in a student-teacher relationship and where they felt 'right' answers should be displayed" (p.77), but this was counteracted by the unusualness of the focus group format and the timing, outside of regular class-time.

The interview design was mirrored on Robson's, (1993) four stages of semi-structured interviews. The first stage included explanation of purpose and requested permission to use a tape recorder during the interview process. The second stage was what Robson referred to as the 'warm-up' in an endeavour to put participants at their ease, with informal chatting. The third stage comprised the main body of the interview schedule, involving a 'shopping list' of questions which were directly translated from the research objectives. Unlike group interviews, which may cover a variety of issues and not necessarily in a specific order, focus groups tend to have a central topic as a goal (Hurworth, 1996). Therefore, once particular questions were posed, student teachers were free to talk without interruption from the interviewer. The fourth stage involved analysis and assessment of the raw data.

#### **4.6.2.2: Question Format**

A significant amount of information was required from the interviews, so care with choice and length of questioning was vital in order to ensure that questions adequately reflected what the researcher was trying to find out (Cohen and Manion, 1994). An interview template containing twenty questions was divided into three discussions as based on the key research questions of this study, summarized in Table 4.3. The discussions aimed to explore the thoughts, beliefs, values, attitudes, emotions and experience that compromised the student teachers' developing styles as EFL Emirati reading teachers.

Table 4.3: A Summary of the Focus Group Data

Discussion	Main Focus	College & Participants
<b>Part A: Questions relating to the impact of Curricular Changes</b>		
Focus Groups 1, 2, 3	The relevance of the content matter to becoming an EFL Emirati	Abu Dhabi Women's College – 16 student teachers; two focus groups
	Connecting theory to practical experiences	
	Knowledge of reading theory and reading approaches	
	Does the course sufficiently prepare you for teaching practice in Emirati schools?	
	Making connections with the UAE government school curriculum	
<b>Part B: Questions relating to the impact of Prior Reading Experiences</b>		
Focus Groups 1, 2, 3	Prior reading experiences	Abu Dhabi Women's College – 16 student teachers; two focus groups
	Former teachers as Role Models	
	Beliefs about how students best learn to read	
	Beliefs about appropriate reading methods for EFL Emirati	
	Inter-teaching tensions- challenging prior beliefs and experiences	
	Influence of teacher education experiences upon prior beliefs, understanding and practices	
	Perceived influence of prior beliefs and experiences upon styles of reading teaching. Do you teach reading as your previous teachers taught?	
<b>Part C: Questions relating to the impact of Constructivist Delivery Approaches</b>		
Focus Groups 1, 2, 3	The impact of lecturer modeling on your own teaching practices	Abu Dhabi Women's College – 16 student teachers; two focus groups
	The impact of problem-based learning on your own teaching	
	The impact of micro-teaching on your own teaching practices	
	Perceived influence of overall delivery approaches used by the teacher educator upon developing styles of reading teaching. Do you teach reading as you were taught to teach?	
	How is your learning scaffolded on the reading course?	
	Describe a memorable lesson from the EDUC250 course	
	Are you taught on the EDUC 250 course as you are expected to teach on T.P.?	
	Is it possible for teacher education to adequately prepare students for the Emirati classroom?	

\* All Focus Group interviews were conducted in English and recorded using a minidisk (See Appendix 4 for excerpts).

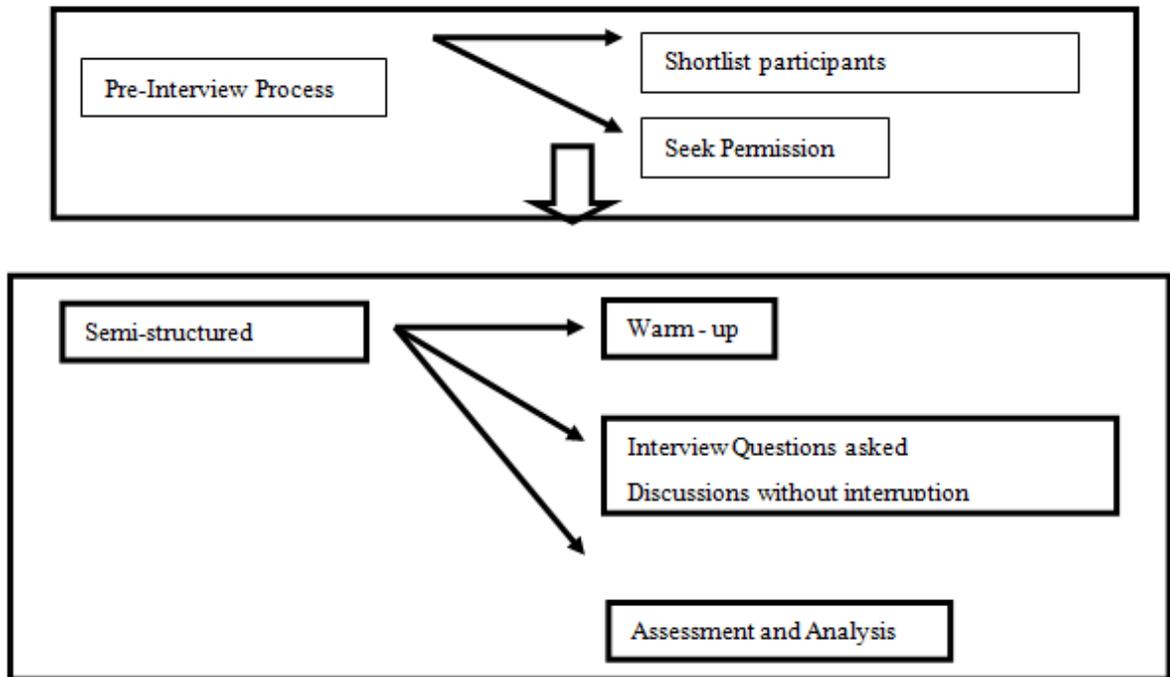
The focus of the first set of discussions was on the student teachers' thoughts and feelings about the impact of the revised reading methodology course upon their own teaching practices and the ways that their understanding of teaching reading and reading approaches had developed due to their experiences on the B.Ed. programme. Here the researcher was seeking an evaluation of the new course content by student teachers' emerging 'teaching selves' (Danielewicz, 2001). The researcher also enquired about how well the course had prepared student teachers for their teaching practice placement and whether they had suggestions for further development of the course curriculum.

The focus of the second set of data was on student teachers' perceptions of the potential impact of prior reading experiences on their developing reading practices during Teaching Practice. Drawing on literature that emphasized the significance of models observed during students' "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975; Roberts, 1998; Johnson, 1999), the focus was also on past teachers who made an impact, positive or negative on the student teachers developing reading styles. Student teachers were asked to state their beliefs about how students best learn to read and outline appropriate reading methods for EFL Emirati classrooms. They were further asked to comment on possible tensions that may be created in using alternative methodologies to those commonly practiced in primary government Emirati schools. The researcher enquired about the overall influence of college experiences (content and delivery) on their prior beliefs, developing reading practices and on the type of reading teacher they aspired to become.

The focus of the third set of discussions was on student teachers' perceptions of the impact of the introduction of particular delivery innovations (microteaching, modelling and problem-based learning) upon their own reading practices. Acknowledging the emphasis in the literature on other case studies of the potentially powerful effects of teacher educators' teaching styles on student teachers' practices that are mostly unrecognized to date (Freeman, 1993; Korthagen et al, 2001, Kane, 2002; Schön, 2001; Lunenberg et al, 2007), the main focus of this study was on the applicability of delivery approaches used by the teacher educator. The researcher also enquired about any 'critical incidents in college' that had made a difference to their understanding of themselves as teachers (Goodson and Sikes, 2001) and particularly to their style of reading teaching (teaching orientation) during Teaching Practice.

The interview design and ‘stages of discussion’ for focus groups (introductory questions, key questions etc) can be seen in figure 4.1 below.

**Figure 4.1: Semi Structured Interview Design**



#### 4.6.2.3: Challenges when Conducting Focus Group Interviews

In any research, choices need to be made, which may have consequences (negative or positive) in relation to alternative choices not made. Below are issues relating to this study’s focus group interviews.

In any interview, there is the issue of whether or not to record the interaction and if so, how. In this research, the focus group interviews were recorded using a digital recorder in order to analyze the student teacher discussions. It also retained a public record (Silverman, 2000a), rather than solely relying on later interpretations of research notes. Similar to Clarke’s (2005) study conducted in the present research setting, student teachers “often became quite animated, talking rapidly and often several at once, when the discussion took its most interesting turns and this would have been impossible to capture without a sound recording” (p.80).

Although recognizing the importance of obtaining an accurate record of what student teachers said, a written transcribed word-for-word text cannot be an identical replica of the spoken interaction (Kvale, 1996, p.166). Intonation and pitch that are unique to oral language are lost in the written transcription. Transcriptions must be accurate and readable but also make explicit to the reader the constructed nature of written talk (Roberts, 1997, p.168).

Therefore, the researcher decided to maintain the false starts, incomplete sentences, pauses and fillers that are part of spoken language, in order to give a more accurate interpretation of student teachers' views of the influence of delivery innovations and curricular changes within the teacher education course. However, in taking account of how interviewees are presented in research (Kvale, 1996; Roberts, 1997), grammatical errors of tenses were corrected, without altering the message of the utterances, to avoid any stigmatizing of the student teachers as non-native English speakers.

Another issue relating to focus group interviews involved the teacher educator's/researcher's dominant position which could have threatened to distort the participation of the student teachers. So as Wilson (1997, p.214) and Clarke (2005) recommended, the researcher decided to play a "minimalist role" in the group interactions and care was therefore taken not to over direct the conversation to validate certain points of view at the expense of greater student initiative and more extended discussions. An attempt was also made to balance sensitivity, objectivity and engagement, while signalling an interest in the topics being discussed and in the student teachers' own perceptions of the impact of curricular changes and delivery innovations upon their own reading practices. However, as the interviews were thoroughly institutionally situated, this had consequences in terms of what topics and responses were considered acceptable and appropriate by the student teachers. As discovered by Clarke (2005) in a previous study in the current research context, there is always the fear that Emirati student teachers may say what they think their lecturer wants to hear. Despite assurances to student teachers that "they are 'free to speak their minds' and 'work things out for themselves', the narrowing of focus that occurs with the use of a particular set of topics and questions influences the answers given (Clarke, 2005, p.79).

Having designed, amended and conducted the interviews, the data was then deemed suitable for analysis. The next section considers the collection of observational data.

### **4.6.3: Observation**

A vital component of the study's B.Ed. programme is Teaching Practice, offering student teachers the opportunity to integrate the theories and knowledge they have learned with practical experience in primary schools. Each semester student teachers are observed by supervising college teacher educators, usually twice or three times each in a three week block, to monitor and evaluate their teaching. While online discussions and focus group interviews aimed to evaluate how student teachers interpret the impact of teacher education experiences upon their prior beliefs of reading teaching and current reading practices during Teaching Practice, observational analysis was carried out to observe and monitor student teachers' reading styles in action in the classroom. In triangulating this evidence with focus group interview data and online discussions, a 'truer' picture may emerge of the relationship between reading styles and perceptions of the impact of pedagogical college experiences upon their own teaching. Therefore, based on a series of observation reports, student teachers were categorized into three types of reading teachers: confident, developing and reluctant reading teachers.

Observation has been characterized as "the systematic, and as accurate as possible, collection of usually visual evidence, leading to informed judgments and to necessary changes to accepted practices" (Tilstone, 1998, p.6). By 'watching' and recording behaviour, this research technique implies features such as the collection of evidence; the specific analysis and interpretation of evidence and subsequent changes and improvements to accepted practices (Zhang, 2003). Recognized by Harrison et al (2005) that more research is needed on contexts, this study illuminates the developing reading styles of Emirati student teachers, while mentor teacher educators and the researcher were non-participant observers in government school classrooms. By engaged in recording field notes as based on competency areas (Appendix 7), they were also participants in the process of observation through active ongoing mentoring practices before and after observations (Appendix 5). This non-participation/partial participation position adopted, according to Patton, (1990) will yield more meaningful data about the programme.

#### **4.6.3.1: Phases of the Observation Process**

In the Pre Observation Stage, an initial meeting took place between the college mentor and the student teachers under supervision. Teaching practice related issues of professionalism,

observation schedules, feedback processes and role and responsibilities was considered to be a vital part of the observation process. The mentor college teacher (MCT) informed students of the time and date of a school visit a week in advance. Student teachers were required to submit lesson plans by email at least two days before the observation, which was then edited by the mentor teacher. Following this, either of two things happened – the revised lesson plan was sent back to the student teacher and/or a face-to-face meeting set up to discuss the lesson design and adaptations made. Student teacher feedback was incorporated into the review process and where more than one student teacher was placed in a school, peer observations were encouraged.

On the day of supervision the supervisor arrived early at the school and reviewed the lesson plan again with the student teacher, if necessary. Using a hard copy of the lesson plan, the supervisor began to observe as the student teacher conducted the lesson by sitting at the back of the class. This 'fly on the wall' technique aimed to observe things as they happened naturally, as undisturbed as possible by the presence of the researcher. While observing, attention was given to student teacher's performance and competence in teaching reading as well as the pupils' activities and learning in the classroom.

In the Post Observation Stage, the college mentor and student teacher retired to a quiet area and the observer first elicited the student teacher's own perception of the lesson in order to encourage reflective practice. Following Harrison et al.'s (2005) framework of mentoring styles, the mentor and mentee operated mainly through co-enquiry. Educative interactions related to achievable objectives, target language, suitability of activities, timing, student engagement, challenges faced and teaching strategies used. Moving to a more guided mentoring style, then thoughts were shared by the mentor on what was seen, focusing on strengths of the lesson and outlining possible areas for further development. In some cases, prolonged interactions proposed to challenge existing beliefs and practices, formed as learners. At the end of the discussion, the mentor and mentee co-reflected on the key conclusions of the lesson. To indicate the end of the mentoring process, the college mentor printed out a copy of the lesson feedback and left it with the student teacher for them to add their written reflective statements. Below is a summary of the nature of observation in the current research context.

**Table 4.4: A Summary of the Observation Process**

Main Observation Focus	Participants	Skill observed	Year Level and No. of observations	Type of school
To observe developing styles of reading teaching among Emirati student teachers	College X - 16 student teachers	Reading lessons only	B.Ed. Year Two, Semester Two 2 observations per student teacher over a 2 week period	Government Emirati schools  Note: The previous placement took place in Private English schools, which is referred to by student teachers in focus group discussions

As based on the University of Melbourne model of Teaching Practice and echoing Zeichner's (1996) need for an educative approach to the supervision process, student teachers receive both formative and summative evaluations, as outlined below.

#### 4.6.3.2: Methods of Recording Observational Data

The approach to observation that most accurately describes this study is 'semi-structured', synthesizing both ethnographic and structured observation perspectives. The focus of individual observations was to gather and record information on the reading approaches observed and developing style of reading teaching. Record sheets were divided into three main areas: strengths of the lesson, areas for development and overall impression. Although the recording of observations was semi-structured, broad pre-determined competency areas, as based on documentation developed by the education department and University of Melbourne was used as a benchmark (Appendix 7) to focus on particular aspects of teaching. This acted as a guide towards more accurate mentoring practices and unlike Montgomery's (2002) 'gazing about' observation process in which a checklist is used to evaluate student teachers' teaching abilities, the judging of student teachers' classroom performance using competencies may have increased its reliability. In order to help student teachers develop as reading teachers, a formative monitoring system, such as this focused on enhancing the student teachers' teaching over a period of time. After each observation, progress was identified, along with targets for change and improvement. After a cycle of such appraisals, conclusions were drawn about the student teachers' teaching abilities and written up in a summative format using Teaching Practice reports. These documents were written against a

broad framework of competencies as summarized below, with the key focus on category C – ‘Managing and Implementing Learning’. In an effort to maintain sensitivity to and support the student teachers’ zone of proximal development (ZPD), which underpins the Vygotskian (1962;1978) constructivist philosophy of the programme, the Teaching Practice incremental competencies, evident from Year Two to Year Three are summarized below (Internal T.P. Booklet, 2007).

**Table 4.5: A Summary of Teaching Practice Competencies during Observations**

Observation Focus	Year Two – Supervised Teaching
Category A – Knowledge and Understanding of Content	Demonstrates an understanding of the organization and functioning of the primary school classroom; Emirati curriculum and assessment procedures.
Category B – Planning for learning	Present and plan a sequence of lessons in a professional manner, showing clear objectives and transitions between stages. Consider individual needs and disabilities. Select appropriate resources and demonstrate a growing understanding of current approaches to the teaching of English to young learners.
Category C – Implementing and managing Learning	While focusing on the teaching of reading, recognize the need to use a variety of approaches (such as shared reading, reading aloud, sustained silent reading, reader's theatre) and strategies (e.g. prediction, questioning, communication, engagement, demonstration) that will motivate, engage and extend EFL students. Make effective use of reading resources and use classroom space effectively. Maintain pace and challenge for students while adhering to individual needs. Show an ability to manage a small group of readers and focus on lesson objectives.
Category D– Monitoring and Assessment	Demonstrates an awareness of the reading progress of the class and individual readers, including examining and beginning to keep reading records. Is able to modify a session if necessary. Provides ongoing feedback to children and monitors students' reading.
Category E – Professionalism	Demonstrates a responsible approach to their position as a developing professional in the school setting. Conveys enthusiasm with appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Interacts with students through effective dialogue.
Category F – Critical Reflection	Seek and accept guidance and respond constructively to feedback from colleagues. Assess how well learning objectives have been achieved. Demonstrate an active commitment to teaching, personal growth and professional development.

**4.6.3.3: Challenges when Conducting Observations**

Observation as a means of analyzing student teaching has a number of limitations affecting a study's reliability, despite the fact that it is central to the appraisal and training of teachers. Below are issues of reliability and validity relating to the observational analysis of this study.

Firstly, it has been assumed that “naturalistic observation does not interfere with the people or activities under observation” (Adler & Adler, 1994, p.389 in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.674). However, it’s difficult to argue that the observer’s dominant presence does not affect or change the observed (Bowring-Carr, 1993), regardless of the supervisor’s relationship with the student teachers. Supervisors in this study played a “non-participant” passive role in the classroom, and care was therefore taken not to interfere with classroom practices. Despite this, student teachers are likely to ‘put on a show’ for their supervisor, affecting their choice of reading approaches, strategies and interaction patterns. Sergiovanni and Starratt, (2002, p.224) argue that a teacher’s potential ability as a teacher is more important than the right teaching performance.

Whether Emirati student teachers will *do* an equivalent job of their own free will, when they are not assessed is unknown. Also, there is always the fear that student teachers may teach in a way that they think their supervisor wants to them to. Furthermore the unequal status of supervisors with student teachers may make post-lesson discussions less constructive (Zhang, 2003, p.29). The traditional Emirati culture of respecting more knowledgeable supervisors may prevent student teachers from challenging feedback given. Interestingly in this study, the group of student teachers had no hesitation in disagreeing with supervisors, while the reluctant student teachers displayed the least level of critical reflection. However, as the constructivist approach to supervision on the education programme is an educative one, rather than just evaluative, all feedback was welcomed.

Secondly, there is no such thing as a neutral observer (Bowring-Carr, 1993). Recording and analyzing observation is shaped by the mood, experience and intention of the researcher. Although an observer may try to be neutral, s/he will have a particular focus and interpret significant events subjectively. Therefore the quality of what is recorded becomes the measure of usable data, rather than the quality of the observation itself (Adler & Adler, 1994, p.389 in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.674) which may validate certain points of view. “Careful researchers are supposed to adhere to rigorous standards of objective reporting designed to overcome that potential bias” (Adler & Adler, 1994, p.389 in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.674). However, a question that rises is whether observational objectivity is either desirable or feasible as an aim.

Thirdly, in an educational setting, it is neither possible to control all extraneous variables nor to hold all such variables constant. Extending section 4.2 on issues of validity, for practical reasons, there were three teacher educators in this study, who observed and assessed student teachers' reading practices while on teaching practice. This may result in some lack of control of extraneous variables, such as different styles of reportage or different interpretations of the observed reading lessons. Although this could not be controlled completely, efforts were made to minimize this limitation and ensure reliability of observational data and subsequent report writing by engaging in agreed mentoring practices, along with following a guided competency template, as summarized in Table 4.5. This was developed by the education department in a series of meetings on 'Best Practices for College Mentors' (See Appendix 5) for the pre, while and post observation stages. In collaboration with the teaching practice teacher educator (EDUC 299), observation tasks required of student teachers were outlined as well as the explicit focus on reading approaches, strategies and stages of reading to young learners which ensured that teacher educators were aware of what they were looking for in the reading lessons observed. However, despite these attempts to construct inter-observer reliability, the whole process of observation can be "very idiosyncratic or unreliable" (Zhang, 2003, p.28) and much of what occurs in a classroom is still subjectively recorded.

Fourthly, although most forms of data collection cannot avoid some subjectivity, the more data there is, the more helpful it is as a reminder of lessons observed. Consequently a number of lessons have to be observed before a valid judgment can be made (Bowring-Carr, 1993; Zhang, 2003). This case study has conducted semi-structured observations of student teachers teaching reading during a three week teaching practicum. This represents only 'snapshots' of their teaching abilities and does not show the stability of reading styles over time. However, as the teaching of reading was not specifically focused on during subsequent teaching practice placements, this could not be avoided. However, efforts have been made to reduce the limitations of observations through triangulation of other data collection tools – online discussions, focus group interviews and documentary evidence. Additionally student teachers own observations/reflections of themselves teaching became apparent in the online discussions in the thread "In my reading classroom..." This was subsequently compared with teacher educator observations of reading lessons and the curriculum framework of the course through which the student teachers were trained. Although classroom observation is only one way of gathering data for teacher professional development "if appraisal of performance is

about improving the quality of children's education by improving teacher effectiveness, then looking at what is actually happening in the classroom is vital" (Jones, 1993, p.67).

The next section considers the collection of documentary evidence.

#### **4.6.4: Documentation**

"Document based research relies on the use of available printed or written data" (Busher, 2002, p.1). In triangulating with dialogic evidence (Online discussions and focus group interviews) and addressing research questions 1 and 2, documentary evidence was used to authenticate the effects of revising teacher education curriculum and delivery upon student teachers' reading practices during teaching practice. An immediate question that arises is why use documentation. The centrality of document based research has been highlighted by Freebody who states that texts are, "Cultural artefacts, producible and recognisable by members of the cultural community as acts that communicate meaningful context" (Freebody, 2003, p. 179). They represent something of the reality of what they communicate (Gallagher, 2007). The use of documents in this study, such as teaching practice reports as based on observations conducted by more than one college mentor, makes it easier to construct processes of inter-interpreter reliability and allow a report to be analyzed and reanalyzed. Despite the fact that documents are generally written from a particular perspective (Weber, 1990; Kushner et al., 1996), they are an unobtrusive and non-reactive type of research (Busher, 2002, p.2) that provide a rich source of data, making it an invaluable methodological triangulation tool (Lee, 2000).

Education documents are often institutionally situated, providing a contextual source of information about relevant endeavours. Similar to other types of communication, they contain six elements: a source or sender, an encoding process, a message, a channel of transmission, the recipient of the message, and a decoding process (Kushner et al., 1996). This research is primarily concerned with interpreting the message component of internal curriculum documents for the improvement of curriculum and instructional delivery in a teacher education methodology course. It will be recalled that through the College system's Programme Quality Assurance processes (PQA), and external accreditation with the University of Melbourne, internal documentation is continually revised and so dynamic and evolving. Reflecting a constructivist philosophy, the education department undergoes regular

and formal collaborative processes of documentary review and planning which identifies areas for further development.

#### **4.6.4.1: Types of Documentation**

One of the key questions regarding documentation is about the relationship of a document to the events being commented on (Busher, 2002, p.4). These can include either primary or secondary documents, depending on whether they were written at the time of the events in question. This study contains both classroom instructional resources and non-classroom documents used to systematically examine content, format and methodology of teacher education experiences provided for student teachers. Primary documents included student teacher and teacher educator course evaluations, course outlines, team leader's workplan and sample online discussion postings. Other documentary sources included Teaching Practice reports and observation record sheets, Teaching Practice competencies, mentoring guidelines, grading procedures, sample student teacher lesson plans from their teaching practice placements, sample lessons from the UAE Ministry of Education course book 'New Parade' (Herrera and Zanatta, 1997), a sample email introducing the revised course to faculty and the recommended use of an online learning management system.

The following outlines documents in more detail, focusing on curriculum documents, teaching practice related documents and dialogic evaluative documentation.

The updated course outlines (teacher educator and student teacher versions) included a description of the course, a summary of course goals, outline of assessments, related education courses and recommended textbooks, including core and supplementary texts. As mentioned in Chapter One, the rationale behind editing *curriculum documents* was to tailor the course to suit the needs of Emirati student teachers of English, to make more concrete links between theory and practice and to consider their previous learning experiences in college tutorials. Therefore the new course outline incorporated reading approaches, strategies and activities suitable for EFL learners, along with incorporating explicit micro-teaching practice into the programme.

*Supporting documents* created by the team leader/researcher and used by six teachers across the College system included a faculty work plan (College system, 2007d), presentations, guided readings, sample reading aloud texts, a list of recommended videos

and accompanying video analysis worksheets, summary sheets, flashcards, pre-, while- and post- reading activities, assessment outlines, recommended websites, recommended microteaching activities related to each goal, up-to date supplementary readings and a bibliography. All of these materials were stored on a learning management system accessible throughout the College system.

Below is an example of the work plan, as created by the team leader/researcher incorporating recommended delivery approaches for faculty and supporting materials for implementation of regular micro-teaching sessions, modelling and problem-based learning.

**Table 4.6: Sample of Work Plan for EDUC 250**

Goal Focus	Suggested Methodology	Possible Student Activities	Recommended Resources / Readings
<p><b>Goal 3, obj 3: Analyze different approaches to the teaching of Reading and evaluate applicability to an ESL/EFL setting.</b></p>	<p><b>Introduce approaches:</b> Choral reading; reading aloud; reader's theatre; shared reading and sustained silent reading.</p> <p><b>Model</b> choral reading, reading aloud and shared reading.</p> <p>One lesson: Assignment support</p>	<p>Student teachers participate in modeled lessons. <b>Engage in group micro-teaching</b> of a chosen reading approach</p> <p>Using reader's theatre, student teachers <b>act out</b> 'The Three little Bears' (child Education article).</p> <p><b>Group discussion/student teacher interviews</b> on applicability of certain reading approaches to an ESL/EFL setting. Discuss whether they are top-down, bottom-up or interactive.</p> <p><b>Critique Video on Shared reading/reading aloud:</b> Successful Classrooms</p>	<p><b>PowerPoints:</b> Approaches to reading in the EFL classroom The Fish with a Wish The Hungry Caterpillar <b>SSR:</b> Tierney &amp; Readence, pp.98-102. <b>Reader's Theatre:</b> Tierney &amp; Readence pp.250-254. <b>Reading Aloud:</b> Soderman, Gregory &amp; O' Neill, pp.107-108. <b>Choral Reading:</b> Tierney, pp.458-461. <b>Shared Reading:</b> Stephenson, pp.3-5. Soderman, Gregory &amp; O' Neill, pp.81-83.</p>

*Teaching Practice related documentation* were used to systematically monitor and record student teachers' developing reading styles 'in action' in EFL classrooms. In triangulating this evidence with other forms of dialogic data, the perceived effects of revising teacher education curriculum and delivery upon student teachers' reading practices during teaching practice may be authenticated.

Teaching Practice related documentation included mentoring guidelines (Appendix 5), Teaching Practice competencies, observation record sheets (Appendix 6), Teaching Practice report (Appendix 7) and sample student teacher lesson plans integrated with the Emirati course book 'New Parade' (Herrera and Zanatta, 1007).

Other types of documentation generated by the curriculum review project were *dialogic evaluative documents* in the form of Online discussion postings (Appendix 8), and student teacher and teacher educator course evaluations (Appendix 9 and 10). Online discussions enabled the 'interconnectedness' of the dialogic relations and ongoing evaluation of teacher education curriculum and delivery to be captured, so that a more complex interpretation of the impact of teacher education pedagogical experiences upon student teachers' reading practices emerged. Secondly, as course evaluations are "rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.116), they gave prominence to teacher educator and student teacher voices in a non-threatening, anonymous setting. The course evaluations (as did the online discussion postings) enabled the researcher to gather data from a wider body of student teachers and teacher educators at each of the six colleges (42 student participants and 6 faculty participants), as compared to the core data from focus group interviews and semi-structured observations which were conducted at College X (16 student teachers).

Course evaluations were a primary data source in the pre-intervention stage, highlighting the over emphasis on theoretical perspectives in the reading course along with student teachers' lack of practice knowledge, as evidenced in Chapter Three. Further course evaluations were used in the post-intervention stage, one year later, to establish teacher educator and student teacher perceptions on the quality of the revised reading methodology course. Student teachers were initially asked to indicate how they felt regarding the reading course by checking a scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Questions ranged in topic from enthusiasm about the course, workload, appropriacy of delivery of content matter, relevancy of course to their needs as student teachers, appropriacy of instructional learning resources used by the teacher educator and quality of assessments. While institutionally situated, these course evaluations comprised a collection of 'naturally occurring data' which is reflected in the design and question types. However, they were further asked to elaborate on each question type, which most of the student teachers did willingly. This documentation validated and reinforced the more deliberate nature of focus group interview data, highlighting

the same fundamental issues in both sets of data. The emphasis in these constructions was on the relationship between teacher education pedagogical experiences and needs as reading teachers, as evidenced in Chapter Five.

Below is a summary of the three types of documents used in this study.

**Table 4.7: A Summary of Document Types**

Type of documentation	Details
<b>Curriculum documents</b>	Course outlines (old and revised)
	Team leader’s work plan
	Team leader’s email introducing the revised course to faculty and the recommended use of Online Learning management system.
	<b>New teaching resources</b> e.g. PowerPoint presentations, guided readings, pamphlets, reading aloud texts, recommended videos, summary sheets, flashcards, pre-, while- and post- reading activities, assessment outlines, recommended reading teaching websites, recommended microteaching activities related to each goal, Up-to date supplementary readings, bibliography
<b>Teaching Practice Related Documents</b>	Teaching Practice reports
	Teaching Practice competencies
	Observation record sheets
	Mentoring guidelines
	Grading procedures
	Sample student teacher lesson plans integrated with lessons from the Ministry of Education course book ‘NewParade’
<b>Online Evaluative documents</b>	Student teacher and teacher educator course evaluations
	Online discussion postings

**4.6.4.2: Limitations of Documentary Evidence**

Documentation as a means of analyzing curriculum revisions and instructional strategies (micro-teaching, problem-based learning and modelling) has a number of limitations affecting a study’s reliability, despite the fact that it offers a convenient means of triangulation. Below are issues of reliability and validity relating to the documentary analysis of this study.

Firstly, “Documents are not neutral reports and are shared by the contexts in which they are produced” (Busher, 2002, p.2). Internal, inadvertent documentation, such as the ones in this study have been written for purposes unconnected with this research, and as a result the researcher had to sift through a mass of irrelevant material. Although quality assurance

policies adopted in the education department result in documentation being continually reviewed and updated, it is however shaped and reshaped by curriculum leaders, faculty and education management present at the time of review. This is therefore representative of a particular group of people at a particular time, making the documentation itself subjective and partial. However, this does not mean that internal documentation is not necessarily 'genuine' or 'valid' as data. Evaluating the validity of institutionally-based documents such as course outlines, curriculum resources and assessments is not meant to be a scientific matter, free from subjectivity and bias.

Secondly, it has often been assumed that "written texts provide a "truer" indication of original meanings than do other types of evidence (Hodder, 2000 cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000 p.704). However, as Derrida (1978) has shown, meaning does not reside in a text but is interpreted in the writing and reading of it. Once words are transformed into written text, the distance between the 'author' and the 'reader' widens, thus increasing the possibility of multiple interpretations, which are often embedded in context. This results in text and context being in a continual state of tension that is often related to changes in meaning across cultures (Hodder, 2000 cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000 p.704; 709). Available documents may therefore be partial and limited and are likely to be "biased or present a distorted picture of events and practices" (Busher, 2002, p.2). Despite this, written evidence such as curriculum and evaluative documents used in this study, can be effectively used alongside other data so that particular biases of each can be compared.

Thirdly, as with the online discussions, student teachers' were communicating in a foreign language. Varying writing abilities in English may account for lack of consistency in articulation of their beliefs about the perceived impact of teacher education experiences upon their developing reading styles on teaching practice. Syntactical and grammatical errors may have impeded explanation of thought processes in their second language. Content and elaborations made by student teachers may also have been affected by assessment pressures at the end of the semester, resulting in student teachers carrying out the course evaluations as quickly as possible, rather than reflecting constructively upon the semester. Nevertheless, the EDUC 250 course was evaluated, some elaborations were made and thoughts seemed to be mainly well organized and clear. As Kramsch and Lam (1999) claim, the written mode fosters a secure and confident identity as foreign language learners of English.

Overall, despite the above constraints, the use of documentation was clearly a relevant and concrete medium for communicating the curriculum revisions, instructional strategies (micro-teaching, problem-based learning and modelling) and student teacher and teacher educator evaluations for the improvement of teacher education provision. It also complemented and enhanced the focus group interview data and online discussions and offers a convenient means of triangulation.

#### **4.7: Presenting the Data for Analysis and Interpretation**

In some ways, the stages of data collection and analysis cannot be clearly separated, since choice of methods, participants, structure and content, as well as decisions made during the data collection, such as whether or not to pursue an unexpected thread initiated by a participant, are all interpretative choices (Clarke, 2005, p.89). By recognizing that different stages of research shape and transform data, they are all part of the overall process of weaving a range of material into a coherent text (Crang, 2003).

The process of analyzing data was complex, involving a hybrid approach to qualitative thematic analysis, where emergent themes related to the effectiveness of curriculum development and instructional delivery of a Revised Teacher Education Reading Course became the categories for analysis. It used a deductive a priori approach advocated by Crabtree and Miller (1999) to reach the first level of interpretive understanding and the data-driven inductive approach of Boyatzis (1998) using manual coding by highlighting key themes and words to reach the second level of interpretative understanding. “Both are legitimate and useful paths” in describing and explaining a pattern of relationships (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.431) and demonstrate how key themes are supported by excerpts from the raw data. This blended data analysis approach aided triangulation and reliability of data analyzed, along with allowing additional themes to emerge direct from the data.

Deductive analysis, involved manual encoding of online discussion postings, categorized a priori based on issues derived from a review of literature and related to the key research questions. Other data such as teaching practice reports and course evaluations were analyzed using the ‘cut and paste’ technique (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990) in which sections relevant to the research questions were identified and categorized into the key

themes (Appendix 12). Colour coding was used where necessary to organize the material into 'chunks' (Rossman and Rallis, 1998). This further coding process enabled the researcher to identify coherent patterns across the data, providing a degree of cross-referencing between the different types of data collected as well as between the two data analysis approaches. Inductive analysis was conducted only with focus group interview data, derived from key participants in College X (Appendix 13). These student teachers began to take greater ownership of the processes of narrative construction by extending answers and emphasizing particular topics that were of significance to them. This strengthening of participants' control prevented the focus group interviews from having a selective focus (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) and allowed key ideas to be explored further.

The data presented for analysis and interpretation involved three core stages and a pre-intervention stage, in a cyclical process of moving back and forth between the data, related literature and research questions (Miles and Huberman, 1994). These stages involved a process of clarification of the key themes structuring the data through both deductive and inductive processes, as indicated in Table 4.8 below. This provided a cumulative accretion of understanding into what the dialogic forums and documentation were saying and into how the study addresses the fundamental issues it seeks to explore: the student teachers' developing reading styles in their identity construction as EFL student teachers and the perceived influence of teacher education pedagogy upon that.

The data analysis therefore incorporated a range of processes, from typed online discussion postings to online course evaluations and transcriptions, mp3 focus group recordings as well as inductive manual coding of highlighted themes and related key words. The latter was used to theorize from the data in order to gain further understandings of the data itself.

A technique that was informally used in stages two and three of the post-intervention stage was Flanagan's (1954; Brennon and Green, 1993; Farrell, 2004; 2008) Critical Incident Technique (CIT). This drew out the most memorable aspects of student teachers' past and present learning experiences that had made a difference to their understanding of themselves as teachers (Goodson and Sikes, 2001) and particularly to their style of reading teaching during Teaching Practice. Using both deductive and inductive processes, the categories for analysis were pre-determined based on a review of literature, yet student teachers were also encouraged to describe and reflect upon incidents that were of particular importance to them

in a critical reflective online discussion (p.103) and focus group discussion forum (p.111). Without using the word 'critical', the use of "stimulated recall" (Harrison et al, 2005, p.286) in online discussions allowed student teachers to delay their reflection of key incidents, unlike focus group responses which were unstructured and spontaneous. When Emirati student teachers recalled "vividly remembered events" (Brookfield, 1990, p.84) from their past, as highlighted in section 5.4.1, some discussions were lengthier and more detailed than others, e.g. 'memories of past reading teachers' seemed to arouse a mixture of mainly negative emotions in student teachers and influence the type of reading teacher they aspired to become. All student teachers positioned themselves as agents of change, bringing interactive reading teaching methods to Emirati classrooms, previously dominated by 'traditional teaching'. This, they largely attribute to the impact of critical incidents in the EDUC 250 course (section 5.3.2.). As developing EFL reading teachers, this process of reflection ensured that what they learnt made "sense" (Loughran,1996, p.21, cited in Harrison et al, 2005, p.275) so that they better understand and analyze assumptions that underlie their teaching identities.

**Table 4.8: Data Analysis foci, stages, tools and approaches**

Stage	Pre-intervention, as discussed in Chapter 3	Post-Intervention as discussed in Chapter 5		
		Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<b>Analytical Focus</b>	Analyzing the perceived need for curricular changes	Analyzing the perceived impact of Curricular Changes upon student teachers' own practices	Analyzing the perceived and observed impact of Constructivist Delivery Innovations upon student teachers' own practices	Analyzing the perceived impact of teacher education pedagogy upon the 'apprenticeship of observation'
<b>Analytical Approach</b>	Deductive Analysis	Deductive Analysis (Documentation) Inductive Analysis (focus groups)	Deductive Analysis (Online Discussion Postings and Documentation) Inductive Analysis (focus groups) Discourse Analysis/Critical Incidents	Deductive Analysis (Online Discussion Postings) Inductive Analysis (focus groups) Discourse Analysis/Critical Incidents
<b>Tools</b>	Documentation (Course Evaluations) Teaching Practice Observations	Documentation (Course Evaluations) Focus group discussions	Online Discussion postings Focus group discussions Teaching Practice Observations	Online Discussion postings Focus group discussions

\*Note: While course evaluations and online discussions took place in six women's colleges across the country, focus group discussions and Teaching Practice observations took place at College X only.

#### **4.7.1: Building the Analysis –Using Inductive Discourse Methods to Generate Focus Group Analytical Categories**

While acknowledging the sophisticated thematic organization capabilities of qualitative data analysis software such as NUD\*IST as used by Clarke (2005) in the current research context, Kelle (1997) argues that such software programmes are simply mechanical tools for data administration and archiving rather than as tools for analysis. Therefore due to the small quantity of data generated from the key research participants in this study along with a variety of data tools, the researcher decided to code focus group analytical categories manually, rather than use an explicit tool for the organization of themes. This process therefore involved indexing, searching, pattern identification, categorizing and theorizing by manually coding signified text and table data (Appendix 13). By highlighting key words, counting the occurrence of themes and showing the relationships between them, it allowed the researcher to develop, record and restructure a theoretical framework as it emerged whilst working with the data (Clarke, 2005, p.91). In order to create the latter, each coding was given a number to facilitate searching further instances of a particular code. The numbering system facilitates the building of a visual ‘hierarchical ‘index tree’ structure (Silverman, 2000; Lee and Fielding, 2004) indicating the relationship between sub-categories. This can be updated as the coding scheme develops.

An unstructured system of coding (i.e. no numberings or sub-categories) was used to conduct the inductive analysis part of this study, based on the main topics that had structured the focus group discussions, as shown in Table 4.9 below. This triangulated a more theoretically defined framework as the researcher moved back and forth between the transcribed data, the literature and main categories highlighted through deductive analysis. As relationships were identified, notes were written alongside excerpts of text. The linguistic feature most used to explore the meaning behind the language used by the student teachers was vocabulary (Fairclough, 1992, p.75). An example of this was when the researcher applied the coding ‘Apprenticeship of Observation/Memories of Past teachers’ where ‘memories of past teachers’ is a subcategory of ‘apprenticeship of observation’. Student teachers were responding to a question about memories of past teachers and comments included ‘shouting’; ‘behaviourist teaching methods’, ‘traditional’ ‘negative influence’ and ‘drilling’ appeared (Appendix 13). Other linguistic features used included cohesion and text structure (Fairclough, 1992, p.75), from the point of view of gaps or silences in the text. For example,

focus group discussions with reluctant and developing student teachers revealed that they choose to only emphasize the negative aspects of their past education, selectively ignoring any good aspects in order to construct a discourse of difference. This was in contrast to the confident student teachers, who tended to present a more balanced picture of past experiences. At the level of grammar, numerous examples of the modal verb ‘should’ and ‘shouldn’t’ can be found throughout the data analysis stages (e.g. p.147) in both online discussion postings and focus group discussions, indicating degrees of obligation or necessity.

While the core methodology of this study uses a case study approach, similar to that of Lunenberg et al. (2007), it also incorporates into its analysis an element of discourse analysis similar to Clarke’s study (2005), as seen further in Chapter Five. Loosely defined by Taylor (2001, p.5) as “the close study of language in use”, Discourse Analysis in this study involves patterns of ‘language as discourse’ to systematic analysis (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). Drawing predominately on Fairclough’s (1992, 2003) model of Critical Discourse Analysis at the level of discursive practice, this study is focused on describing and interpreting the socially constructed meanings (content, interpersonal and textual) of developing EFL teachers of reading, as reflected in their systems of belief and knowledge. While it has been criticized by Widdowson (1998, p.137) as a toolkit that lacks rigour, from the postmodern perspective, knowledge is recognized as being partial and situated. Blommaert (2005, p.34) also criticized it for its focus on textual minutia and ‘linguistic bias’ which may miss the bigger picture. He also argues that discourse analysis has predominantly focused on Western societies – a criticism to which this study can be seen as an active response.

Table 4.9 below presents a diagrammatic outline of the analytical framework used to generate focus group data from the key participants in this study. The first column shows how key authors cited in the literature connects to the main categories that emerged from focus group discussions. The second column lists the categories used to code the focus group data, prior to the development of further refinements made using inductive analysis. As indicated above, these topics were drawn from the literature in column one including literature on effective teacher education, ‘apprenticeship of observation; and constructivist teacher education methodologies. The third column lists the inductive coding used to further categorize the student teachers’ comments in the focus group discussions. Within the semi-structured focus group interview format, the student teachers elaborated on topics initiated,

emphasizing aspects that were of particular important to them. Thus unplanned themes emerged, for example, in each focus group the researcher asked about memories of past student teachers but it was the student teachers who responded with comments about ‘shouting’, ‘comprehension exercises’, ‘passive learning’, ‘negative influence’ and ‘behaviourist teaching methods’. These sub-categories were formed while reading and analyzing the focus group data, using inductive manual coding methods.

**Table 4.9: Focus Group Discussion Topics, Related Literature and Inductive analytical Categories**

<b>Key Research Question 1: What is the perceived influence of a revised Vygotskian social constructivist teacher education curriculum upon student teachers' reading teaching practices?</b>		
<b>Sources in the Literature on Effective teacher education</b>	<b>Main Topics used to structure focus group discussions and code student teachers' comments</b>	<b>Sub-categories used to code student teachers' comments, using manual inductive methods</b>
Vygotsky, 1962; Bruner, 1986; Furlong, 1990; Fullan, 1993; Cannella & Reiff, 1994; Oldfather, Bonds & Bray, 1994; Richardson, 1997; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Feiman-Nemser, 1998; Lampert & Ball, 1999; Kennedy, 1999; Crandall, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Berliner, 2001; Korthagen et al., 2001; Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002; Rice, 2003; Shulman, 2004; Cameron and Baker, 2004; Van Huizen, 2005; Lunenberg et al, 2007.	1. Relevance of course content matter to becoming an EFL Emirati Teacher	Highly relevant No culture of reading in government schools
	2. Connecting theory to practical experiences	PowerPoint presentations, followed by micro-teaching Theory of reading Approaches followed by practical ideas on how to teach reading
	3. Knowledge of reading theory and reading approaches	We didn't know... I learnt why... How to implement... What the benefits... ZPD Top-down Interactive Word, sentence, text
	4. Teacher education preparation for teaching practice in Emirati schools	preparation Discussions Micro-teaching Theory Practical ideas
	5. Making connections with the UAE government school curriculum	Lesson plans connected to the New Parade Curriculum

<b>Key Research Question 2: What is the perceived and observed impact of Constructivist Delivery innovations of performance modeling, systematic micro-teaching and problem-based learning upon student teachers reading teaching methods during teaching practice?</b>		
<b>Sources in the Literature on Constructivist Delivery Approaches</b>	<b>Main Topics used to structure focus group discussions and code student teachers' comments</b>	<b>Sub-categories used to code student teachers' comments, using manual inductive methods</b>
Vygotsky, 1962; 1978; Wells (1999; 2001); Bruner, 1986; Shulman, 1987; Stover, 1990; Wilson, 1990; Freeman, 1993; Rogers & Sluss, 1996; Zeichner, 1996; Bodrova & Leong, 1996; Lunderberg & Scheurman, 1997; Jarvis et al., 1998; Crandall, 1998, 2000; Korthagen et al, 2001, Russell, 2001; Glazer, 2001; Bok, 2002; Kane, 2002; Jay, 2002; Cameron & Baker, 2004; Anderson, 2005; Verity, 2005; Van Huizen et al., 2005; Al-Methen, 1995; Rivers, 2006; Lunenberg et al, 2007.	1. Impact of teacher educator explicit modeling of reading strategies on student teachers' teaching practices	Shared Reading Reader's Theatre Watching vodcasts/videos Electronic books Pre, while and post reading
	2. Impact of problem-based learning on student teachers' teaching practices	Presenting real problems Contextualized learning Discussing issues Finding solutions Critical thinking skills Practiced reading teaching Wrote anticipated problems in a book
	3. Impact of micro-teaching on student teachers' teaching practices	Peer-teaching Safe/artificial environment Facilitates feedback Preparation for Teaching Practice Scaffolded Applied theory to practice
	4. Perceived influence of overall delivery approaches used by the teacher educator upon developing styles of reading teaching.	Helpful Well-prepared for Teaching Practice Interactive Model
	5. Scaffolding in teacher education	Higher level in ZPD Ongoing feedback Modeling A variety of approaches
	6. Teacher educator as model of best practice (taught as expected to teach)	'Try to model good reading behaviors on T.P., just like our teacher educator'.
	7. Teaching reading as you were taught to teach	Different approaches Interactive strategies Reluctant student teachers - no
	8. Effective elements of teacher education methodology – a memorable lesson from the EDUC 250 course	Shared Reading lessons Use of vodcasts Electronic books Pre, while and post reading Acting Total Physical Response Using intonation and predictive questions Musical instruments

<b>Key Research Question 3: How do student teachers interpret the impact of teacher education pedagogy upon their prior beliefs, knowledge and practices and how does this impact their beliefs and 'knowledge' about teaching reading in an EFL Emirati context?</b>		
<b>Sources in the Literature on teacher identity, beliefs and apprenticeship of observation</b>	<b>Main Topics used to structure focus group discussions and code student teachers' comments</b>	<b>Sub-categories used to code student teachers' comments, using manual inductive methods</b>
Piaget, 1971; Lortie, 1975; Goodman, 1988; Gardner, 1990; Britzman, 1991; Kennedy, 1991; Pajares, 1992; Porter and Brophy, 1998; Johnson, 1999; Danielewicz, 2001; Lind, 2001; Freeman, 2002, 2004; Taha-Thomure, 2003; Borg, 2003; Dickinson et al, 2004; Collins, 2004; Buser, 2005; Day et al., 2005; Clarke, 2005; James, 2005.	1. Memories of Past student teachers	Shouting Behaviourist teaching methods Negative influence Drilling Curriculum book
	2. Prior reading experiences as learners	Traditional Passive learning Repetition Comprehension questions Grammar Memorization Accuracy
	3. Beliefs about how students best learn to read	Interaction with text Indirect learning through story reading Learn to read by reading Authentic texts Decoding Reading for pleasure
	4. Beliefs about appropriate reading methods for EFL Emirati students	Interactive methods A variety of reading approaches and activities Shared reading, reading aloud, reader's theatre, sustained silent reading Pre, while and post reading stages Literacy and print-rich environment Differentiated groups Exposure to meaningful texts Promoting a love of reading Present a variety of genre Daily reading aloud sessions
	5. Influence of teacher education experiences upon prior beliefs and understanding of the teaching of reading	Influenced past beliefs Increased understanding of reading process Enhanced thinking Student-centered/teacher-centered Fluency/Accuracy Enhanced knowledge of EFL reading approaches Professionalism
	6. Interteaching tensions – challenging prior beliefs and experiences	Combine previous knowledge and new knowledge Us versus them Agents of change

## **4.8: Conclusion**

This chapter has developed a methodological framework for the study of 'Preparing Student Teachers to be Teachers of EFL Reading: Effectiveness of curriculum development and instructional delivery of a Revised Teacher Education Reading Course upon student teachers' delivery methods during teaching practice in the UAE'. The presentation of a qualitative instrumental case study method has been justified providing a complex picture of developing reading teaching styles, situated in a specific time and place. The case study method has also provided for flexibility of data collection and analysis and for the selection of appropriate tools and techniques from other research traditions. The theoretical underpinnings of the research have been examined, along with issues of reliability and validity relating to aims and claims of the research and to the researcher's position as an insider researcher. Issues of reflexivity have been focused on, noting how interpretative approaches do not absolve researchers of ethical obligations. The sampling techniques have been described, along with the research tools and techniques designed to gather, produce and analyze the data.

The findings presented in Chapter Five, provide an analytical framework to explore the main aspects and dimensions, relating to the construction of Emirati reading teacher identities and the perceived influence of college pedagogical experiences upon developing reading styles.

## **Chapter 5 - Analyzing and Discussing teacher education curriculum and delivery**

### **Part 1: Data Analysis Overview**

#### **5.0: Introduction**

Chapter Four provided an overview of the processes and methods of data collection employed in the research. Specifically, it outlined the case study methodology, sampling procedures, instruments adopted and related methodological and ethical issues that arose. The theoretical underpinnings of the research were examined, along with issues of reliability and validity and the researcher's position as an insider researcher.

From inductive manual coding of emergent themes to handwritten annotations based on themes in the theoretical literature, this chapter presents a systematic analysis of data under each Key Theme that arose from the literature review. Three core stages of data analysis provide an analytical framework and cumulative understanding into the main aspects and dimensions, relating to the construction of Emirati student teacher identities and the perceived influence of college pedagogical experiences upon developing reading teaching styles. It begins with an overview of the case study participants.

#### **5.1: Case Study Participants**

##### **5.1.1: An Intact Group of Emirati Female Student Teachers**

An intact group of student teachers, integral to the enactment of this case, consisted of a group of sixteen Year Two Emirati female student teachers, ranging in age from 18-25. As outlined in Chapter Four, p.99, the selection of participants was deliberately purposive and this group was chosen because the teaching of reading is only specifically focused on Year Two of the degree. For focus group discussions, student teachers were categorized into three groups (Group 1 – confident; Group 2 - reluctant and Group 3 - developing student teachers) as based on pedagogical reading competence from observational analysis and Teaching Practice grades from the previous year (Appendix 11). This helped facilitate documentation of the different emerging styles and practices of reading teaching within the group. These

students were also part of online discussion postings conducted across the College system but their identities were not revealed. If mentioned in Teaching Practice reports, student teachers are referred to as 'Student X'.

Within this group of Emirati women, twelve out of sixteen derive from traditional Bedouin families, the remaining four deriving from merchant families based in the city of College X. Interestingly, all of the student teachers categorized as pedagogically 'reluctant', derived from Bedouin family circumstances. However, the opposite was not true for those categorized as 'confident' and 'developing' reading teachers, with half the confident student teachers and a quarter of the developing student teachers deriving from Bedouin family circumstances. All of the core group of student teachers, regardless of background dress in a black 'abaya' (cloaks) and 'shayla' (head scarves), with only their faces uncovered. Most of these women are driven to and from college by a male relative or driver in vehicles with tinted windows. They stay at college until 4.00p.m., at which time they are escorted home. These students' home lives, "which play a central role in their experiences, is very restricted compared with women students from Western countries" (Richardson, 2004, p.432). For example, the reality for most of these young women is a pre-destined life where marriage is arranged, often during their B.Ed. degree. The student's home lives are often controlled by elders and most of them are prohibited to socialize with men, shop alone or travel without chaperons.

However, despite society's adherence to a strict Muslim code of behaviour for women and contrary to the perceptions of the typical Emirati woman who is "protected from public display and not involved in the public arena" (Richardson, 2004, p.433), the core group of student teachers are enthusiastic and empowered to contribute to the building of their country's education system. As the first generation of Emirati student teachers to attain a degree in education and as much needed agents of change, they are a product of behaviourist schooling and it is negative memories of previous learning experiences that fuel their desire for educational change. Within this case study, their changing perceptions and reading teaching practices are viewed in the light of new knowledge gained in part from one of their college courses – 'EDUC 250', focusing on the teaching of reading.

A profile of secondary participants who contributed to the case study is included here.

### **5.1.2: Student Teachers from Other Colleges**

As outlined in Table 4.1, secondary participants included 79 Year Two student teachers from five other colleges operating in Sharjah, Dubai, Al Ain, Fujairah and Ras Al Khaimah who also studied the EDUC 250 course. These Year Two student teachers participated in both online discussions and course evaluations, conducted at the end of Semester Two, but unlike the core group of student teachers, were not observed in practice. As is shown later in this chapter, the anonymous contributions of secondary participants from across the UAE consolidate and confirm perceptions of the core group of student teachers in College X, demonstrating an increased self-awareness, reflection on practice and problem-solving orientation to the EFL reading classroom.

### **5.1.3: Teacher Educators**

Cross-reference to student teacher perceptions and interactions was provided through observational analysis and documentary evidence provided by teacher educators.

Eight Western teacher educators were involved in this research, three at College X who participated in non-participant observations, one of whom was the researcher. The other five were from across the College system in other Emirates. These five participated in course evaluations and curriculum leader evaluations, conducted at the end of the semester (College System, 2007a). They also facilitated student online discussions by devoting a number of classes to reflection on practice. Four out of the six teacher educators involved in the methodology course had between ten to fifteen years of experience as primary school teachers, prior to becoming teacher educators and were specialists in the teaching of reading within their own colleges. This included College X, where the key participating researcher/participating teacher educator/curriculum leader specialized in reading pedagogy and was responsible for the implementation, review and assessment of this course across the six colleges. The other four, two of whom were teaching the methodology course, had a background in linguistics with ten to twenty years previous experience as secondary school teachers. The two teacher educators not teaching the methodology course at College X were also teaching linguistic based courses, yet were involved in the mentoring of student teachers while on teaching practice placements (See Chapter Four, p.120 for discussion of inter-observer reliability and subsequent report writing). All participants had worked in the College system for more than three years and all except one had more than seven years international

experience. They were aged between thirty five and fifty, with the researcher as the youngest member of the team. The contributions of these participating teacher educators, evident in teaching practice reports or course evaluations are anonymous and therefore no names are referred to in example extracts.

Table 5.1: summarizes the profile of participants involved in this study.

**Table 5.1: Key Participants - An Intact Group of Student Teachers and their Teacher Educator in College X**

Participants	College	Pedagogic Categories of student teachers	Nationality	Native language	Gender	Number of key participants	Involvement in Research
An intact group of Year Two, semester 2 student teachers	College X	Confident – Group 1 (*4) Developing – Group 2 (*8) Reluctant – Group 3 (*4)	Emirati Bedouin (12) Merchant families (4)	Arabic	Female	16	Focus group discussions Online Discussions Course evaluations 3 week T.P. placement
Researcher /Key teacher educator	College X	Pedagogical background: B.Ed. MA (Ed) TEFL Curriculum Leader	Irish	English	Female	1	Participant researcher/participant teacher educator Non-Participant observer

**Table 5.2: Secondary Participants from across the UAE**

Participant s	College	Nationality	Pedagogic al Background	Native languag e	Gender	Number of Participants	Involvement in Research
Other B.Ed. Student teachers, Year Two, Semester 2	Sharjah, Dubai, Al Ain, Fujariah Ras Al Khamiah colleges	Emirati		Arabic	Female	79 anonymous postings	Online Discussions
							Course Evaluations
Other Teacher Educators	College X	English	BA, PGCE, MA (Ed) TEFL Linguistic specialism	English	Female	2	Non-participant observers during Teaching Practice Placements
		New Zealander	BA, PGCE, MA (Ed) TEFL Linguistic specialism				
Teacher educators from across five UAE colleges	Sharjah	Australian	B.Ed., MA (Ed) TEFL EFL Reading specialism	English	Female	5	Course Evaluations Facilitated student teacher Online discussions
	Dubai	English	B.Ed., MA (Ed) EFL Reading specialism		Male		
	Al Ain	Australian	BA, MA(Ed), TEFL EFL Linguistic specialism		Male		
	Fujariah	English	BA, MA (Ed), TEFL EFL Linguistic specialism		Female		
	Ras Al Khamiah	American	B.Ed., MA (Ed), TEFL EFL Reading specialism		Female		

As stated in the methodology chapter p.127, the data collection and analysis stages could not be clearly separated and this interactivity was applied throughout the research process. The research analysis was therefore an iterative and reflexive process, yet is presented in a linear, step-by-step procedure. The primary objective of the data was to represent the subjective viewpoint of the intact group of student teachers described above, supported by secondary participating student teachers and teacher educators. By focusing on subjective interpretation, this study therefore recognizes the partial and situated nature of this

knowledge. Where possible, links between existing literature, the raw data and research results are compared and contrasted in the main themes of the study. This approach complemented the research questions by using processes of both deductive thematic analysis and inductive coding and consolidated the categories that structure the rest of this chapter.

The following section outlines the analytical stages adopted for the purposes of this study. Internal sources of data will be divided into two categories – core data from ‘College X’ and secondary data from the ‘College system’, from across six Emirates. Multiple sources within one year will be labelled in alphabetical order.

## **Part 2: Data Analysis Stages**

Analyzing the perceived impact of curricular changes, constructivist delivery innovations and teacher education pedagogy upon student teachers’ knowledge, beliefs and teaching practices forms the focus in part two of this chapter. The categories identified above address each of the three research questions, reflecting the sections used to organize the analysis and interpretation of data below. It begins with a description, interpretation and explanation of data (Bakhtin (1986) in Stage One of the analysis process.

### **5.2: Data Analysis Stage 1: Analyzing the Perceived Impact of Curricular Changes upon Student Teachers’ Reading Teaching Practices – perceptions of student teachers and teacher educators across six colleges**

The analytic focus of Data Analysis, Stage One relates to key research question one, involving analyzing the perceived influence of a revised teacher education curriculum upon student teachers’ methods of teaching reading in foreign language UAE classrooms. By the end of the reading course, student teachers’ newly acquired knowledge of reading theory and reading approaches, along with the effectiveness of contextualizing content matter for an EFL Emirati environment is analyzed using course evaluations and face-to-face focus group discussions. This begins the process of consolidating an approach to Teacher Education,

informed by Vygotskian (1978 cited in Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002) social constructivist methods as emphasized in the conceptual framework p.38.

### **5.2.1: Knowledge of Reading Theory and Reading Approaches**

While recognized in the introductory chapter, p.16 that in its original iteration, the EDUC 250 course focused on examining bottom-up and top-down theories of reading, student teachers' knowledge of EFL reading approaches and related strategies was poor. Course evaluations and focus group face-to-face discussions below reveal teacher educator and student teacher perceptions of the impact the revised reading course on student teacher's systems of knowledge and understanding.

#### **5.2.1.1: Course Evaluations**

Course evaluations revealed that all teacher educators from across the six women's colleges felt that a sound theoretical knowledge of reading was an essential skill for becoming teachers of the future as evidenced from the sample quote below:

The various aspects of reading and vocabulary development taught in this course are essential areas in which students need to be knowledgeable as future teachers.

(College System, Teacher educator course evaluations (TECE), 2007a)

Recognizing the merits of the new course curriculum, teacher educators further highlight three areas that had been developed: student teachers' own reading skills; teaching methods and theoretical knowledge of approaches and strategies as in the sample below:

The content of this course focuses on developing students' own reading skills as well as providing them with the skills and understanding necessary to teach reading/vocabulary in an EFL setting. This year, students' knowledge of reading approaches and strategies has greatly improved.

(College System (TECE), 2007a)

Expressed in the words, "this year..." student teachers' increased knowledge of reading teaching methods has been observed by teacher educators. One teacher educator from across the College system credited this change with the curriculum leader/researcher's development and organization of the course itself:

F. is by far the most organized and helpful team leader I have ever had. I am so impressed by her WebCT programmes for this course as well as our binders with reading and teaching ideas. She worked extremely hard to make my job a little easier and enjoyable. As a result, students' knowledge of reading theory and approaches is higher this year.

(College System, EDUC 250 Curriculum Leader evaluation, 2007e)

All participating student teachers emphasized their satisfaction with the diversity of reading approaches introduced to them in the EDUC 250 course, along with referring to their theoretical underpinnings. The following responses are typical:

It is really a rich course full of useful information and tips to overcome difficulties in reading and diversity of reading approaches presented helped us a lot.

(College System student teacher course evaluations (STCE), 2007b)

Knowing different kinds of reading approaches and their related theory helped me in understanding the needs that I should be aware of while planning my lessons. We as future English teacher could use those approaches when we teach in the future.

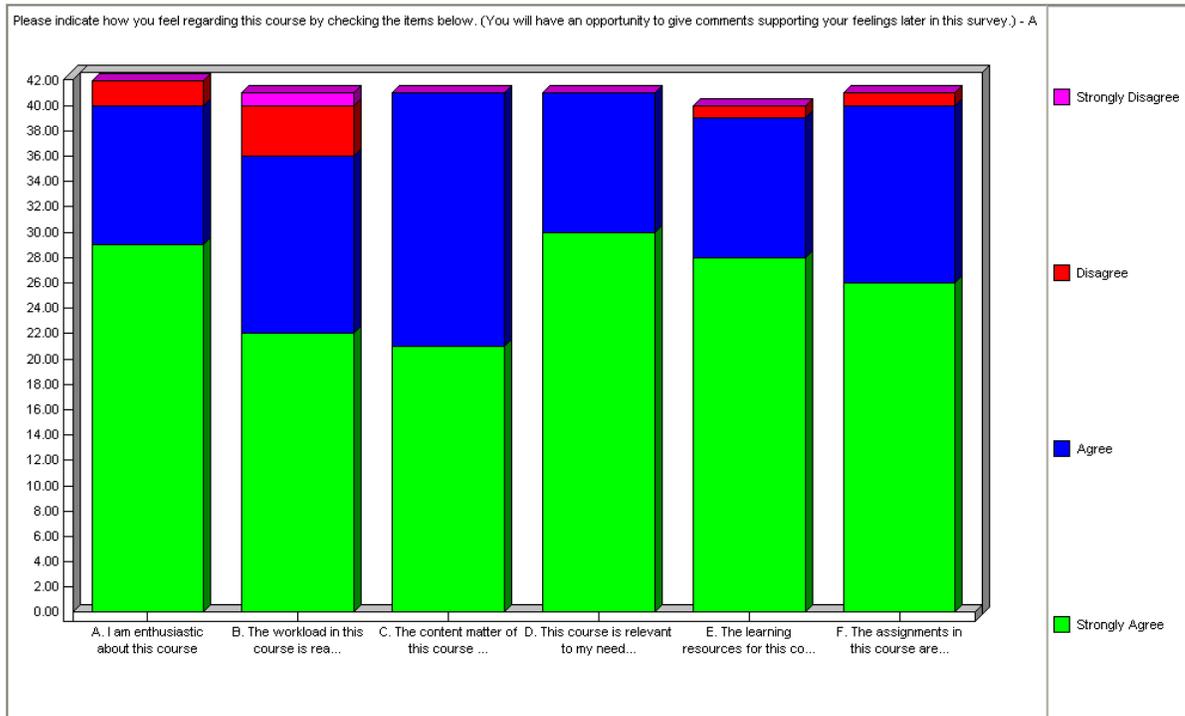
(College System, STCE, 2007b)

This course is a very good one, because of the content. It is all about how to teach and apply different types of reading approaches to suit EFL children. It also enhances self-improvement towards reading.

(College System, STCE, 2007b)

This knowledge, combined with explicit practice during microteaching lessons was cited by another student teacher as providing “a sound foundation for developing as a student teacher” and “it was relevant to our needs as student teachers when planning reading lessons (College System, STCE, 2007b).

Figure 5.1 below represents a college generated quality assurance summary of student teachers' feedback on the EDUC 250 course content, workload, relevance to student needs, appropriacy of learning resources and chosen assignments. As can be seen, when asked to respond to the statement “The content matter of this course is appropriately delivered” and “This course is relevant to my needs as a student”, in both cases, all except one student teacher agreed or strongly agreed.

**Figure 5.1: College System Student Teacher Course Evaluation Survey, 2007**

### 5.2.1.2: Focus Group Interviews

Similar to course evaluations, the range of reading approaches introduced in the EDUC 250 course was highlighted by student teachers from the core group of student teachers at College X. However, they further elaborated on the reading approaches learned, that had meaning for them:

We didn't know anything about reading and different approaches and styles of reading teaching, but by the end of this course we learnt about different techniques and ways of teaching such as reading aloud, shared reading, reader's theatre, sustained silent reading and choral reading.

(Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Group 1: 2007, p.21)

We learnt many approaches and how to apply them in EFL classrooms such as guided reading, shared reading and reading aloud. When we were students we didn't have such approaches, only the teacher read and we repeated after her, so it's important to learn and apply these reading approaches in our schools.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.1)

...We didn't know all these approaches before...

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.3)

“We didn’t know” refers to their pre-college knowledge. Another student teacher responded with “I think though, when we are in the teaching environment we could learn more and more” (FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.23), reflecting the transition from a learner’s view of teaching to that of a teacher’s. Student teachers’ confidence in the content learnt in this course is exemplified in the responses below, along with an initial ability to choose appropriate reading approaches for EFL students:

I also learnt why they are important, how to implement them in EFL classes and what benefits students can get from them and when... because we have to use these approaches depending on the level of the students, depending on what you are aiming to do. Like, if you are doing reading aloud then usually the level of the book is high, so it’s kind of challenging but if you are doing independent reading or guided reading, you have to give them some easier books. We even learnt when to use these strategies in the class.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.2)

Also we discussed in college about how we can apply guided reading in EFL classrooms because most young EFL Emirati learners are not able to read by themselves and they need support and scaffolding while reading. So, during problem solving discussions..., we recommended that a teacher of young EFL learners should start by using reading aloud, then apply guided reading later.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.4)

While the confident and developing student teachers above display sophisticated knowledge of EFL reading approaches, critical awareness and application to an EFL classroom, the reluctant student teachers tended to make more generalizations and assumptions about the suitability of approaches for different age groups, without the supporting rationale, evident in other student teacher responses. They also display naivety when labelling children’s reading challenges. For example:

The reading aloud approach I think is very beneficial as most of the EFL students prefer listening to stories. So, it’s better for the teacher to use this approach. While I was on Teaching Practice, I saw a special needs child. I think he was dyslexic. He was not able to read at all and spoke no English.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.2)

The common view expressed by student teachers in all three focus groups on the purpose of the curricular changes was to marry their newly acquired content knowledge with enhanced

delivery of their lessons. Representing the sentiments of all student teachers, the following example is quoted from a confident student teacher:

I think the content of this course teaches how to deliver learning, because knowing a lot about education and about the curriculum is one thing but implementing that content by delivering a strategy I think it also important.  
(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.1)

The confident student teachers make the distinction between terms such as ‘top down’, ‘interactive’, ‘zone of proximal development’ (ZPD) and ‘word, sentence and text levels’:

When I think back to my school, I have learned using the bottom up approach which focuses on accuracy of grammar instructions and correcting mistakes, but I think if we use the interactionist theory which focuses on the overall meaning, promoting fluency and integrating both traditional strategies and techniques in order to assist the students’ development in literacy...uh and push them forward in their ZPD...then expanding their vocabulary starting from word level to the sentence level then to the text level. This kind of theory really helped us and we are now realizing and recognizing its benefits

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.4)

Expressed in the phrases “we are now realizing” and “I think if we use”, student teachers’ newly acquired knowledge of theories enable them to critically reflect on their past and present experiences in light of the perceived benefits and application to an EFL classroom. Similar to their ‘theorizing’ of the suitability of certain reading approaches highlighted earlier, the confident student teachers seem to take a powerful ideological positioning that largely constructs their developing beliefs and practices:

I think theory explains what you see in the classroom, like when we were on teaching practice. If you see how the students read or what level they are at, because of the theory we learnt, we know how they got to this level, with what scaffold, what help, based on which theory... you know how this happened.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.3)

Indirectly informed by the realistic model of teacher education (Korthagen et al., 2001, conceptual framework, p.47), this group displayed a deep understanding of the theoretical limitations of any one theory of reading, despite the awareness of the importance of linking perceptual theory (theory with a small (t) developed on teaching practice placements with conceptual theory (theory with a capital (T), developed in the college classroom. The interaction of practice and theory, action and reflection is evident in their professional thinking:

But we also learnt in this course that there is no such thing as a perfect theory. The good thing is to know to take the good from every theory, like the behaviourist theory also has some advantages; there is repetition and memorizing of new language which is good for EFL learners. The interactionist theory promotes learners to talk more freely and be more fluent. I tried this on Teaching Practice.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p. 5)

However, the developing and reluctant student teachers were not as coherent as the confident student teachers and their discussions often lacked the elaboration, synthesis and critical analysis, evident in the confident student teachers' responses:

We will try use a combination of approaches and theories that we learnt.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.4)

The reluctant student teachers sometimes used incorrect educational terminology, as in the example below in which the top-down and bottom-up reading theories are confused:

I recall learning about the top-down theory. I think it's good to use because it starts from simple to difficult texts, so you are going to teach them step by step, starting with decoding.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.2)

Specific strategies assimilated into student teachers' knowledge base included the use of pre, while and post-reading stages in a lesson, using a variety of question types, the pointing technique and involving students in the storyline. The following response indicates a reluctant student teacher's developing awareness of self, as she reflects on a previous teaching practice placement in the previous year, using the repeated lexical phrase "I didn't know". Her newly acquired knowledge of the reading process and reading teaching is expressed using "But now when I read a story I think about...."

I didn't know the benefits of using different strategies with students and how I could develop their reading. I didn't know that reading has an interesting successful way to develop students learning. For example, last year in Year One I was reading a story about animals but I wasn't focusing on anything specific, but now when I read a story I think about the students' level, the objectives, how can I interact with them, what are the suitable questions that I will ask during or after the story.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.3)

The 'passing on' of knowledge from teacher educator to student teachers was seen as a necessary part of the socialization process of becoming a knowledgeable teacher for all three groups of student teachers:

For me I have faced a problem with student misbehaviour and they were getting bored easily and when I discussed this with my teacher educator, we reached two reasons - that maybe because of the seating arrangement and because of the activity being too long for the student so that's why they got bored. So I've learned two points from my teacher educator and am going to develop them in my future practice.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.17)

Now we know from our teacher educator how exactly reading strategies are implemented and how to apply them in real classroom situation

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.3)

She is giving us what she had learnt and we are learning from her ways. I think she gave us many beneficial tips and reflection

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.8)

Again, while the above two responses lack the elaboration and criticality of the confident student teachers, it appears that they may be making reference to implicit modelling of reflection and practice by the teacher educator. This idea is further explored in Data Analysis Stage Three.

## **5.2.2: Contextualizing Content Matter to an EFL Emirati Environment**

As stated in the rationale for this study, although the EDUC 250 course was accredited with the University of Melbourne, Australia, it was not contextualized for an Emirati context (Teacher educator feedback to EDUC 250 course, 2005-2006). To help address this concern, course curricular and delivery revisions were made, stemming from the need to improve student teachers' teaching abilities in reading. The researcher was guided by the question: what do student teachers need to know about reading to teach it effectively in the context of language learning in UAE schools?

### **5.2.2.1: Course Evaluations**

Teacher educator views from across the six womens colleges revealed positive feedback on the planning, structure, content, resources and implementation of the revised reading methodology course. As one teacher educator said:

The strengths of this course are the curriculum itself. The content of the new course is not only comprehensible but highly relevant to becoming a student teacher of English in a foreign language setting

(College System, Teacher educator course evaluations (TECE), 2007a)

Other teacher educators commented on the explicit focus on

Developing students' own reading skills as well as providing them with the skills and understanding necessary to teach reading in an EFL setting (College System, TECE, 2007a).

All agreed that it was very well-integrated with both the Teaching Practice course and EDUC 255 course on Children's Literature. Another teacher educator said although the methodology course on the teaching of reading was "extremely appropriate" for EFL student teachers of English, it was a pity that it was not explicitly focused on beyond Year Two of the B. Ed. Programme (College System, TECE, 2007a). Other suggestions included the possibility of involving student teachers in subsequent year groups in special events such as book week, reading workshops and family literacy education, both inside and outside the college environment.

Similarly, anonymous student teacher course feedback from across the six women's colleges was very positive towards the revised reading course. Comments surrounded key words and phrases such as 'useful', 'apply', 'help us in our future', 'motivate', 'interesting' and 'relevant'. The following quotes were typical:

It is a very useful course. It focuses on reading and how we could apply approaches to EFL classes and to improve students' reading in Arabic as well as in English.

(College System, STCE, 2007b).

It will help us in our future career and show us how to read and motivate EFL students to read.

(College System, STCE, 2007b).

The course was very interesting and relevant to my needs as a future teacher

(College System, STCE, 2007b).

However, despite the above remarks, one student teacher acknowledged the challenge of introducing new concepts and language to young EFL learners, expressed in the line "I still felt stressed when I had to teach something new to young EFL learners" (College System, STCE, 2007b). This sentiment also reminds us that this group of student teachers are not yet ready for the teaching profession.

### 5.2.2.2: Focus Group Interviews

Similar to the findings above from course evaluations across the College system, student focus groups in College X said:

The reading content that we studied is highly relevant to teaching EFL learners because it provides us with different approaches, different reading theories, styles and techniques

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.1)

Also we learnt many approaches and how to apply them in EFL classrooms such as guided reading, shared reading and reading aloud. When we were students we didn't have such approaches, only the teacher read and we repeated after her, so it's important to learn and apply these reading approaches in our schools.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.1)

We've taken all the approaches... that can or cannot be implemented in Emirati classrooms... Now we know which is good and what is not good for young EFL learners... Also our view of reading teaching is different from our teachers. I mean they thought only about comprehension, pronunciation and grammar. We want students to develop a love of reading and not be afraid to make mistakes

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.1,2,6)

Student teachers were extremely positive towards the relevance of the reading content introduced in the college classroom. They also employ a series of binary oppositions, within an overarching distinction between the traditional teachers of the past (including many teachers currently working in government schools) and themselves who want to “develop a love of reading”, underpinned by the Vygotskian (1978) constructivist theory. However, it is a confident student teacher (in focus group one above) who recognizes that not all approaches introduced are suitable for Emirati government school classrooms.

When asked if the college classroom made specific reference to the UAE government school curriculum, the developing and reluctant student teachers responded eagerly with:

Yes of course...uh...

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.1).

...because we are going to be teachers in the UAE we have to base our lesson plans in college on the curriculum that they study

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.2).

However, it was the confident student teachers who noted that while connections were made with the UAE government school curriculum, the focus of the course was not explicitly on the curriculum itself, rather on the delivery of the curriculum:

Basically all our assignments and mini-lessons are related to the New Parade curriculum, like if we have to do a micro teaching lesson we have to relate it to a unit in the New Parade Curriculum. But I think we are not being taught the curriculum explicitly, we have been taught how to deliver the curriculum.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.18).

However, one reluctant student teacher expressed a desire to extend beyond the prescribed government school curriculum, to include culturally specific texts:

Now that I know about the different reading approaches suitable for EFL learners, I would like to integrate more the UAE cultures and customs into the reading approaches that I am going to teach. The New Parade curriculum doesn't do this

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p. 9)

### **5.2.3: Connecting Content Knowledge, Practical Experiences and Preparation for Teaching Practice**

While recognized in the conceptual framework p.46 that the development of concrete, relevant links between theory and practice throughout teacher education programmes are important (Bruner, 1986; Lave, 1988), these experiences are often too few and not sufficiently focused on the realities of the classroom (Crandall, 1996).

#### **5.2.3.1: Course Evaluations**

Teacher educators expressed their views on the provision of sufficient resources for the successful implementation of this course and that there was a very good balance of assignment types which were meaningful, appropriate and realistic for student teachers. Particular mention was given to the introduction of a new assignment where student teachers were required to teach a mini-reading lesson that demonstrated appropriate strategies and activities for a chosen reading approach to EFL learners:

Students especially enjoyed the mini-reading lesson which gave them experience of teaching reading before going on teaching practice.

(College System, TECE, 2007a, p.13)

Student teachers across the six colleges made an explicit linking of reading theory to practice as a recurring improvement. Moving from understanding reading as a multifaceted, complex phenomenon to immediate practical application of concepts and methodologies provided them with a basic foundation for the teaching of reading. The following quote was typical:

“It focuses on reading and how we could apply approaches to an EFL class and improve students’ reading in Arabic as well as English”.  
(College System, STCE, 2007b).

However, one student teacher felt that it would have been better if chosen reading approaches had been introduced for a longer period of time, before trialling them on teaching practice. She still felt that she was “thrown into the deep end” when faced with young EFL learners (College system, STCE, 2007b). This sentiment aligns with a previous quote from a student teacher in system wide course evaluations (p.151), who felt stressed when teaching new language and concepts to young EFL learners, despite other students’ positive feedback towards the revised reading course. This may be indicative of the developmental process of becoming a teacher (Fuller, 1969). However, it must also be noted that it is unknown as to the type of student teacher represented here as system-wide course evaluations were anonymous and student teachers were not categorized into the groups of confident, developing or reluctant student teachers, as was done at the college level. However, typically, based on other focus group discussions, this type of discursive distinction would represent that of a reluctant student teacher.

### **5.2.3.2: Focus Group Interviews**

Student teacher’s responses in the focus group interviews in College X seemed to be representative of students from across the six women’s colleges. All student teachers connected their newly acquired content knowledge with their college experiences using lexical items such as “delivery approaches used in college”, “now we know” and “this is how we got to know”. However, it was the confident student teachers who made explicit connections between content knowledge, collaborative practical experiences in the college classroom and preparation for teaching practice in government Emirati schools:

I think obviously that the course content prepared us for teaching practice because it not only provides us with all different kind of methodologies, different kinds of techniques and strategies that we could use with EFL learners, for example the interactionist approach but we practiced how to

do it in college through microteaching which gave us the chance to see if it worked or not, we all worked together to improve ourselves...  
(FGD: Group 1, 2007, p.6)

Even at this early stage of analysis, the desire to become agents of change, by setting themselves apart from their past teachers, moving to child-centred approaches and instilling a love of reading in EFL children, is apparent in the student teachers' responses below:

From our past experiences, some reading techniques in EFL classrooms were not really promoting the love of reading, so now as future teachers we really want to promote the love of reading so that students will have the desire to read for pleasure...we know what we have to do to improve this situation...  
(FGD: Group 1: 2007, p.6)

I think now it's time to give the students the chance to talk, speak, read and write and to do everything  
(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.5)

Although the reluctant student teachers are not as passionate or coherent about becoming agents of change, they attribute their newly acquired knowledge to their teaching experiences, as formed during their college practicum:

I know now the differences between my reading now and my previous reading because it developed strongly and this came from teaching the students.  
(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.4).

The course content was therefore not the only positive scaffold mentioned by student teachers for developing appropriate reading practices. Experiential knowledge, (Eraut, 1989) formed by student teachers on teaching practice placements in private English schools emerged as facilitating practice to theory and practical experiences in the college classroom (Kortegen et al. 2001):

We also observed native speakers in private schools using different kinds of approaches, so this helped us to build up more information from our observations and make connections back to the course we have here.  
(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.3)

We learnt how to create a print-rich environment from both college and the private schools.  
(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.2)

Student teachers in focus groups one and three revealed their intentions to trial and apply reading approaches observed in private English schools to an Emirati government school setting, in their following teaching practice placement:

We have already done lesson plans in our private schools with different reading approaches for example shared reading, reading aloud and guided reading so it will be very beneficial if we use them in UAE government schools.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.3)

I think that government schools are not aware yet of how important it is to have reading schemes for example Ginn, just like in the private schools. I will try to use them to improve reading.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.13)

The influence of the private school Teaching Practice Placement on developing reading styles, is further highlighted in one of their course assignments where numerous references are made to constructivist, interactive classroom environments, including concepts such as a 'literacy-rich reading environment':

Every element of that classroom was designed to allow students explore the elements of literacy. The literacy rich environment involved the selection of materials that will facilitate language and literacy opportunities. Therefore, my teacher in the Private school ensured that students had access to a variety of resources by providing many choices. The teacher used to exchange books in the classroom library to maintain student's interest and expose them to various ideas. As a result, children learned to love reading as they had many learning opportunities by looking at different types of books that they could read independently or with friends. I would like to do this in my classes in the future.

(EDUC 250, Assessment 2: 2007)

This emergent theme is extended further in section 5.2.3.2, in which a confident student teacher associates college pedagogy with methods used in private English schools.

#### **5.2.4: Addressing Research Question 1: Discussion of the Perceived Impact of Curricular Changes upon Student Teachers' Knowledge, Beliefs and Reading Teaching Practices**

In addressing research question one, Data Analysis, Stage One has looked at the discursive construction of developing student teachers and their perceived influence of a revised social constructivist teacher education curriculum upon their knowledge, beliefs and reading

teaching methods during teaching practice in foreign language UAE classrooms. Drawing on the work of Vygotsky (cited in Bodrova and Leong, 2001 and Wells, 1999; 2001, conceptual framework p.40), student teachers from across the six women's colleges explicitly linked reading theory to practice in both curriculum and assessment as an improvement of the revised reading methodology course. The revised course moved from understanding reading as a multifaceted, complex phenomenon to immediate practical application of concepts and methodologies in the college classroom, thereby providing a foundation for student teachers' development as EFL reading teachers. Of particular note was student teachers' satisfaction with the diversity of reading approaches introduced to them, along with explicit practice during microteaching lessons before they went on teaching practice placements. Despite the fact that all participants felt there was an increased theoretical, methodological and practical knowledge of EFL reading teaching for student teachers, teacher educators felt this course could have been extended beyond Year Two of the B. Ed.

Student teachers seemed to employ a series of binary oppositions, within an overarching distinction between the traditional teachers of the past (including many teachers currently working in government schools) and themselves (similar to Clarke's study 2005 cited in the conceptual framework, p. 50) who want to 'develop a love of reading'. Again underpinned by the Vygotskian constructivist theory as cited in Bodrova and Leong (1996) and expressed in the phrases "We didn't know" "we are now realizing" and "I think if we use", student teachers' newly acquired knowledge of theories and approaches enable them to critically reflect on their past and present experiences in light of the perceived benefits and application to an EFL classroom. This also highlights a basic division between student teachers as learners and as trainee teachers. "We didn't know" refers to their pre-college knowledge. Even at this early stage of analysis, the desire to become agents of change, as informed by their professional knowledge and beliefs, sets themselves apart from their past and present government school teachers. To a lesser degree, experiential knowledge formed on teaching practice placements in private English schools emerged as a positive scaffold for student teachers, facilitating practice to theory and theory to practice (Korthagen et al. 2001, conceptual framework, p.47).

However, there were differences among the three focus groups. The developing and reluctant student teachers tended to make generalizations and assumptions about the suitability of reading approaches for different age groups and ability levels. They lacked the synthesis,

critical analysis and coherence, evident in the confident student teachers' responses. For the weaker groups, new experiences and received theories may have only contributed to their learner knowledge and not transformed into their teacher knowledge (referred to in the conceptual framework p.56 by Prestage and Perks (2001) and Aubrey (1997 cited in Dickinson et al, 2004 p.1). However, the confident student teachers displayed sophisticated knowledge and criticality when choosing EFL reading approaches and took a strong ideological positioning that constructed their developing beliefs and practices. Therefore this study found that shifts in knowledge varied considerably depending on the ability level of the student teacher, thereby extending previous literature.

Analyzing the perceived impact of Curricular Changes upon student teachers' knowledge, beliefs and reading teaching practices are not the only constitutive effect of this case study. While recognizing that four levels of analysis operate simultaneously and are interconnected, nevertheless it is useful to separate these effects for analytical purposes so as to identify the pertinent issues within each. With this in mind, the next section explores the perceived and observed impact of teacher education Vygotskian constructivist delivery innovations upon student teachers' own reading teaching practices.

### **5.3: Data Analysis Stage 2: Analyzing the Perceived and Observed Impact of College Constructivist Delivery Innovations upon Student Teachers' Reading Teaching Practices** - perceptions of reluctant, developing and confident student teachers and teacher educators in College X

The analytic focus of Data Analysis, Stage Two relates to research question two, involving analyzing the perceived and observed influence of reforming delivery in the college classroom upon student teachers' reading teaching methods in a foreign language UAE context. Focus group discussions and semi-structured non-participant observations within College X, along with contextualized data from Online discussions and course evaluations conducted across six colleges within the College system reveal student teacher and teacher educator perspectives of the influence of three scaffolded teacher education approaches on student teachers' learning: performance modelling, systematic microteaching and problem-based learning.

### **5.3.1: The Intervention: Revised EDUC 250 Course Delivery Approaches- Scaffolding Student Teachers' Learning**

While as noted in the introductory chapter and rationale for the intervention, Chapter Three, although the B.Ed programme was designed to follow a Vygotskian Social Constructivist model, in its original iteration, the EDUC 250 reading course had more of a focus on reading as a multi-faceted complex phenomenon, rather than on how to teach reading itself. This resulted in student teachers not necessarily understanding how to apply theory to practice in EFL classroom in UAE schools.

Therefore the revised methodology course aimed to further assist and scaffold student teachers' learning of how to teach reading and address two key concerns:

- What is reading in a foreign language?
- How can our B.Ed graduates successfully teach reading to EFL learners in a UAE context?

As stated in the intervention chapter p.79, the EDUC 250 course set out to achieve these aims by revising the content of the course itself and incorporating revised teaching approaches into the course work plan, including performance modelling of reading strategies, systematic microteaching and problem-based learning. Drawing on the work of Bruner (1986) and Vygotsky (in Bodrova & Leong, 1996), as outlined in the conceptual framework p.63, all three delivery approaches serve as a positive scaffold for developmentally appropriate reading practices by providing opportunities for discussion, collaboration and reflection on teaching. As highlighted in the conceptual framework p.63, the Vygotskian approach to teacher education is one of 'assisted performance' (Vygotsky, 1978, p.87) in which the role of the teacher educator is to support student teachers, with support being gradually removed as they become more independent with the targeted teaching skills. In this way, these approaches aim to help student teachers to achieve what is just out of their reach.

Table 5.3 gives an overview of the major delivery changes made to the EDUC 250 course, following curricular changes mentioned earlier.

**Table 5.3: Summary of Delivery Changes made to EDUC 250 Course**

Original EDUC 250 Course Delivery Approaches	Sequence of Revised Delivery Approaches	Pedagogical rationale for changes made
<b>1. Explicit Performance Modeling</b>		
<p>Theoretical emphasis of top-down, bottom-up and interactive reading theories first language reading approaches such as guided reading, phonics and look say using</p>	<p><b>Introduction</b> to modeled lessons: Revisiting what and how student teachers were taught themselves in school.</p> <p><b>Core:</b> Teacher educator explicit performance modeling of EFL reading approaches including reading aloud, shared reading, choral reading, look-say, phonics instruction, reader's theatre and sustained silent reading.</p> <p>Teacher educator performance modeling of interactive reading strategies such as pointing, questioning, predicting, clarifying, summarizing, intonation, animation, use of props, the three stages in a reading lesson – pre, while and post. Implicit modeling of positive attitudes to reading.</p> <p>Additional performance modeling of reading approaches used published videos, contextualized videos of Emirati teachers, online vodcasts and electronic books.</p> <p><b>Close:</b> Modeled sessions were followed by a discussion of the applicability of a particular approach/strategy to a foreign language Emirati school setting. Whole class reflective dialogue was summarized on a flip chart.</p>	<p>Previous to this, it was observed by teacher educators that student teachers had difficulty understanding the differences between reading methods and often struggled to implement them effectively during teaching practice. Also as previous literature highlighted (Clarke et al, 2007; Barber et al, 2007), models provided by government school Arabic teachers were not necessarily examples of best practice</p>

Original EDUC 250 Course Delivery Approaches	Sequence of Revised Delivery Approaches	Pedagogical rationale for changes made
<b>2. Systematic Microteaching</b>		
<p>Limited microteaching - adhoc</p> <p>Develop activities and reading teaching styles during Teaching Practice.</p>	<p>Following teacher educator modeling of reading approaches, weekly systematic reflective micro-teaching/observation of microteaching sessions incorporated throughout the entire course.</p> <p>*Microteaching cycle based on Dickinson et al (2004)'s model - observation, rehearsal, teaching and reflection.</p> <p>Developed/Piloted a biweekly cycle:</p> <p><b>Week 1:</b> In pairs, plan a reading lesson using a selected EFL approach, based on a chosen textbook for a particular grade, sketch a lesson plan using example template, showing clear objectives, a particular language focus, develop and trial strategies and activities for pre-, while-, and post-reading stages in the foreign language classroom.</p> <p>In pairs, one teaches, the other evaluates. Teacher educator guides, monitors, facilitates and reviews individual teaching and encourages links between theory and practice. Conclusion to sessions may involve student teacher example mini-lessons, justifying how chosen reading approaches, related strategies and activities support reading development in a foreign language setting. Whole class reflective dialogue is summarized on a flip chart.</p> <p><b>Week 2:</b> Student teachers encouraged to reteach the same reading lesson as last week, using adaptations, as recommended by peers and teacher, where necessary. Student teachers are encouraged to record suggestions to enhance teaching techniques in future reading lessons while on Teaching Practice.</p>	<p>Incorporate microteaching into the course outline as a central component to the course, to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Activities tried and developed before teaching practice.</p>

Original EDUC 250 Course Delivery Approaches	Sequence of Revised Delivery Approaches	Pedagogical rationale for changes made
<b>3. Problem-Based Learning</b>		
Theoretical, informative teacher directed PowerPoint Presentations to introduce key concepts about Top-down, Bottom-up and Interactive reading approaches. Presentations relate to related literature. Extensive reading required.	Problem-based learning tasks incorporated into PowerPoint presentations to make lessons more interactive. Lessons require student involvement, input, discussion, extensive reading and sustained reflection. Conclusion to presentations include a slide, relating theory to practice in an EFL Emirati context. "What if" scenarios are raised, discussed and solved. Problem cards are distributed to groups, highlighting potential contextualized problem situations relating to the teaching of reading e.g. lack of relevant resources. Extensive reading maintained.	Based on a Vygotskian constructivist teacher education philosophy the focus is on student teacher learning, reflection, creativity, criticality, versatility and problem-solving skills, seen as essential preparation for the EFL Emirati reading environment

The following three sections focus on the specific delivery approaches of performance modelling, systematic microteaching and problem-based learning, as perceived by participating student teachers. To begin with, however, the more general constructivist role of scaffolding is discussed by student teachers from across the College system, as well as focus groups within College X. Their value on both group and individual support within the college classroom is evident.

### 5.3.1.1: Course Evaluations

There was no explicit reference made to the scaffolding student teachers' received in the college classroom in either teacher educator or student teacher course evaluations, conducted at the end of the intervention period, following a twenty week semester, unlike focus group discussions. However, the role of the teacher educator as an important and necessary model in the socialization process of becoming an interactive student teacher was highlighted by the course team. The following statement exemplifies this:

Our T.P. school settings do not necessarily fulfil what the students need to see as far as a model reading programme; in fact some of the schools don't have reading programmes and therefore modelling interactive reading lessons in the college classroom filled a great gap. Without adequate teacher education preparation, student teachers are in greater danger of teaching the way they were taught themselves.

(College System, TECE, 2007a)

Educating Emirati student teachers who are a product of such teacher-directed rote learning, (McNally et al, 2002) to incorporate interactive methods into the primary school classroom is a challenge, yet a necessary part of ensuring that future student teachers maximize opportunities to enhance EFL children's English literacy development. Many student teachers from across the six colleges acknowledged the influence of teacher education instructional delivery approaches, while commenting on their applicability to their future careers as reading teachers. The following comments were typical:

What makes it so beneficial is how it is delivered to the students. The way the teacher educator showed us how reading is such an interesting habit that a person can get used to doing and that is what this course delivered, and that's what makes it so easy and smooth to teach in my future.

This course is extremely important and especially for students who don't know anything about reading. Moreover, it's also helpful and needed during teaching practice. We as future English teacher could use those approaches when we teach in the future.

(College System, STCE, 2007b).

Microteaching was cited by almost all Emirati student teachers as being a positive aspect of the reading course, despite natural differences in delivery across the six women's colleges. Comments included "Microteaching lessons provided a sound foundation for developing as a student teacher" and "I became confident as a student teacher through micro-teaching practice" (College System, STCE, 2007b). Other general comments were made on the value of scripted lesson planning as providing a valuable scaffold, from which their lesson developed "Lesson plans helped us to structure our reading lessons during micro-teaching" (College System, STCE, 2007b).

The teacher educators noted that student teachers often clung rigidly to the content of the lesson plan, demonstrating a range of skills associated with the lesson plan, e.g. questioning of pupils, pre, while and post-reading stages (College System, TECE, 2007a). However, as the semester progressed, student teachers became more 'conscious of self', thus accommodating their thoughts about teaching and learning which was beginning to show in their reading practices. Additionally student teachers discussed and designed appropriate activities that reflected the Emirati culture. This was reflected in their design of a storysack

(Griffiths, 2001) which was a requirement of a related course on children's literature where they created resources, realia and materials to accompany a chosen textbook. As one student teacher said:

There is no way that any one will get bored during these classes, because the course is based on student- centred approaches where everybody shares their ideas.

(College System, STCE, 2007b)

### 5.3.1.2: Focus Group Interviews

Student teachers in the focus groups presented their own observations and perceptions of the role of teacher educators in scaffolding, supporting, instructing and socializing student teacher learning. In response to the question "How is your learning scaffolded in the reading course?" Manual inductive coding confirmed categories for analysis including the following lexical items: 'encouraged', 'challenging', 'helped', 'increased our motivation', 'teach each other' and 'individual support'. This demonstrates their perceptions of the level of scaffolding they received in the EDUC 250 reading course. The teacher educator's ability to intentionally challenge and motivate student teachers' beyond their zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978 cited in Bodrova & Leong, 1996, conceptual framework p.63) was a recurring emergent theme within Emirati student teachers' responses:

She always encouraged us to do something challenging.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.8)

The teacher educator helped us and increased our motivation to learn more.

(FGD, Group 2, p.8)

I think that the more you are challenged, the more you learn. I think that the teacher educator also helped us to teach each other and to learn from each other and she taught us how to peer edit... Not once, we have to do it three or four times in order to have good English... and we knew that we could do it

(FGD, Group 1, p.22)

The student teachers here seem to have moved to a new level of understanding in which they have become aware of their own thinking, along with the value of collaborative teaching and learning, including peer editing and self-correction.

However, despite their somewhat limited experiences beyond their own college, one confident student teacher highlighted her perceptions of the level of support and scaffolding provided by teacher educators at College X, in comparison with her knowledge of other universities:

I think we are lucky because in some other universities in AD, the students are not given as much scaffolding or help as we are, and I think this helped us a lot.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.22)

Student teachers' awareness of differentiated abilities within the college classroom and how the teacher educator supported and scaffolded college learning tasks is further shown:

Like in any other classroom, in our class we were at different levels, so I think our teacher educator knows when to be with you and to support you, help you and scaffold your learning and when to allow you time to be independent and work individually.

(FGD Group 1: 2007, p.21)

She always encouraged us to do extra research, where necessary. In that way, the teacher educator challenged us and helped us to learn more.

(FGD, Group 2:, 2007, p.4)

Also... we learnt how to scaffold students' learning.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.9)

Not only was their own learning scaffolded in the college classroom, but the teacher educator also explicitly modelled scaffolding of constructivist reading approaches for young EFL learners (as further detailed in section 5.5.2.):

Of course it has been scaffolded, because we are going to use it in our EFL classrooms and we have already used it in English medium schools because we were planning for the three most important activities, pre, while and post, which really enhanced children in learning to read.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.6)

A confident and developing student teacher recall their own days as a student in which limited scaffolding was provided and compare that to their own perceptions of its importance:

I think that it is the individual support from your teacher because you are scaffolded and move to another stage. We did not get this when we were in school.

(FGD, Group 1, p.21)

It's important before choosing any activity to think about the level of the students, so as to be able to scaffold them properly. When I was in school, we all learnt the same.

(FGD, Group 2, p.2)

The rest of Data Analysis Stage Two elaborates on how the limited contextualized data from course evaluations from across the College system is reflected and elaborated on in focus group discussions and non-participant observations in College X. It begins with student teacher perceptions of how the teacher educator scaffolded their learning using performance modelling as a delivery approach.

### **5.3.2: Teacher Educator Performance Modelling of Reading Strategies**

As outlined in Chapter Three, p.82, the revised methodology course introduced different forms of modelling in the college classroom. These included explicit performance modelling of reading approaches and strategies, implicit modelling using the ‘Think Aloud Approach’ (Loughran, 1996) to draw explicit attention to pedagogical choices and implicit modelling of positive attitudes towards reading. Models other than their teacher educator included the use of video and vodcasts, in which other teachers were showcased. This gave student teachers time to reflect critically on the suitability of different reading approaches for an EFL Emirati classroom. Focus group discussions below reveal the forms of modelling that seemed to have a last impact on the minds of student teachers.

#### **5.3.2.1: Focus Group Interviews**

As outlined on p.111, student teachers’ recall of memorable lessons as critical incidents in college was used to detect the impact of teacher educator performance modelling of reading strategies upon evolving knowledge, beliefs and practices. The conceptual framework of EDUC 250 (p.34) draws on multiple case studies of a number of researchers including Rice (2003) and Lunenberg et al. (2007) to indicate that teacher educators who have a solid foundation in pedagogy and subject matter are more effective teachers and have a positive influence on student achievements. This assertion was tested by asking the three groups of Emirati student teachers their views on memorable lessons in the college classroom. The impact of their teacher educator’s delivery approaches on their learning was analysed using manual inductive coding and the elements which emerged from all three groups included: ‘Shared Reading’, ‘Reader’s Theatre’, ‘Electronic books’, ‘Watching vodcasts/videos’, modelling of ‘Pre, while and post reading’ stages, ‘Modelled different reading lessons’, ‘Total Physical Response’ (TPR), using ‘Intonation and Predictive Questions’, ‘Acted out with us’ and ‘musical instruments’. The very presence of so many references to interactive reading practices shows the impact of teacher education on student teachers’ learning and identity construction as developing teachers. The following responses from the three focus groups

indicate the impact of not only modelling the reader's theatre approach in the college classroom on student teachers' confidence and motivation to learn but also their perceptions of the importance of 'learning by doing', consistent with this study's Vygotskian (cited in Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002; p.38 conceptual framework) social constructivist theoretical underpinning:

The most interesting one was reader's theatre about Cinderella because the teacher scaffold us how to implement reader's theatre into EFL classrooms or an English medium school. In this lesson the class was divided into different groups and every group took the role of different characters in the Cinderella story. After that we practiced reading as a group, then we practiced it as a whole class and that was with miming and by using gestures and intonation to go with a character. That helped us to implement reading approaches in EFL classrooms. This was really interesting.

(FGD: Group 1, 2007, p. 19)

Also she modelled different reading lessons, for example she modelled the Cinderella story... as if we are the children and she is the teacher... we really enjoyed acting because when you experience it you learn it.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.3)

...Yes, also you believe in yourself that you are achieving something in your life when you are actually doing, acting and practicing. This is how we got to know how to teach by this strategy.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.7)

Another memorable lesson for student teachers across the three groups of student teachers was performance modelling of an electronic book using the Shared Reading Approach, as described in an earlier study conducted in the present research setting:

First the teacher presented it as a PowerPoint presentation, then she asked us about what do you think that story will be about, then the whole class, every students tried to guess what the story would be about. Then she completed the story without telling us the answer, the story was created in an enjoyable and colourful way that motivated students to interact with the presentation directly and indirectly to know what was happening in the story. She was using intonation and predictive questions. Also she used TPR which helped us to understand the story more and try to guess what was happening next.... I also remember a Fish who Had a Wish, I liked the presentation of this story because I felt that I was in a student's place.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.7)

She also used an electronic book to read a story about a fish who had a wish and we really benefited a lot from her way.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.3)

...and she modelled the three stages, pre, while, post and she acted out with us and then she taught us how to go through the four stages of

shared reading – demonstration, participation, practice, production through that lesson, so it inspired me that time.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.19)

As described in the previous section, other technological models introduced to student teachers' included the use of videos and vodcasts as a stimulus for learning how to teach reading. This seemed to have a lasting impact on the memories of one group - the confident student teachers', as exemplified in the following three responses:

I also have something that stuck in my mind that my teacher educator showed us-vodcasts of classrooms of other teachers. We also saw the 'Teacher of The Year' which was I think in England, and we saw one of his lessons...He was the one who used Reader's Theatre with his students and technology..... He had that Smart Board...

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.20)

When we first did reading, we saw this video on how children decode and how the teacher could help them build up a sentence just from words and how they could stick the words together to build up a sentence, so we saw examples of effective classrooms.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.21)

This helped us a lot because we saw different models, styles and teachers.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.21)

The conceptual framework has highlighted the limitations of other types of modelling in the college classroom, including implicit modelling as evidenced in a series of multiple case studies conducted by Lunenberg et al (2007) in The Netherlands. However, this study contradicts their idea that student teachers often do not extensively learn from implicit modelling, because they do not recognize those examples. The following responses demonstrate implicit modelling of positive attitudes towards reading by the teacher educator and the lasting impact it has had on the student teacher:

But I think the way that the teacher models in class whatever the approach, it kind of shapes the way we teach and ...it encouraged me to think about how to promote students to love reading, to create a strong desire of reading for pleasure. I think this is the important thing.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.10)

...And we saw how we can involve all the students, give them the chance to participate and have a go at reading.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.3)

I think she gave us many beneficial things for teaching and we learnt indirectly from her ways every day.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.8)

Something that surprised the teacher educator/researcher was the fact that student teachers in Focus Group One made explicit connections between performance modelling observed during the EDUC250 course and an open book assessment component of an education studies course in the previous semester (EDUC 200), focusing on the teaching of speaking and listening. Student teachers were required to describe and analyse the videotaped lesson in terms of certain fundamental concepts of learning and teaching, specifically on how the observed teacher scaffolded learning through modelling, questioning, and feedback:

I think that when we did one of the assignments last semester when we had to watch a video tape about a teacher teaching a lesson, then reflect upon that lesson by answering three questions: how effective her question techniques were, how was her feedback and modelling, this encouraged me how to think carefully and critically about a lesson and how it could be taught.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.21)

This data not only displayed student teachers' abilities to critically reflect on how a teacher can model language and tasks for their students but also demonstrated the connections they made between methodology courses, college pedagogy and assessments across semesters. However, this ability to accommodate knowledge and skills was unique to the confident student teachers. The reluctant and developing student teachers tended to compartmentalize subjects and semesters, by making reference to their current studies only. For the confident student teachers, they realized that the process of analyzing lessons taught by others, including the teacher educator's, was preparation for when they would analyze their own teaching:

Sometimes it's easier to be critical of someone else than yourself, so when we get to see example teachers and can be critical of them, we learn how to be critical of ourselves and it helps us to be apply this in our teaching

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.21)

Of particular interest to student teachers across all groups was when the teacher educator modelled a musical approach to shared reading by providing student teachers with a sung version of the same story, while simultaneously viewing the printed text. Adding musical instruments to enhance the reading process, increase the level of student interactivity and create intrigue and magic was highlighted by student teachers:

Also what our teacher educator did, she brought this song for us 'Five Little Monkeys' and we had to read it and use instruments and we made the music by ourselves and we sang it all together... then each one of us was one character, so we had to act out by singing and reading as well... and even if we are adults but we liked this way.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.19)

But I also think that the most important thing that I learned about reading is the way you read, because that's what the children listen to...so if you are interactive... even the student teachers in our class enjoyed it, so what about the children, how they are going to enjoy it?

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.4)

My teacher told me that you could use musical instruments to create magic in the story, and I think this was really nice.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.7)

The potential impact of a musical approach to Shared Reading on the English reading and vocabulary acquisition of Emirati learners was further mentioned by the confident student teachers. Comments included "Songs are an enjoyable way for student to learn to read...The songs have effective educational objectives... They can read in an interactive way and share the reading...they learn new vocabulary and follow along with the script" (FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.19, 20). Also as discussed in the conceptual framework of EDUC 250 (p. 67), models observed by student teachers in both their past and present government school teaching practice placements were/are not necessarily examples of best practice (Clarke et al., 2007; Barber et al, 2007 and Taha-Thomure, 2003). For example, in the UAE, the oppression of behaviourist style formal schooling in which former teachers suffocate students, is emphasized by Taha-Thomure (2003, p.1) below:

Most teachers in the Arab world still engage in teaching techniques that are based on yelling, shouting, giving students unintelligent pieces of homework and lecturing from behind a desk with rows of students just staring at them to the point that sometimes students become indistinguishable from their desks.

This magnifies the role of the teacher educator in the present research context, which has been recognized by both teacher educators and student teachers:

"Our T.P. school setting does not fulfil what the students need to see as far as a model reading programme; in fact they do not have reading programmes and therefore we need to 'fill a great gap' in preparing student teachers to teach reading in an EFL Emirati environment"

(Teacher educator feedback to EDUC 250 course, 2006-2007).

Modelling by teacher educators is very important for us in order to implement appropriate techniques for EFL young learners in schools, because we didn't see it in government schools, either in the past or present. We, uh... just see it in college and while we were studying.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.10).

The teacher educator used different intonation, facial expression, so that while she is modelling, we can recognize these reading strategies and then be able to teach them.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.3).

She is teaching us a lot of things in reading that we didn't know before. Seeing models of this experienced teacher, is really beneficial for us when we start.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.8).

When asked the question “Are you taught on the EDUC 250 course as you are expected to teach on T.P.?” all student teachers responded extremely positively. The following example represents the sentiments of the three focus groups:

I think it was above my expectation, I thought it would just highlight some of reading strategies and that's it, but this course I think highlighted beyond what I expected because it taught us how exactly to implement the approaches, and we all had the opportunity to do micro teaching and to implement by ourselves

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.9).

The use of “taught us how exactly to implement the approaches” reveal student teachers' perceptions of the positive impact of teacher educator innovative delivery approaches upon their own teaching practices. One confident student teacher connected modelling of reading strategies observed in the college classroom with examples of best practice modelled in private English schools:

Actually every single input and every modelling that our teacher educator has done, I've really seen it in real life in Private English Medium schools, and everything that I've learnt in theory the college, I've also seen being practiced and being implemented in the private schools...by excellent teachers there. I've also tried it myself.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.10).

Even for us as student teachers, not just for the young students because now we read in a different way than before, we use intonation, we use sound effects, we use something that we didn't use before, we try to model good reading behaviours on T.P. ,just like our teacher educator.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.10)

Student teachers also felt they learnt the skills of pro-activity, resourcefulness and improvisation in the college classroom:

We learnt to be improvisers; we learnt how to be independent and how to think in advance in the classroom.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.15)

We learnt how to improvise and think of other ways because not all schools are fully resourced. If the reading scheme is not available in the government school, we could for example make a PowerPoint of the chosen story. There are many ways to teaching reading when you know how and you don't have to be dependent on school resources.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.14)

Although the benefits of theory, modelling, practice and reflection have been noticed by the confident student teachers, they are also aware of the artificiality and limitations of situated college practices and the challenges they face when entering the real EFL classroom environment:

And it's still a big challenge when you go to teaching practice, because it's different, theory and practice in college is different when it comes to real practice, it's also kind of challenging even though that you learnt about it. It helps you, like what you learn in class, how the teacher models, you practice micro teaching, seeing other pairs doing microteaching, it's all beneficial for you but when it comes to actual practice on teaching practice, it's still challenging. But what we have, what we got from the input in college helps us on teaching practice, but it still is not the same

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.9)

However, on the contrary, the majority of reluctant student teachers perceived teacher educator performance modelling as an exclusive way of teaching. Emphasized in the words "correct" and "knows the best way", this group's lack of ability to perceive teacher education practices as merely a starting point, from which to develop individual styles of reading teaching, rather rigidly copying what she says and does, demonstrates the limitations they have unconsciously placed on their own development as teachers:

Of course we learnt from her modelling and experiences - how to implement the reading approaches in the EFL classrooms. She had the correct approaches that are suitable for learners and she gave us the problems and solutions that ensure us that the students are learning. I will do the same.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.8)

Our teacher in the college knows that best way for reading, so she is teaching us the beneficial ways of using reading.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.8)

### 5.3.3: Systematic Micro-teaching in the College Classroom

As outlined in Chapter Three, p.84, in the revised EDUC 250 course, systematic reflective microteaching and observation of microteaching sessions were scheduled weekly in order to bridge the gap between theory and practice. By reconstructing understandings of reading teaching and learning, it aimed to help student teachers move from being self-conscious to being conscious of self. Spanning across two weeks, the teacher educator extended Dickinson et al's, (2004) model of observation, rehearsal, teaching and reflection, to include planning and re-teaching in the cycle. Focus group discussions below reveal student teachers' perceptions of how the teacher educator scaffolded their learning using systematic microteaching as a delivery approach.

#### 5.3.3.1: Focus Group Interviews

Emirati student teachers at College X have ample opportunities to practice their teaching skills in 'real' situations, incorporating thirty weeks of teaching practice over the course of a four year degree. Unfortunately, as highlighted in the introductory chapter p.26, those practical experiences are not always beneficial or positive in terms of improving reading practices, especially when pressurized by mentor government school teachers to use teacher-centred curriculum-based pedagogy (Clarke et al, 2007, conceptual framework, p.44). By contrast, student teachers have highlighted below the benefits of practicing constructivist student-centred reading approaches in the college classroom:

Microteaching assisted my way in choosing interactive activities and correct activities for the correct stage. For example, preparing students in the pre reading stage is different from asking questions in the while stage and a writing activity in the post reading stage.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.11)

In college we had the chance to pretend that we were in school and teaching real classes. We applied many lessons during micro teaching sessions, such as when Aisha and I prepared a reading lesson for the story "The Mazy Rainbow". I think this lesson was based on the reading aloud approach and we used three stages of reading – pre, while and post.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.4)

So this helped us a lot before going on teaching practice... So we are prepared and scaffolded for .....

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.7)

The safe, clinical environment provided by microteaching makes student teachers conscious of developing their knowledge, approaches and activities for improving the teaching and

learning of reading, without the complexities of the classroom situation such as time pressures and the management of students:

From micro teaching I've learned that there are huge and big differences between reading for decoding and reading for comprehension  
(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.11)

Yes, all the class practiced teaching reading sessions, for example guided reading, reading aloud and shared reading and we also saw the teacher perform these approaches, so we could apply them.  
(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.2)

We did micro teaching for showing an example where each student had to choose an approach like shared reading, reading theatre and reading aloud, so each student had to try to teach the lesson with that approach. This benefits us a lot.  
(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.5, 6)

The confident student teachers further emphasized the interconnection made in the college classroom between teacher educator modelling, microteaching practice, the Emirati government school primary curriculum and the new course assessment involving a mini-lesson and oral rationale, (As outlined in Table 3.1, on 'Summary of Curricular Changes made to EDUC 250 course'):

Microteaching helped us, because each one of us had a model lesson plan taught, practiced and developed by the teacher educator who assisted us. It's also based on the Emirati New Parade curriculum.... and each of us could use, exchange and manipulate our lessons to match with the assignments.....  
(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.18)

The fact that the first assignment for this course required student teachers to rationalize and demonstrate strategies and activities for a chosen reading approach to EFL learners, may have increased their motivation and participation in weekly systematic microteaching practice. Focusing further on the affirmative side, the confident and developing student teachers drew a connection between the teacher educator providing positive, constructive feedback on mini-lessons and students' motivation and self-esteem:

I think the feedback from the teacher educator is really good because you can't see what you did wrong, but from the feedback you can learn more. And I think also the positive reinforcement from the teacher educator is very good, she tells us our positives, so it motivates us to develop further  
(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.13)

We know that even our colleagues and our teacher helped us and gave us support and new ideas that we could implement. For example, sometimes when we taught something good, she just improved it so we had to add something to the slideshow or electronic story

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.3)

However, the following response from a confident student teacher implies a distinction between ‘real’ teaching and ‘microteaching’ in the college classroom and yet despite her awareness of the limitations of “an artificial setting”, highlighted the perceived benefits of connecting theory and practice:

Even though micro teaching is an artificial setting, it’s really beneficial, like in our class once we get to learn about the new reading approaches, and then we try to practice them to see how it works. It’s really beneficial for us because it kind of sets us up before we go on teaching practice.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.7)

From theory to practice, trialling of EFL approaches, collaborative involvement, observation of practice by peers, application in schools and reflection on practice; systematic microteaching in the college classroom has been reported by three ability groups of student teachers to aid the gradual development of professional expertise and minimize the risk of failure in the EFL primary classroom. Throughout focus group discussions, key lexical items using manual inductive coding highlighted the value all three groups of student teachers placed on microteaching practice including: “We had the chance to”; “See how it works”, “Sets us up”, “This helped us”, “We are prepared”, “Scaffolded”; “So we could apply them”, “it’s really beneficial”, “assisted my way in choosing activities...” and “gave us support and new ideas that we could implement...” The common view expressed here reflects Wilkinson’s, (1996, conceptual framework p.69) view of microteaching practice as better equipping student teachers with the necessary skills prior to beginning their student teaching.

While of the three groups, the confident student teachers realized that microteaching is not the same as regular teaching, (consistent with authors such as Klinzig and Folden (1991), conceptual framework p.70), their responses consistently point towards the benefits of this clinical based practice in which their teaching performance could be analyzed and evaluated not only by themselves but through peer and teacher feedback. Their coherent, elaborated responses expressed their beliefs about the benefits of microteaching, while displaying their developing criticality as teachers, rather than as learners (Feiman-Nemser and Buchman, 1995 cited in Furlong and Maynard, 1995):

We learnt many things on this course, for example we learnt theory and we practiced theory by doing micro teaching which gave us the chance to see if it works or not with young EFL learner. We worked all together in order to improve ourselves, so when we will go to school, we will practice what we learnt in the college because we know what we have to improve and what we need to work on again.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.7).

I think we learned from each other also in microteaching because we saw each other's lessons. I might do something interesting, but I might miss something out and learn when I see someone else's lesson.....

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.13)

### **5.3.4: Problem-Based Learning – Creating a Disturbance in the College Classroom**

As outlined in Chapter Three, p.81, in the revised EDUC 250 course, problem-based contextualized learning tasks were incorporated into PowerPoint presentations used by the teacher educator, to make lessons more interactive and relevant to an EFL Emirati environment. Simulations of "what if" scenarios were used to give student teachers experience in the issues involved in reading on a daily basis in an EFL setting. Problem-based simulations in the college classroom therefore provided an opportunity to not only address realistic classroom based problems in an Emirati context but to encourage student teachers to become reflective practitioners (as emphasized by Schön, 1983, conceptual framework p.72) and experiment with interactive reading approaches while engaged in teaching practice experiences. The following section exemplifies student teacher responses, as based on their experiences of problem-based related tasks in the college classroom.

#### **5.3.4.1: Focus Group Interviews**

As highlighted in the conceptual framework of EDUC 250, p.71, principles of problem based learning are firmly placed within constructivism in defining and developing the concepts of experiential and social learning (Jarvis et al., 1998). Manual inductive coding calculated constructivist sub-categories for analysis including 'presenting real problems'; 'contextualized learning'; 'discussing issues'; 'finding solutions'; 'critical thinking skills'; 'practiced reading teaching' and 'wrote anticipated problems in a book'. As a scaffolded approach in the teacher education classroom, its benefits were noted by all three focus groups, for example:

“In this course I learnt to think ahead and how to be an improviser for any kind of situation that could happen in our classrooms...” which may mean making “ongoing modifications and adaptations to your lesson”...”Depending on the students’ needs”

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.17).

We discussed in college about how we can apply guided reading in EFL classrooms because most young EFL Emirati learners are not able to read by themselves and they need support and scaffolding while reading. So, during problem solving discussions in college, we recommended that a teacher of young EFL learners should start by using reading aloud, then apply guided reading later

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.4).

She gave us real contextualized problems that we might face in EFL classrooms and we discussed suitable solutions to solve these problems.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.6).

Together, the group members have developed their own ‘language of practice’ in which they have discussed, authored and even documented example cases within the context of teaching reading in an EFL Emirati environment:

Before going on teaching practice we discussed a lot of problems that might happen in the classrooms and we wrote them in a book, so I used my own book to write anticipated problem and what could be possible solutions

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.16).

The developing and reluctant student teachers’ responses included descriptions of classroom problems, such as varying ability levels, student interests and suitability of reading approaches for EFL learners. These two groups often requested if their solutions were correct or not, claiming that they didn’t feel comfortable relying solely on their own opinions when sorting out a classroom problem. This lack of confidence seemed to inhibit some student teachers’ abilities to problematise and critique classroom issues, which in itself created a new type of disturbance. As one student teacher claimed

I think it is hard to form our own solutions because in the past we were not asked to think for ourselves or to question but by working step by step with our teacher educator we are able to...”

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.5).

Distinguishing between past and present learning experiences, this response echoes with criticism of the past, forming a broader set of oppositions that include “active’ versus ‘passive learning’. In the college classroom, the teacher educator therefore tried to move student teachers’ from describing a classroom problem to critically analyzing the causes to identifying

possible solutions. However, the reluctant and developing student teachers needed to be constantly nudged to move along on the developmental pathway towards more complex problem-solving. In contrast, the confident student teachers “assimilated and accommodated our own knowledge of teaching and learning...” (FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.16). They identified a learning cycle adopted in the college classroom, similar to Kortegen et al’s. (2001) Realistic Model of teacher education (as highlighted on p.47 of the conceptual framework).

The central role of problem-based learning within this cycle is evident, both before and after teaching practice, in which there is frequent “commuting” from experience to reflection and aimed at the development of theory with a small (t) (Eraut, 1994):

It’s not just like other Universities, in this course we have to go to schools to see the real life, we study something about reading and we have to implement it, and come back to the college and we try to solve classroom problems by discussing issues and finding solutions. If we have a problem again, we study something else and again implement it in the schools. At the end of the course, we will have gained a lot of experience.  
(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.22)

I think that we will be well prepared for teaching because as Amna said, by discussing and practicing reading approaches and going to T.P to implement them, then coming to the college and discussing again, reflecting and finding solutions to problems, this in general would eventually lead us to be fully prepared for the EFL reading classroom.  
(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.23)

The above student teachers’ confidence in the structure of the programme as an alternation between school and college in an attempt to optimize the integration between theory and practice is exemplified in their comments “If we have a problem again, we study something else and again implement it in the schools... At the end of the course, we will have gained a lot of experience” This in general would eventually lead us to be fully prepared for the EFL reading classroom”. Here teaching and learning are viewed from a Vygotskian social constructivist perspective in which teachers construct understand from experiences, using their already existing frameworks and incorporate both theory with a small (t) and capital (T) into their professional thinking. Yet another confident student teacher’s response below shows a deep awareness of the developmental process of becoming an EFL student teacher, extending beyond the EDUC 250 reading course in the college classroom:

What we learnt in college gave us the ability to think critically about the world of teaching, but when we get there we are obviously going to learn more and more in our future.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.23).

For the most part, the revised EDUC 250 course succeeded in encouraging student teachers to take ownership of their roles in problem-based learning, where they engaged in sustained reflection and dialogue about issues faced while on teaching practice. As they shape and reshape their perceptions about teaching and learning, this non-threatening simulated environment helped connect theory to practice and at a minimum increased student teachers' subconscious awareness of how to deal with contextualized issues relating to the teaching of reading in an Emirati environment. This brings value to their experiences and perspectives and encourages them to characterize teaching as a continuous process of problem-solving.

### **5.3.5: Perceived Impact of Teacher Education Delivery upon Developing Reading Teaching Styles: do you teach reading as you were taught to teach?**

Based on the idea that 'teachers teach as they are taught' (Blume, 1971 as highlighted in the conceptual framework p.65) and referring to section 5.3.2 on the perceptions of whether the teacher educator modelled the practices she expected to observe during teaching practice placements, student teachers were asked to summarize their overall perceived impact of teacher education delivery upon their developing reading teaching styles. In answering the question "do you teach reading as you were taught to teach?" the analysis of online discussions and face-to-face focus group discussions aim to examine these perceptions and compare them with teacher educator observation records and subsequent Teaching Practice reports.

#### **5.3.5.1: Focus Group Interviews**

Although responses were extremely positive towards teacher education pedagogy in the EDUC 250 course, student teachers across the three focus groups were not in agreement regarding their own teaching styles developed. Some student teachers claimed to have developed an interactive style of reading teaching, in contrast to behaviourist styles as observed in their past:

Really I think by having this course I really developed an interactive style of reading, because I think I thought more about how I could teach students by being a role model of teaching students reading, because I think really that was neglected in my past experience. Also this course I think was very beneficial because it was delivered in a good way and also helped me to improve my reading skills as both a teacher and as a student teacher as well. I think it was very beneficial we had a lot of reading and micro teaching which helped me as teacher to develop my reading skills.

(FGD: Group 1, 2007, p.3).

For me I will use the same interactive strategies as college...

(FGD, Group 3, 2007, p.9).

Yes, I teach reading as I was taught in college and I think the most successful with Emirati students is the interactionist way of reading because there hasn't been enough emphasis on reading in government schools. We really need to encourage reading a lot, because some of them are kind of scared when it comes to reading because they haven't done this much

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.5).

Implicit here is the idea that “being a role model” and “reading for pleasure” are associated with ‘interactive reading’ as observed in the college classroom while being “scared” and “not enough emphasis on reading” is associated with behaviourist reading approaches, observed largely in their past.

Other student teachers claimed to have developed a less radical, yet eclectic approach, that combines both interactive and behaviourist styles of teaching:

Throughout this course I think I developed two approaches to my teaching, interactive and behaviourist, because I tried to use both of them while I was in school. I tried to make a combination and take what is good from each approach and add them together in order to effectively teach EFL learners

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.9)

My style is a combination of the behaviourist and the interactive...of course we apply what we learnt from the college because it really helped us improve our teaching of reading and we will try use a combination of approaches and theories that we learnt.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.5)

I would like to integrate all the approaches...

(FGD, Group 3: 2007 p.9)

Specific strategies of reading teaching mentioned by student teachers as being the most influential on their own reading teaching styles, were interactive methods modelled by the teacher educator such as reader's theatre, shared reading, reading aloud, guided reading, electronic books to engage young EFL learners, use of musical instruments and the three stages in a reading lesson (As detailed in section 5.3.2.1 when asked to describe a memorable lesson from their college classroom). Example responses include:

...reading aloud in the three stages, in the pre- while and post stages, I also like teaching shared reading...

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.8)

...traditional methods like reading aloud and we can use new approaches such as guided reading and shared reading

(FGD, Group 2: 2007 p.5)

I strongly agree with shared reading and reader's theatre because this is the way to interact with children and this will help the students to interact with you

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.1)

Interestingly none of the groups mentioned a desire to teach reading using behaviourist methods alone, despite years of exposure to traditional models as learners themselves along with observations of mentor school teachers during teaching practice placements in government schools. The awareness that they were still at the beginning of their careers echoed in the reluctant student teachers responses, with one student teacher saying "I can't say now my style of reading teaching because I am a student, not a teacher" (FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.9). Further evidence of student teachers' abilities to construct and reconstruct their styles of teaching reading, as based on their belief systems is clearly expressed in Data Analysis Stage Three. Focusing on professional beliefs offers not only a testimony of change but an embrace of present/future learning.

#### **5.3.5.2: Online Discussion Postings**

Contextualized online discussion data from across six women's colleges in the UAE College system revealed that findings in each college were representative of student teacher perceptions in College X. Despite the fact that the Online discussion postings below lack specific reference to reading styles developed (as raised in the face-to-face focus group discussions), they reiterate the perceived positive impact of teacher education delivery upon their reading teaching practices in schools:

While I was on teaching practice, I tried my best to apply what I learned in EDUC 250 in my workplace. I used reading aloud, shared reading, guided reading and reader's theatre. I realized that using different methods help you as a teacher and help the students to do well in reading.

(Online Discussion Posting (ODP) No. 56, 2007)

I think I learned a lot from the course 250 and when I was on teaching practice I used different reading methods to teach the learners in the English medium school. I applied guided reading and reading aloud in the school with great understanding. The guided reading approach

helped me a lot to enhance the students' reading abilities, because it develops their confidence in reading in front of peers.

(ODP, No. 61, 2007)

I believe I have benefited a lot from education experiences in the EDUC 250 course, because our teacher taught us a lot about different reading approaches before we went on teaching practice. I have tried many of the interactive approaches and activities she showed us when I was in schools. It really helped me.

(ODP, No. 67, 2007)

Student teachers' perceptions of their developing reading teaching styles are now compared with teaching practice observations and subsequent teaching practice reports, conducted by three teacher educators in College X. As stated in the methodology chapter, an attempt was made to minimize inter-observer differences in styles of reportage or different interpretations of the observed reading lessons. This was done by using a guided competency template (Table 4.5) and engaging in agreed mentoring practices, as developed by the education department (Appendix 5) for the pre, while and post observation stages. At a minimum, this ensured that teacher educators were aware of what they were looking for in the reading lessons observed. However, as stated in Chapter Four, p. 120, despite these attempts to construct inter-observer reliability, the whole process of observation can be "very idiosyncratic or unreliable" (Zhang, 2003, p.28) and much of what occurs in a classroom is still subjectively recorded.

#### **5.3.5.3: Teaching Practice Observations in Government Schools – Three Groups**

Teaching practice observations and subsequent teaching practice reports by mentors at College X were used to support the key focus group data, while at the same time revealing emerging tensions and differences in reading styles among the three groups of student teachers (Confident, developing and reluctant). One competency area - 'Implementing and Managing Learning' is used to triangulate this data, as exemplified below.

Three styles of reading teaching were observed by mentors at College X, firstly the most progressive group (the confident student teachers) endeavoured to enact pedagogic change in schools. By combining both behaviourist and constructivist reading approaches, they have developed an eclectic style of reading teaching, as exemplified in the observation report below:

Combining her previous learning experiences as a learner with college experiences, her reading teaching style included a combination of behaviourist and interactive methods...depending on her aim at that

particular time in the lesson... She used the best of both methods. She set up a temporary reading corner and created a literacy-rich and print-rich environment, while remaining enthusiastic and focused throughout the placement... Student X has excellent potential as a future EFL student teacher.

(College X, TPCMR: Confident Student teacher, 2007b)

The observed EFL reading approaches implemented by the confident student teachers confirm that many of them incorporated college experiences and understanding into their own teaching. Reiterating the perceived positive impact of teacher education pedagogy in statements made during their online discussions such as “I have tried many of the interactive approaches and activities she showed us when I was in schools... but I also use repetition” (ODP, No. 67, 2007, p.12), teaching practice reports further comment on these student teachers’ abilities to plan for, implement and reflect on the importance of an eclectic approach to reading teaching. For example:

She consulted regularly with her school mentoring teacher to increase her own knowledge and understanding of reading teaching. She seemed to be also able to apply what she had learnt in college about reading with her reading practices in school. During this placement, she got involved in the day-to-day running of the school and developed a good understanding of different approaches to reading, such as reading aloud, sustained silent reading and guided reading... Using the revised college planning template, Student X devised activities for the pre-, while and post reading stages... This was also evident in her teaching as her lessons had clear stages that flowed from one into the other. She planned for a variety of reading activities to maintain students' attention in the lessons that combined both behaviourist and interactive methods. These included the use of story sacks, comprehension questions, repetition of key vocabulary in the story and post-reading games. The children were actively involved and stimulated through a variety of questioning.

(College X, Teaching Practice College Mentor Report (TPCMR):  
Confident Student teacher, 2007b)

Secondly, the developing student teachers seem to have developed a true interactive reading style of reading teaching, leaving behind the teacher-centred paradigm of their past. Lesson observations of these student teachers reported a core focus on interactive reading approaches such as shared reading, reader’s theatre, reading aloud and group reading, as informed by a Vygotskian constructivist teacher education approach (*College X* (TPCMR, 2007b).

Overall, Student X's style of reading teaching is interactive and motivating. She tried out a number of reading approaches, including reading aloud, sustained silent reading and guided reading. The students are active in her classes. She has very good potential as a teacher of English to foreign language learners.

(College X, TPCMR, Developing Student teacher, 2007b)

Student Y demonstrated she was able to manage groups effectively. She was very at ease with the students and very positive in her dealings with them, so was able to develop an excellent rapport with them in a short time. In her observed lessons, student Y was able to motivate her students through a variety of interactive kinaesthetic activities (e.g. props for each character to be raised throughout the story) and so they remained engaged and on task until the end of the story.

(College X, TPCMR, Developing Student teacher, 2007b)

Drawing on micro-teaching reading lessons practiced in college X, both confident and developing student teachers sometimes taught 'high risk' lessons, in terms of classroom management and organization as in the below:

During one of her lessons, she set up literacy centres, where small groups of students moved from one activity to the other, all based on her chosen text "The cat in the hat" by Dr. Seuss. She rang a bell to catch students' attention and gather them all together as a whole class. Then they moved onto the next centre to continue responding to the story. In this way, she integrated the four skills. She also created an effective literacy display related to this lesson.

(College X, TPCMR, Developing Student Teacher, 2007b)

Both groups, but particularly the confident student teachers, showed an ability to use the lesson plan as a guide, thereafter improvising and adapting the lesson according to the student's needs. Drawing on the conceptual framework p.66, Jay, (2002, p.12) states that "when students are ready, they should teach in personalized ways":

Her lesson plans showed a very clear student centred focus, with opportunities for pair work, group work and individual work. Student X's materials were of a high standard for teaching and learning that had accurate language and were very appropriate for the needs of the learners. She carefully structured her activities and tasks focusing on appropriate strategies to encourage and maintain active student participation including predicting, summarizing, comprehension and role play...She developed a good rapport with her students, listened to their needs and created a positive learning environment for her students to thrive in.

(College X, TPCMR: Developing Student teacher, 2007b)

The activities she planned for students were pitched to the right level and were student centred. In her plan Student X had clearly thought about possible student responses to the questions she asked and was able to plan a language focus to her lessons, for example the descriptive words used in the story of "The Picky Prince" This degree of planning was impressive for a second year student. She was also thoroughly prepared for lessons and it was clear she had familiarized herself with the texts she used. ...Her "Brown Bear, Brown Bear" lesson demonstrated her real creativity, improvisation skills and the ability to plan a range of activities which met the learning needs of her students.

(College X, TPCMR, Confident Student teacher, 2007b)

Particular strategies trialled by these two groups of student teachers during teaching practice placements match those modelled in the college classroom, such as use of big books, puppets, picture cues, electronic books and games to enhance students' language learning:

Student X used a range of resources and equipment effectively. Her observed lesson demonstrated her ability to use a big book, puppets, worksheets, picture cards, the whiteboard and the walls around the room, to effectively deliver the lesson. The lesson was thoroughly enjoyed by the students and she used the classroom space effectively. She used appropriate strategies to encourage and maintain active student participation. She developed an excellent rapport with her students and created a positive learning environment for her students thrive in.

(College X, TPCMR: Confident Student teacher, 2007b)

Student X submitted plans ahead of time and discussed ideas with both her MST and MCT. She prepared fantastic materials to accompany her lessons including realia for stories she taught and professionally produced PowerPoints with accompanying sound. Amena had clearly put hours of effort into producing such quality materials which hopefully will be of use in the future, but she needs to realize that such depth of preparation is not possible in a day to day situation... She read aloud to the students with excellent expression and correct stress and intonation. She also managed to set up a game to revise the colour and names of animals in the story they had just read. Her instructions were clear and students achieved what they were supposed to.

(College X, TPCMR: Confident Student teacher, 2007b)

Although the above student teacher's materials were extremely well-prepared, her college mentor alerts her to the fact that this level of efficiency may be unrealistic as a graduate teacher. This advice aligns with Korthagen et al.'s (2001) realistic approach to teacher education (conceptual framework p. 47) in which the teacher educator determines ways to help people become realistic teachers. However, in light of the developmental process of becoming an experienced teacher (Fuller, 1969, see, p.64), this advice may be unrealistic.

College mentors reported that engaging young learners in the pre, while and post reading stages was frequently practiced by confident and developing student teachers, as observed in the college classroom. Example responses include:

She tried at all times to maximize the reading experience by varying her pre-, while- and post- reading strategies. The children were actively involved and stimulated through questioning, dialogue and journal writing.

(College X, TPCMR: Developing Student teacher, 2007b)

She set a purpose for reading by asking pre-reading questions. She then maintained the children's interest throughout the reading by varying the activities. Students were motivated and challenged.

(College X, TPCMR, Confident Student teacher, 2007b)

Reiterated in focus group responses (section 5.3.2.1.), when asked to describe a memorable lesson from their college classroom, these student teachers cite observing the three stages of a reading lesson as being influential on their own practices. While translating modelled behaviour in the college classroom into student teachers' own teaching practices is challenging, these two groups of Emirati student teachers demonstrate an ability to enact pedagogic change in schools, in contrast with their previous learning experiences. In this way, they are 'recasting' conceptions of reading teaching in the UAE (Freeman & Johnson, 1998 discussed in conceptual framework, p.38).

While the confident and developing student teachers taught reading predominately as they had reported in face-to-face focus group discussions and online discussions, the third group - the reluctant student teachers have unconsciously developed a behaviourist style of reading teaching. This is despite attempts to draw a clean break with their past behaviourist learning experiences in favour of constructivist teaching approaches, as advocated in the college classroom, saying:

I think I will use the reading strategies promoted in college in UAE classrooms because this is the right way to teach reading. I will forget about the traditional way because I didn't learn that much from it.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.9).

Yet teaching practice reports, such as the examples below, reveal that in practice this group of student teachers predominately teach reading as they had been taught, rather than as they had been taught to teach, despite an interactive lesson plan being presented:

Her reading style is mainly teacher-centred and she provides limited opportunities for students to be active in her classroom. On her next placement, Student X should try to relax more so that she can enjoy being with the students. She needs to have more confidence in her ability to teach and with increased confidence I'm sure her rapport with the students can only improve. Student X's potential as a teacher of English is of a satisfactory level.

(College X, TPCMR, Developing Student teacher, 2007b)

Student Y's classroom management skills are good and she has an effective teaching persona and can command students' attention. However, she needs to focus on engaging students actively in learning activities through effective whole class, group and pair work. She needs to understand that students cannot learn by just listening and that students need to be active with relevant and meaningful language learning activities.... She fills a lot of class time with teacher talk and does not engage students in language use above word level answers.

(College X, TPCMR, Reluctant Student teacher, 2007b)

Student Z's style of teaching is traditional. She uses lots of repetition and focuses on accuracy of language. She has good classroom control. However, she needs to work on eliciting more answers from students by giving them time to answer, encouraging them to interact in a variety of groupings and developing her own questioning techniques.

(College X, TPCMR, Reluctant Student teacher, 2007b)

Here, the teacher-centred behaviourist paradigm, in which students are passive learners and not challenged beyond the 'word level' is reminiscent of years of exposure to traditional reading instruction by former student teachers and current government school mentor teachers. As highlighted in the conceptual framework p.58 (Richards and Pennington's ,1996 study in Hong Kong), while student teachers may mimic mini-lessons taught in the college classroom and while teacher educators may discuss their pedagogical choices with their student teachers, "this does not necessarily mean that the students can make the translation to their own teaching" (Lunenberg et al, 2007, p.591). They may unconsciously base their teaching more on their previous experiences and revert to what Oldfather et al. (1994) characterize as the 'default mode' in education, to which they are familiar. While remaining unaware, this collapse into the comfort zones of behaviourist methodologies contradicts the constructivist pedagogy promoted in the college classroom and therefore demonstrates that this group of reluctant student teachers has failed to shift from a transmission, product-orientated perspective to a constructivist, process-orientated perspective, where students are active participants in the reading process, rather than passive recipients of transmitted knowledge.

Further evidence of this rigid, traditional mentality was seen when moving from the planning to the implementation stage of learning. All the reluctant student teachers clung rigidly to the lesson plan as a blueprint. As recommended by the college mentor in the example report below, this student teacher needs to begin "teaching students rather than teaching her plan".

Student X now needs to move onto thinking about teaching students rather than teaching her plan. She needs to focus more on the students

themselves to be able to accurately assess their level. She was determined to use a lesson that she had prepared in college rather than plan according to the needs of the students in the private school.  
(College X, TPCMR, Reluctant Student Teacher, 2007b)

However, beginning reluctant student teachers are more concerned with their own teaching approaches and therefore lack the ability to focus on reading lessons from the perspective of the learners. In this way, learning to become a student teacher is developmental, as noted by Fuller (1969 cited in the conceptual framework, p.64) where styles of reading teaching are being continually shaped and reshaped. Yet, whether or not in this case study, these findings relate to a developmental issue or a cultural issue is unknown. This could be an area for further research.

### **5.3.6: Addressing Research Question 2: Discussion of Perceived Impact of Teacher Education Delivery Approaches upon Student Teachers' Reading Teaching Practices**

The analytic focus of Data Analysis, Stage Two related to research question two, involving analyzing the perceived and observed influence of reforming delivery in the college classroom upon student teachers' reading teaching methods in a foreign language UAE context. Drawing on the work of Bruner (1986), Vygotsky (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002) and Verity (2005) referred to in the conceptual framework (p. 63, 64) three scaffolded teacher education approaches: performance modelling, systematic microteaching and problem-based learning were found to provide student teachers with opportunities for discussion, collaboration and reflection on teaching. By providing greater opportunities to link theory to practice, student teachers not only felt they were taught in the EDUC 250 course as they were expected to teach on T.P. but they also made connections between modelling of reading strategies observed in the college classroom with examples of best practice modelled in private English schools, as discussed more fully on page 154.

The teacher educator's ability to intentionally challenge and motivate student teachers' beyond what was just out of their reach was a recurring emergent theme within Emirati student teachers' responses. Not only was their own learning scaffolded, but explicit modelling of scaffolded constructivist reading approaches for young EFL was also observed and cited as a major influence on shaping what they do in the EFL classroom. Critical for professional development as recognized by Bransford et al, (2000, p.204) in the conceptual

framework p. 61, is to involve student teachers in “learning activities that are similar to ones that they will use with their students”. Using manual inductive coding, effective elements of teacher education methodology, as remembered by student teachers in this study, included ‘Shared Reading’, ‘Reader’s Theatre’, ‘Electronic books’, ‘Watching vodcasts/videos’, modelling of ‘Pre, while and post reading’ stages, ‘Modelled different reading lessons’, ‘Total Physical Response’ (TPR), using ‘Intonation and Predictive Questions’, ‘Acted out with us’ and ‘musical instruments’. Teaching Practice reports reveal that many of these modelled strategies were indeed trialled by student teachers during their teaching practice placements. These findings are consistent with international claims in the conceptual framework p.65 (e.g. Bass & Chambless, 1994; Jay 2002), with an emphasis on the multiple case study approach used by Lunenberg et al. (2007) in the Netherlands, all which found that student teachers learn about teaching by example, as much as through the content and activities presented.

To a lesser degree, yet contradicting the case study findings of Lunenberg et al’s, (2007 cited in the conceptual framework p.65), the influence of implicit modelling of positive attitudes towards reading and constructive feedback on mini-lessons by the teacher educator was reported as increasing student teachers’ confidence and motivation to learn. The fact that the first assignment for this course required student teachers to rationalize and demonstrate strategies and activities for a chosen reading approach to EFL learners, may have also increased their motivation and participation in weekly microteaching practice. Other skills developed during microteaching practice included proactivity, resourcefulness and improvisation. Consistent with another study conducted in the Gulf by Al-Methen, (1995 as cited in the conceptual framework, p.70) both teacher educators and student teachers felt this practical experience in college minimized the risk of failure in the EFL primary classroom and provided an opportunity for their teaching to be analyzed and evaluated not only by themselves but through peer and teacher feedback. Student teachers’ overall confidence in the structure of the programme as an alternation between school and college, in an attempt to optimize the integration between theory and practice is exemplified in their responses, where they use their already existing frameworks and incorporate both theory with a small (t) and capital (T) into their professional thinking. This mirrors Korthagen et al.’s (2001) realistic model of teacher education, as outlined in the conceptual framework p. 47. Together, they have developed their own ‘language of practice’ in which they have discussed, authored and even documented example cases within the context of teaching reading in an EFL Emirati environment.

However, there were differences among the three groups of student teachers. Although connecting theory and practice through modelling, microteaching practice, problem-based learning, the Emirati government school primary curriculum and course assessments increased student teachers' understanding and criticality of the learning-teaching cycle, it was only the confident student teachers who were aware of the artificiality and limitations of situated college practices. They consciously raised challenges they may face when entering the real EFL classroom environment. However, on the contrary, the majority of reluctant student teachers perceived teacher educator performance modelling as an exclusive way of teaching and lacked the ability to perceive teacher education practices as merely a starting point, from which to develop individual styles of reading teaching, consistent with Loughran (1997) and Jay's, (2002) fears expressed in the conceptual framework, p.67. Also the confident student teachers displayed an ability to accommodate knowledge and skills (Piaget, 1973 cited in the conceptual framework p.55) by connecting previous learning experiences in college with performance modelling observed during the EDUC250 course, whereas the developing and reluctant student teachers tended to compartmentalize their learning from year to year. Teacher educator observations also revealed differences amongst the three groups of student teachers. For example, the confident student teachers attempted to take more risks with their teaching, in terms of interactive strategies used, classroom management and organization and enact pedagogic change in schools, in contrast with their previous learning experiences. This group claimed to have developed an eclectic style, that combines both interactive and behaviourist styles of teaching. However, while the majority of developing and reluctant student teachers advocated drawing a clean break with their past behaviourist learning experiences in focus group discussions, in favour of constructivist teaching approaches; teaching practice reports reveal that in practice many of them teach reading as they had been taught, rather than as they had been taught to teach. As recognized in the conceptual framework, p.56, student teachers can espouse particular knowledge and beliefs, yet still employ classroom practices that contradict these (Woods, 1979). This distinction is one of the key findings of this study and one that shows the power of the apprenticeship of observation in influencing external behaviours of Arabic learners, especially for weaker student teachers. This idea is explored further in the next section.

## **5.4: Data Analysis Stage 3: Analyzing the Perceived Impact of Teacher Education Pedagogy upon an Evolving System of Knowledge and Beliefs** - perceptions of student teachers across six colleges

The analytic focus of Data Analysis Stage Three is the discursive construction of reality for developing EFL teachers of reading, as reflected in their systems of belief and knowledge. This study is 'constitutive' and as such is focused on describing and interpreting socially constructed meanings, rather than explaining or justifying them. In addressing research question three, the analysis of both online discussions and face-to-face focus group discussions will therefore aim to "examine actual patterns of language use with some degree of detail and explicitness" (Luke, 1996, p.11). In this way, this study incorporates an element of discourse analysis into its analysis of inductive data, as discussed in section 4.7.1. Although "the comparability of qualitative data can never be assumed" and "the activity of theory-building may be as controversial at the level of techniques and tools as it is in other respects" (Lee and Fielding, 2004, p.532), by interpreting these comments, a form of theory building was created.

### **5.4.1: Prior Reading Experiences and Memories of Past Teachers**

In order to analyze the perceived impact of teacher education pedagogy upon evolving knowledge, beliefs and practices, student teachers' recall of previous reading experiences and past student teachers was targeted. The issue of the influence of prior reading experiences has been raised in the conceptual framework p. 49 with Lortie, (1975) arguing that the attitudes of student teachers are forged during their experiences as students, long before they arrive at a teacher training college for formal training as a teacher. As is evidenced below, the majority of Emirati student teachers cited previous reading experiences in school as a major influence on shaping what they do or don't do in the EFL classroom.

#### **5.4.1.1: Online Discussion Postings**

As highlighted in the conceptual framework p.49, the student teachers in this study are a product of teacher-directed rote learning, using state-developed curriculum and test-driven assessment (McNally et al, 2002, Clarke, 2005). This is amplified in the following postings:

In the past we used to be silent in the classroom and just repeat everything after the teacher

(Online Discussion Posting (ODP), No. 33, 2007)

I noticed that teachers didn't care about teaching reading but they wanted to finish the curriculum and get the students ready for the exams.

(ODP, No. 72, 2007)

In the classes that I was in, teachers used traditional reading methodologies. They used traditional strategies which emphasized words in isolated form. They used memorization, repetition and drilling in order to teach new vocabulary without using or teaching it in a meaningful or authentic context. To explain more, the teachers that I had in my previous years did not have reading lessons including storybooks to teach vocabulary in a more authentic context, or teaching grammar in an indirect way. This affected me to use incorrect syntax when translating from my mother tongue language to a foreign language.

(ODP No. 27, 2007)

The experience of behaviourist teaching methods involving drilling, repetition, textbook reading, grammar, memorization and accompanying comprehension exercises have been so widespread to be taken as given among Emirati student teachers (e.g. ODP No. 27; 34; 37; 41; 45; 51; 69). Reflected in their postings, the memories which they bring to their teacher education reading course are often coupled with emotional stress. The last posting above openly attributes use of 'incorrect syntax' to didactic teaching approaches. Conversely, the majority of former teachers that student teachers recalled from their childhood memories were remembered with fear and/or resentment because of their dominant voices and frequent use of corporal punishment, rather than for any pedagogical inspiration they provided. The following comment was typical:

Honestly, my past experience was not the best. The teacher mainly used traditional methods which had a negative impact on the class motivation. She shouted at us and even hit us if we didn't remember the answers to the reading.

(ODP, No. 37, 2007)

The best that the student teachers had to say about a past teacher was that, in contrast to the norm, she was interactive and resourceful:

I remember one teacher from primary school that was very effective. Even though there was a lack of teaching resources, she managed to have an effective learning environment. She tried to make reading lessons interesting by involving us in reading books outside the curriculum. Sometimes she brought books from home and read to us. I really enjoyed her classes.

(ODP, No. 19, 2007)

Despite this acknowledgement of positive learning experiences, behaviourist, rigid teaching approaches seemed to have been so prevalent to be taken as given among student teachers.

#### 5.4.1.2: Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews within College X reiterated and extended the negative memories of past reading experiences expressed during online discussions:

I think really that developing a love of reading in children was neglected in my past.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.9).

In the past we didn't learn how to read and how to answer and do activities, because they didn't use these stages.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.1).

We didn't learn much in reading, we just read a paragraph then answered the questions, and we didn't experience different approaches and strategies, they just gave us tests or we used.....

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.3).

Cross-referencing with manual inductive coding revealed passionately the negative influence of past teaching approaches, including a predominate focus on textbook reading, comprehension questions and grammar:

We only used our curriculum book, not for the purpose of reading but just to focus on the textbook itself, to read and answer comprehension questions.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.3).

Our style in learning reading was traditional, where the teacher focused on grammar and the textbook, however I think now it's time to give the students the chance to talk, speak, read and write and to do everything.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.5).

It was a strict environment; the teacher was shouting, controlling, using traditional ways and methods of reading, children sitting still in places. I really don't want to implement this in my future

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.28).

Similar to Clarke's (2005) findings highlighted in the conceptual framework p.53, in which students are compared to machines (reminiscent of behaviourist education in Dickens's, 1984, p.1, *Hard Times*), these former learning experiences were predominately robotical, mechanical and teacher-centred. Linguistic choices such as "the traditional way forced the students to read" and "it was just spoon feeding" (FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.5), reinforced student teachers' rejection of the past. Their desires to take the different learning needs of

individual students into consideration and increase student interaction during reading lessons is expressed in the sentiment "However I think now it's time to give the students the chance to talk, speak, read and write and to do everything" (FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.5). Implicit here is that 'teacher-centred' classrooms promote passive learning and 'student-centred- classrooms promote active learning.

An additional element evident in focus group discussions is student teachers' consistent use of pedagogical approaches of their past teachers as a medium to distance themselves from the past:

I think one of the things that affected me is past teachers and the way they are teaching students. This has led me to hate the subject itself.  
(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.27).

Again negative emotions such as these are linked back to teaching practices observed during student teachers' own schooling. Similar to Online discussions, the confident student teachers attribute their own use of incorrect syntax and language errors to memories of didactic teaching approaches, including the grammar translation approach. Interestingly, this group of student teachers were those with the best language skills and yet the most self-critical:

I think that the traditional methodology that my previous teacher used with me was based on memorization and teaching direct grammatical instruction and teaching vocabulary in isolated form. This lead me to use sentences incorrectly and not meaningfully, this is because they never taught me how to use this vocabulary in meaningful and authentic.....  
(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.24).

I think the focus was more on translating the word into Arabic. There is no point of translating each word, even the easy words they translated into Arabic.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.24)

Another confident student teacher went on to describe the predominant focus of bottom-up reading approaches, namely the alphabetic approach in which students spelt new words alphabetically, rather than a focus on 'sounding out' words phonetically, as introduced in the college classroom.

...for example, if we have the word GO we have to learn that it's G and O but we didn't know how to pronounce it correctly, we sometimes pronounced it incorrectly and the teacher accepted that and we didn't use language outside the classroom, we just used it in the classroom and after we went home we didn't use it at all.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.23).

What is revealed here is dissatisfaction with direct classroom-based reading as opposed to authentic, meaningful reading experiences that extend beyond the classroom itself. Interestingly, as evidenced later in this chapter, although all students agreed that there was a predominant focus on accuracy of reading in government school classrooms, students were not always corrected. This, they felt may be due to teacher's low levels of linguistic abilities in the foreign language.

Similar to Clarke's (2005) study, as cited in Chapter Two, p.50, the strength of student teachers' convictions in criticizing and distancing themselves from past learning experiences is evident in statements such as "I really don't want to implement this in my future" (FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.28); "I don't want to teach like that" (FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.5) and "It was not fun" (FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.4). Student teacher perceptions and developing styles of reading teaching are further explored in the remainder of Data Analysis Stage 3.

## **5.4.2: Impact of Teacher Education Experiences upon Prior Beliefs and Understanding of the Teaching of Reading**

The dialogic discussion of the influence of teacher education experiences on Emirati student teachers' understanding and beliefs about reading teaching is exemplified below. As such, a binary opposition has been established around different beliefs underpinning past and present approaches to the teaching of reading. Cross-referencing with manual inductive coding confirmed the categories established below.

### **5.4.2.1: Online Discussion Postings**

When I entered the B.Ed. programme I thought that the teacher should just read aloud and the students listen and repeat but while I studied this course on the teaching of reading, I've changed my belief and I realize that the teacher should scaffold the students' reading and involve them in different types of reading.

(ODP, No. 53, 2007)

The shift here is from a reading classroom dominated by teacher-directed learning to one where the students are fore-ground. This thread involved four postings, all reaffirming this

message of changed understanding of the teaching of reading, following the EDUC 250 methodology course. Similar to Clarke's, (2005, p.141) study conducted in the present research setting in which a student made a general claim that "Passive learning belongs to the past", this study further highlights Emirati student teachers' desires to increase interactive reading methods and minimize teacher-directed approaches. The following posting explicitly uses the language of 'teacher-centred' and 'student-centred' teaching to trace the same thread:

I think studying this course changed my mind. In the past our teachers used to teach us using traditional, teacher-centred reading methods which were not suitable for all learners' levels and focusing on accuracy of reading. I thought that this was acceptable as that is how I was taught. However, my beliefs have changed and now I think that lessons should be more student-centred.

(ODP, No. 46, 2007)

This discursive investment involves drawing an opposition between the traditional, behaviourist practices witnessed in the past and interactive, learner-centred approaches encountered during their methodology course in college. Thus another student wrote:

My thoughts about teaching reading were related to the previous knowledge that I got from my teachers in schools. But after I came to college and I took the EDUC 250 I learned a lot of interactive, student-centred strategies that helped me in teaching reading. I also benefited a lot from the different reading approaches that I got to know through the course that helps the teacher in teaching reading to different ages and levels of students. I already implemented most of what I learned from the course in my teaching practice. This implementation allowed me to know the specific things about each reading approach

(ODP, No. 22, 2007)

Here the student not only describes a developmental perspective where her thinking has changed based on the pedagogical experiences encountered during the reading course but she clearly notes her application of newly acquired knowledge during teaching practices. There is no doubt as to where her beliefs and understanding are positioned in terms of teacher-centred/learner-centred opposition.

Linguistically, the student teachers establish a distinction between the past and present using language such as "at first...after"; "in the past we used to... but when we started learning from the EDUC 250 course...; our style in learning reading was traditional...I think now it's time to...Before I thought...now...". The emphasis in their postings is on a change of beliefs and understanding of the teaching of reading:

At first, my thoughts about reading was only repeating reading after the teacher...After studying EDUC 250 course my college teacher enhanced my thinking about reading by giving us great input about the different approaches and methods which can be used to teach reading.

(ODP, No. 26, 2007)

I think studying this course changed my mind in order to think positively. So, to teach young EFL learners I have to use different approaches that is because we have different abilities and levels in every class.

(ODP, No. 54, 2007)

Before I thought that reading just involved comprehension exercises, accuracy and exams. Now I realize that it involves much more.

(ODP, No. 69, 2007)

Yes that is true. I thought reading lessons were boring and was always afraid to make mistakes. Now I know that reading can be fun and enjoyable.

(ODP, No. 63, 2007)

Another student teacher observed that:

I think after studying this course I have a wide knowledge about teaching reading by using different approaches and methods. Now I know how to use appropriate approaches with EFL learners such as shared reading.

(ODP, No. 65, 2007)

The above comments are based on developing professional beliefs, offering a testimony of change that suggests a personal embrace of the variety of reading methods promoted in the college classroom and the realization that reading can indeed be fun. In the last posting, the intensely personal conversion and realization is exemplified in the word 'Now'.

All of the above threads further echo the theme of a distinction between teacher-centred and student-centred approaches to reading, the former associated with past reading experiences in UAE government schools, while the latter with the B.Ed. reading course (EDUC 250). While acknowledging the influence of past teaching approaches, they insist that they have moved beyond these approaches. However, drawing on the work of Eraut (1994) and Schön (1983; 1987), along with evidence from the present study's observational data (section 5.3.5.3), while student teachers may espouse certain knowledge, it doesn't always translate into enacted knowledge.

### 5.4.2.2: Focus Group Interviews

In a focus group discussion in College X, one confident student teacher proposed a distinction between student teachers who focus on developing ‘fluency’, and past student teachers who focused on developing ‘accuracy’:

“Our view of reading teaching is different from our teachers. I mean they thought only about comprehension, pronunciation and grammar. We want students to develop a love of reading and not be afraid to make mistakes”  
(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.6).

Although the language of fluency and student centred teaching is not used here, it is implicit in the contrast established between focusing on ‘comprehension, pronunciation and grammar’ and ‘developing a love of reading’. Associating ‘making mistakes’ with accurate, traditional teaching methods also implies a binary opposite to student-centred teaching, as advocated during teacher education experiences. However, another student confessed that while “I agree with you but:

I’m trying to think about my past experience and even though it was strict and rigid, at least there were some benefits where the teachers used ‘repetition’ or something that I can use in my class. This is the best thing that I got from my past experience. From what I learnt from college, all of these methods have some good points. By using a combination of interactive and behaviourist models, I think it will create an effective learning environment.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.28).

This posting foreshadows beliefs of a confident student teacher, grounded in the dualistic ‘interactive/behaviourist’ framework promoted in the college classroom. The following posting further highlights a confident student teacher’s awareness of the process of accommodation (Piaget, 1973 as highlighted in the literature review, p.55) or deep level processing (Marton & Saljo, 1976) in becoming a successful EFL student teacher:

And we learned how to make a combination between previous knowledge that we learnt from school and our new knowledge that we learned from college in order to be a good model in teaching reading to young EFL learners.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.28).

Despite the above recognition by a confident student teacher that one can learn from past and present experiences, whether positive or negative, the majority of developing and reluctant student teachers emphasized a clean break with the past in favour of the present:

I think I will use the reading strategies promoted in college in UAE classrooms because this is the right way to teach reading. I will forget about the traditional way because I didn't learn that much from it.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.9).

In the past we used to copy the teacher's reading, but now with this course we learnt how to use different approaches appropriate to our students' level. This is the way I will teach.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.1).

However, it could be argued that the above constructions, although convincing may be indicative of a lack of confidence in their own abilities to integrate behaviourist and interactive approaches and ultimately develop their own styles of reading teaching.

In conclusion, it is clear from the above examples that teacher education experiences have had a strong impact on Emirati student teachers' understanding and beliefs about reading teaching. Echoing the theme of a distinction between 'interactive' and 'behaviourist' approaches, the former being associated with government schools and the latter with the education classroom, a binary opposition has been formed. Although it is clear that student teachers have become aware of their own beliefs and value system, translating those beliefs into practice using new pedagogical approaches, as offered by teacher education programmes may be difficult. As highlighted in the conceptual framework p.56, it is well recognized that teachers can espouse particular knowledge and beliefs, yet still employ classroom practices that contradict these (Woods 1979, Dickinson et al, 2004). This challenge is explored in the following section.

### **5.4.3: Inter-teaching Tensions – Challenging Prior Beliefs and Reading Experiences**

Using dialogic tools (Focus group discussions and online discussions), the emerging conflicts within student teachers' belief systems and subsequent classroom practices were analyzed using both deductive and inductive processes, along with elements of discourse analysis, as discussed on p.132. As is evidenced below, focus group discussions revealed much richer data than online discussions on the emerging tensions that shape student teachers' developing reading styles. The social and collective aspects of the group interview, the potential for extended discourse and the face-to-face influence on revealing immediate thoughts are possible reasons for the superior results of this collaborative data tool. As raised

in the methodological framework p.107, the focus group interview itself provides a safe environment for participants where they can “share ideas, beliefs, and attitudes in the company of people from the same socioeconomic, ethnic, and gender backgrounds” (Madriz, 2000, p.835). In exploiting group dynamics (Morgan, 1997), focus group interviews therefore increased the validity and reliability of this part of the research.

#### **5.4.3.1: Online Discussion Postings**

Despite limited online discussion data for this part of the research, one recurring theme that emerged involved student teachers’ espoused beliefs in becoming change agents, within a traditional system of education. Again, evidence of synthesizing past and present beliefs and an awareness of the process of accommodation (Piaget, 1973 as highlighted in the literature review, p.55) in becoming an innovative EFL student teacher is noted:

We need to combine prior beliefs and developing beliefs about reading teaching into our classroom practice.

(ODP No. 57, 2007)

I tried to combined both what I learned throughout my course and my own beliefs based on my past experiences. So, I tried to take the best from what I learned according to my beliefs and asked for help from my college teacher in order to develop new ideas.

(ODP, No. 59, 2007)

However, as stated previously, focus group interviews provided a medium for exploring emerging conflicts within student teachers’ belief systems.

#### **5.4.3.2: Focus Group Interviews**

I had an experience where teachers were very strict with me, because teachers were very strict and they used traditional ways, I think this is still reflected in me because I still have these ideas in my mind. But I am trying my best by having this course in teacher education change this and to follow an interactive model, so I can’t allow my students to experience what I have had in my prior experiences.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.27).

In the above statement, the student teacher is aware of the long-lasting impact of past, traditional, didactic teaching approaches on her belief system. Her words “I think this is still reflected in me...” echo with concern over her own ability to accommodate those beliefs into actual changes in classroom practice. Her shifting conception of the role of the teacher who “can’t allow” her students to “experience what I have had in my prior experiences” seems to connote behaviourist approaches in favour of ‘interactive’ approaches. The words “But I am

trying my best...” displays not only a desire to change past beliefs formed as a young reader, but an awareness that beliefs and reflections about teaching are instrumental in shaping the type of teacher you become (Busher, 2005). Emphasized in the words “By having this course in teacher education change this...” student teachers associate their ‘change’ in belief systems with the college classroom. Again in the example below, a developing student teacher’s high level of motivation, evident in the words “But also I am trying my best” has begun to shift knowledge and beliefs associated with past reading experiences, while espousing accommodated knowledge and beliefs from their present experiences:

Yes, it’s challenging, I have this in my mind from my past experiences but also in my mind I am trying my best to be a different model.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.1)

As highlighted in the conceptual framework, the influence of prior beliefs and experiences acts as an indelible imprint on student teachers’ lives, yet is incomplete and insufficient for the development of robust reasoning teaching (Johnson, 1999, p.23 cited in the conceptual framework p.57). However, as enlightened practitioners, the confident student teachers are aware that memories of past student teachers have a lasting impact on the kind of teacher they aspire to become, be it from positive or negative reasons:

It’s surprising how your past experiences affect you, unconsciously. Even though you don’t believe it and you think it’s wrong, it still affects you”

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.28)

Supporting comments such as “Yeah I think this is what happening to me” (FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.28) reinforces student teachers’ realization of the limitations of their subjective interpretation of their “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975, referred to in the conceptual framework p.49).

Another tension that arose direct from the data, using manual inductive coding was student teachers’ desire to constitute themselves as a distinct group in contrast to the past teachers of reading in UAE schools. As evidenced in the responses below, the ‘school teachers’ of the past and the ‘us’ of the present creates a binary opposition where student teachers reject the past in favour of what they “learnt” in college. Their new beliefs and practices somewhat echoes an undercurrent superior attitude to being educated, as opposed to the ‘ignorant’ teachers of the past. Similar to Mitchell, (2001)’s findings highlighted in the conceptual framework p.58, although student teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning were

informed by experiences prior to teacher education, again the converts' embrace of the present is amplified:

I don't think there is a lot of tension, for us. No. But for the school teachers maybe yes because they used to use behaviourist approaches to teach reading. But for us, we learnt new things that we can apply in schools, different approaches and theories.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.3).

No, we use the techniques that we learn from the college, but most of the teachers use traditional ways of reading.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.5).

Interestingly, focus groups two and three, involving developing and reluctant student teachers were unable to answer the question: "Have you faced inter-teaching tensions or challenges in combining prior beliefs with current experiences on the B.Ed. programme?" Even when rephrased, the answers given were related to dividing a strong line between the past and the present, rather than assimilating and accommodating both sets of experiences, as exemplified in focus group discussion No. 2 above and 3 below:

We were not encouraged when we were in government schools, while now we are developing because the college encourage us to read and teach reading. I don't want to teach like in the past, only the new methods from college.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.5)

This extends Clarke's study (2005 cited in the conceptual framework, p. 50) in which all student teachers expressed a desire to move beyond the past. Here, combining prior beliefs and experiences with developing beliefs reiterates sentiments of one group of students – the confident student teachers. The following response further displays a confident student teacher's ability to reflect on the positive elements of learning from an ineffective model.

But we learn from bad models because what you learn is what you shouldn't do, so I think we learn from bad models as well.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.29).

Rather than drawing a 'line in the sand' between past and present reading approaches, the confident student teachers seem to be capable of seeing merit in learning from 'what not to do'. However, despite differences in beliefs and understanding amongst the three groups of student teachers, all aimed to become change agents. This concept will be discussed further under "Identity construction as EFL student teachers: evolving beliefs and teaching styles".

The findings from focus group discussions above gel with the findings in much of the literature on ‘Challenging Prior Beliefs and Experiences’, as discussed in the conceptual framework of EDUC 250, p.56. As Freeman and Richards, (1996) pointed out, teachers’ beliefs and past experiences as learners may conflict with the images of teaching promoted in teacher education programmes. In the case of the B.Ed. student teachers, this view supports their perceptions of the challenges in moving beyond behaviourist reading approaches, as observed as learners to interactive reading approaches, observed and practiced as teachers in training. Referring to what Freeman (1994, p.5 cited in the conceptual framework p.55) calls ‘inter-teaching’, Emirati student teachers seem to consciously and unconsciously move back and forth between what they have learnt in the past, are currently learning in their studies and teaching practice placements. Yet another element of this distinction involved considerable discussion of issues related to beliefs about effective teaching and learning. Interestingly this was also an issue on which there was disagreement among the students themselves. The following section discussed this.

#### **5.4.4: Identity Construction as EFL Student Teachers: Evolving Beliefs about How Students Best Learn to Read**

Student teacher’s blurring of categories, between ‘teaching’ and ‘learning’ is evident in student teachers’ oral comments and postings below, with the majority focusing on teaching, rather than learning. As Fuller’s (1969) work identifies, beginning student teachers are more concerned with their own teaching approaches and therefore lack the ability to focus on reading lessons from the perspective of the learners. In this way, learning to become a student teacher is developmental. Interestingly, a Year Four B.Ed. teacher educator informally reported at an education forum that student teachers seem to begin focusing on learner performance and output, only when required to undertake data collection for an action research process at the end of their degree. However, there is no concrete evidence for this claim.

Based on previous experiences as learners, the college classroom and observations of first/second language reading approaches adopted in private/public school settings, online and face-to-face dialogic tools below reveal student teachers’ perceptions of how students best learn to read.

#### 5.4.4.1: Online Discussion Postings

Student teachers' personalized constructions seemed to be often guided by educational theorists, introduced in the first year of the programme on child development. The following posting highlights a confident student teachers' synthesis of developing belief systems and identity construction:

I believe in what Vygotsky claimed about students gaining new language. He stated that language acquisition occurs when children are interacting with other people. Therefore during interactive reading, students get the chance to practice language and with the scaffolding of a competent reader. They also learn to read through interacting with the text.

(ODP, No. 48, 2007)

The opening personalized statement of belief "I believe in what Vygotsky claimed" aligns the student teachers with the key tenets of constructivist education, in contrast with the behaviourist learning experiences of the past. Their postings further emphasize the epistemic claims about how children learn or how teachers can be more effective using a number of lexical items including "Learn to read through interacting with the text", "read for pleasure", "develop their reading skills through reading stories" and the importance of "decoding".

I think students learn how to read and develop their reading skills through reading stories. This also helps them to learn other skills like vocabulary and structure.

(ODP, No. 39, 2007)

I think that students best learn reading if they have been given the chance to enjoy their reading. From my teaching experience, the teacher specifies "a story time" each two days and gives the students a chance to choose their own stories and books from the library or the classroom's reading corner. This will increase the students' motivation to read because they choose the stories which matches their interests. The main objective is to let students choose their favourite books and read for pleasure and interest.

(ODP, No. 76, 2007)

However, student teachers express demands for action by teachers, which carry a degree of obligation towards the teaching/learning cycle:

Students learn to read when listening to stories read by their parents or teachers...Teachers should engage them in meaningful texts.

(ODP, No. 64, 2007)

#### 5.4.4.2: Focus Group Interviews

I think decoding is very important in learning to read because once they start decoding they can build other skills like pronunciation or looking for the meaning.

(FGD: Group 1, 2007, p.25)

As displayed above, some of the student teachers in Focus Group One displayed knowledge and confidence when speaking about the fundamentals of the reading process, from a bottom –up perspective. Comments pointed towards students’ abilities to learn to read in different ways including learning to recognize words from their shape, sound or meaning. Also highlighted was the fact that students learn to read by practicing reading, moving from word to sentence to text levels of knowledge.

...When you know how to decode words, this is the first step, this is the first level in the Zone of Proximal Development. Then go to a higher level which is recognizing high frequency words within the reading, then expanding their vocabulary, to reach the sentence level. The text level involves comprehension. Actually students can start to read from the word level and move to the sentence level, then to the text level.

(FGD: Group 1, 2007, p.25)

Using manual inductive coding, a number of lexical items were representative of focus group discussions for this question on how students best learn to read, including ‘decoding’, ‘interaction with text’, ‘indirect learning through story reading’, ‘learn to read by reading’ ‘authentic texts’ and ‘reading for pleasure’. However, the developing and reluctant student teachers blurred the categories of ‘learning’ and ‘teaching’ into one and although it was implicit that their oral constructions aligned with a constructivist learning environment, they did not explicitly express this. Focus group responses that amplified this included “...promote reading and make it enjoyable for them and at the same time enhance their reading” (FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.5); “create a literacy-rich environment...”provide a comfortable area for them to enjoy reading” and “teach them reading as a fun activity, not as a duty” (FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.2). Within this positive picture also lies the implicit negative evaluation of the past educational practices observed by student teachers during their own schooling.

### **5.4.5: Identity Construction as EFL Student Teachers: Evolving Beliefs about Appropriate Reading Methods for EFL Emirati Classes**

Both the online and face-to-face dialogic tools revealed student teachers' perceptions of appropriate reading methods for EFL Emirati classes. These beliefs derived from an accumulation of experiences including previous experiences as learners, the college classroom and observations of first/second language reading approaches adopted in private/public school settings. The philosophy developed by the beginning student teachers seems to represent an eclectic belief system, reflecting many different educational discourses and methods. Using manual inductive coding, these are referred to in the following sections by a number of lexical items including a combination of approaches; interactive reading; repetition; promoting a love of reading; exposure to meaningful texts; differentiated groups, pre-, while- and post reading and a print-rich and literacy-rich environment. The very presence of so many references to reading practices in its own right says something about the potential power of teacher education to shape the belief system and identity of student teachers.

#### **5.4.5.1: Online Discussion Postings**

Online data revealed that using a variety of interactive approaches, as observed in the college classroom had influenced their orientation to reading teaching:

I think the best way to teach reading to students is to use different approaches like Reading Aloud, Shared reading and Readers' Theatre, because students will enjoy reading.

(ODP, No. 45, 2007)

I think, I agree with you because I believe that the effective teacher is one who can combine all the approaches of reading to teach the students and she has to consider differences in learners.

(ODP, No. 55, 2007)

The suggestion here of what constitutes an effective student teacher is a reference to an eclectic teaching style that caters for different ability levels. The following two postings extend this by presenting an awareness of the process of accommodation (Piaget, 1973 as highlighted in the literature review, p.55) in becoming an innovative EFL student teacher:

As we all know they are different approaches which can be used to teach children reading. The best way is to have a combination of both top down and bottom up approaches by eliciting the best out of each, like using repetition and some drilling to teach the language in the story as well as

interactive activities so that EFL learners learn from each other. Teacher should also make their lesson more interactive by promoting the love of reading.

(ODP, No. 51, 2007)

This posting received several responses, all reiterating the need for a variety of teaching approaches, depending on students' needs and desires. However, there is also a realization that despite having an awareness of appropriate reading methods for EFL learners, there is no 'best' method that is applicable to every situation:

I agree with your point view and I think what methods we use depends on both the students and the teacher because sometimes you will feel one of the methods will work this day but maybe at other times you will face difficulty in applying it.

(ODP, No. 66, 2007)

However, one approach that was criticized and singled out by the student teachers as an inappropriate method for EFL Emirati classrooms was the 'Guided Reading Approach':

It's true that a combination of approaches may be effective. However not all reading approaches can be applicable to an EFL setting. Like for example guided reading needs resources, special classes and a lot of time for these lessons. In an EFL setting, the teacher has the class for only one period a day, unlike a private school teacher who teaches the class all day. Guided reading is not suitable for the EFL Emirati environment

(ODP, No. 70, 2007)

Drawing on specific technical reading terms from the college course, student teachers make the distinction between terms such as 'top down', 'bottom up', 'word, sentence and text levels' of reading:

I believe that having a balance between the top down and bottom up approaches is the best of both worlds. The teacher can focus on word level if she is teaching phonics or vocabulary, focus on text level for meaning and exposure to meaningful texts, authentic language and sentence level for syntax.

(ODP, No. 24, 2007)

The following section extends the discursive construction of evolving beliefs about appropriate reading methods for EFL Emirati classes.

### 5.4.5.2: Focus Group Interviews

Implicit in student teachers' focus group responses was support for teaching approaches that promote reading as fun in contrast to the textbook reading of the past. Most responses highlighted two interactive reading approaches as particularly appropriate reading methods for young EFL learners of English – Reading Aloud and Shared Reading. As three student teachers put it:

While reading aloud they are learning indirectly without any stress, they get involved whenever they want, they get engaged with the pictures and the illustrations, they listen to the teachers read, they are just enjoying reading.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.3).

...using large books for shared reading rather than the small books because with the large text students can read and share reading with the teacher. I think this is one of the best methods for EFL learners.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.4).

For me, I believe that using reading aloud is very beneficial for EFL learners in the classroom. From my previous teaching practice in Jaber Ben Hayan, the students still don't know how to read, so it's better for the teacher to use the reading aloud approach in her classroom, even though they don't have their own books, she can use any book to read aloud.

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.1).

Drawing on her experiential knowledge, (Eraut, 1994) developed while on Teaching Practice, the reluctant student teacher above demonstrates an awareness of the need to use scaffolded reading approaches in the beginning stages of EFL reading, before engaging students in other approaches such as guided reading. The additional responses in focus group one advocate for another scaffolded, interactive reading approach:

I think shared reading is the best way, especially for young learners

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.26).

It's appropriate for young EFL learners, because it's fun and enjoyable and the students can learn in a non-stressful way. Moving towards a more student-centred reading classroom environment, in which students enjoy reading, are involved and motivated to read is what they need.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.26).

I think they really enjoy it when you read with them and you do it properly, they really enjoy reading. It's not like the traditional way in just asking everyone to read aloud and all of the class together, they are not actually getting the meaning across but when you read it with them .....

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.3).

The words "when you read with them and do it properly" express student teachers' strong sentiments towards demands for action by teachers to begin teaching reading effectively, in

contrast with traditional methods such as choral reading. Another student teacher responded to this comment by making an implicit negative reference to past educational experiences:

And even sometimes they don't feel shy while they are participating, because they are working as a whole class, not just focusing on one student that feels embarrassed.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.3).

Within this paradigm shift from behaviourist to interactive methods of teaching reading, the powerful role of the teacher in motivating students to learn to read is strongly emphasized by all three groups of student teachers, as evidenced below:

A teacher can lead the students to love the subject being taught or they can deliver the student to hate it and when they hate it they can't learn it.

(FGD, Group 1: 2007, p.27).

I wish my previous teachers encouraged me to read. Now I know the power they had.

(FGD, Group 2: 2007, p.5).

I think everything depends on the teacher...

(FGD, Group 3: 2007, p.4).

#### **5.4.6: Identity Construction as EFL Student Teachers: In My Reading Classroom...**

Personal embrace of student-centred interactive approaches, in contrast with teacher-centred behaviourist approaches observed in their past, are passionately described in student teachers' constructions below.

##### **5.4.6.1: Online Discussion Postings**

This posting appeared to be the most popular posting, attracting nine responses in total, all reiterating the same sentiments. In contrast with student teachers' previous learning experiences where the physical environment consisted of bare walls, all responses paint a counter-image of their own reading classrooms in which a print and literacy-rich environment is evident. Their aspirations mirrored their beliefs about appropriate teaching and learning methods, as reflected in their earlier postings. For example, student teachers who believe in promoting a love of reading, aspire to become teachers who create a print and literacy-rich environment, in every aspect of school life:

When I have my own classroom, I will paint it with a light yellow to

give an impression of a wide class and I will design the walls with some English letters and make a board for students' work to be displayed.

(ODP No. 23, 2007)

The employment of reference to the education literature, namely one of the course textbooks, reinforces the student teachers' distinctness as agents of change, in contrast with traditional classroom environments:

In my reading classroom I will create a reading corner and I will provide a variety of genre that suit students' levels and interests. Moreover, I will supply cushions that make students feel comfortable. As Neuman, Copple & Bredekamp (2000) state "children love comfortable, cosy places where they can sit and read". Also, I will enrich my classroom with a print-rich environment that promotes students' literacy skills such as interactive displays. The seating arrangement in my class will be groups where students can interact with others and in the reading sessions students will sit on floor close to the teacher where they can hear the teacher while she is reading.

(ODP, No. 29, 2007)

Student teachers' enthusiasm, youthful energy and somewhat naivety is evident in their idealistic constructions, above and below: a print-rich and literacy-rich environment with independent reading time:

My classroom will be full of useful displays and labels that promote literacy. Also, I will put a book corner to encourage children to read all the time and also I will try to provide the class with comfortable places for the students to feel more relaxed in reading.

(ODP, No. 40, 2007)

The focus on using student-centred interactive reading approaches is one of the key articles of faith defining student teachers' constructions. Encompassing notions of differentiated reading, varied approaches, an established daily routine for reading aloud and opportunities for home-school links distinguishes student teachers from the past, and propels them into a constructivist reading environment:

In the future, I will try to provide my classroom with a small library at the back where students can borrow books and read them at home. In addition I will divide my students into differentiated groups according to their reading level, so that can help me to observe their reading progress. Moreover, I will try to implement several reading approach that help EFL to develop their reading skills like reading aloud sessions, either at the end of the day or at the beginning of the day.

(ODP, No. 49, 2007)

Although the student teachers in this study are still beginning teachers of reading, it is evident that they are visionaries of the future, constructing new beliefs and practices. The following section extends the discursive construction of evolving philosophies.

### **5.4.7: Identity Construction as EFL Student Teachers: The Type of Reading Teaching I Aspire to Become Is...**

By now, familiar themes of interactive reading approaches in a print-rich and literacy-rich environment that motivate and engage learners in the reading process, along with catering for differentiated abilities comes through clearly. This is exemplified in the postings below:

#### **5.4.7.1: Online Discussion Postings**

I aspire to become a student teacher who encourages students to love reading, engage and involve them in reading sessions. Also, I will use different approaches like Reading Aloud, Shared Reading and Reader's Theatre to motivate students and encourage them to participate in discussions. In addition, I will become a student teacher who applies the three stages of reading – pre, while and post- reading that will help students to comprehend the storyline.

(ODP, No. 21, 2007)

I aspire to become a teacher that uses the different types of approaches that suit different learners. I aspire to differentiate the level of the students and give them appropriate tasks to engage them in the lesson.

(ODP, No. 38, 2007)

Student teachers' constructions are philosophical in terms of their desires to 'make a difference' in developing students' reading skills and the type of classroom environment they want to create. For example:

I aspire to become a teacher who makes a great development in her students' reading skills. To achieve that, I will try to create a classroom which creates a literacy-rich environment by having a small class library which contains different children's books, appropriate for their levels.

(ODP, No. 44, 2007)

However, within this positive belief system lies the implicit negative evaluation of the past teaching practices observed by student teachers during their own schooling:

I think we should encourage the teachers or when we graduate we should read for our students at least two days a week to encourage them to read

more and love the language because through reading, their language will improve and make the students use their imaginations.

(ODP, No. 37, 2007)

As enlightened practitioners, student teachers express a desire to encourage experienced teachers to actively read with their students. While justifying their perceptions, implicit in the lexical item 'should' lies an obligation on the part of the student teachers to change existing practices. This is amplified in focus group responses, the following which represents an example in which a student teacher criticizes past experiences in favour of her new beliefs of what constitutes an effective learning environment:

I think that the traditional way forced the students to read in UAE government schools, we have to let the student read for pleasure, not to force them to read books.

(FGD, Group 3, 2007, p.9).

This topic was also referred back to in other postings, indicating how interconnected many of the topics are. This type of cross-referencing can be seen as evidence of the depth of student teachers' engagement in the discussions. In fact, most can be related back to a fundamental distinction between 'interactive reading approaches' versus 'behaviourist reading approaches. Looking in hope to a different future, these enlightened practitioners aim to be agents of change in the Emirati system of education.

#### **5.4.8: Addressing Research Question 3: Discussion of the Perceived Impact of Teacher Education Pedagogy upon an Evolving System of Knowledge and Beliefs**

In addressing research question three, Data Analysis, Stage Three has looked at the discursive construction of developing student teachers and their perceived influence of college pedagogical practices upon systems of knowledge, beliefs and practices of reading teaching in an EFL Emirati context.

Similar to Clarke's study (2005 cited in the conceptual framework, p. 50), conducted in the present research setting, the findings reveal a basic division between the 'traditional' teachers of the past and themselves as the new teachers of the future. However, fleshing out the details of this overarching opposition include oppositions such as 'fluency' versus 'accuracy' of reading; 'student-centred' versus 'teacher-centred' teaching; 'traditional' versus 'modern', 'behaviourist' versus 'interactive' and 'passive' versus 'active'. Despite previous reading

experiences in school cited as a major influence on shaping what they do or don't do in the EFL classroom which concurs with authors such as Lortie (1975); Florio-Ruane & Lensmire (1990) and Grossman (1990) in section 2.4.1, there has been a strong emphasis on the role of teacher education experiences upon developing emergent knowledge, beliefs and reading teaching practices in an Emirati context. Notions of student-centred interactive reading approaches, differentiated reading, varied approaches, an established daily routine for reading aloud and opportunities for home-school links distinguishes student teachers from the past, and propels them into a constructivist reading environment, as observed in the teacher education classroom. Unlike Clarke's (2005) study, this study has revealed a new constructivist model of second language teacher education for EFL reading teaching, in contrast to the behaviourist model reported in Chapter Two in which teachers instilled students with fear and accuracy of choral reading was promoted to the detriment of making meaning accessible (Suliman, 2000; Mustafa's, 2002; McNally et al, 2002; Shannon, 2003; Taha-Thomure, 2003; Clarke et al, 2007; Barber et al., 2007; Beatty et al, 2009). This new model of teacher education for EFL reading teaching incorporates teacher educator modelling of interactive reading approaches, systematic microteaching and problem-based learning activities, all of which have been connected to issues of confidence, motivation and systematic teaching practice.

Having a lasting impact on how student teachers define themselves as readers and developing reading teachers, the dichotomies of 'traditional' versus 'modern' are characterized by a startling degree of consensus. This consensus is reinforced by the shared discussions of the group which reifies certain ways of understanding EFL reading teaching, while simultaneously excluding others, such as behaviourist teaching methods. All participating student teachers made a clear distinction between themselves and their past teachers that at times take the form of hostility and antagonism. Based on their professional beliefs, they offer a testimony of change that suggests a personal embrace of the variety of reading methods promoted in the college classroom, in contrast to their past learning experiences. This is discussed further in the next section as a key emerging theme of the study.

## **5.5: Analyzing the Perceived Impact of Teacher Education Pedagogy upon Knowledge, Perceptions and Practices: Emergent Themes**

While each stage of analysis in this chapter has ended by addressing its related research question, this section provides a discussion and synthesis of the overall perceived impact of teacher education pedagogy upon knowledge, perceptions and practices. Three themes of ‘becoming EFL reading teachers’ provide a new conceptual framework for the discussion of the study’s research questions below.

### **5.5.1: Contrasting the Traditional Behaviourist Reading Paradigm within the College Constructivist Reading Paradigm**

Student teachers’ newly acquired knowledge of theories and approaches enable them to critically reflect on their past and present experiences in light of the perceived benefits and application to an EFL classroom. One of the most characteristic discursive strategies employed by the Year Two B.Ed. students is the setting up of a series of strong binary oppositions that revolve around an opposition between the ‘progressive’ teacher, who uses ‘student-centred, interactive’ reading methods against the ‘traditional’ teacher who uses ‘teacher-centred, behaviourist’ reading methods.

As highlighted in the conceptual framework by Clarke, (2005), the ‘traditional’ teachers include both the majority of teachers students experienced in their previous schooling, along with the majority of the supervising school teachers they have worked with during their teaching practice placements in government schools. Therefore ‘progressive’ teaching approaches are defined in terms of the interactive reading approaches they have encountered during college and teaching practice placements in private English schools. Underpinned by a Vygotskian constructivist theory (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002) and informed by their developing professional knowledge and beliefs as teachers, they themselves make a clear distinction between themselves and their past teachers, declaring a firm intention to develop a love of reading, create a print-rich and literacy-rich environment, teach using a variety of approaches, challenge and scaffold students’ learning along with catering for differentiated abilities and promote fluency using a variety of genre (e.g. see section 5.4.6.1). This non-traditional approach to teaching and learning, inspired by constructivist principles is perceived by student teachers to be more conducive to learning

than traditional teacher-centred approaches to reading. In addressing key research questions one and two, they see themselves as enlightened practitioners, expressing a desire to ‘make a difference’ in developing students’ reading skills and voicing the type of classroom environment they want to create.

Table 5.4 summarizes the discursive construction of subthemes that emerged, using a combination of deductive thematic analysis along with manual inductive coding to organize and confirm emerging themes direct from the data. The broad categories of ‘a traditional reading paradigm’ and ‘a college reading paradigm’ form the opposing themes below of ‘becoming EFL reading teachers’ by synthesizing the analysis and providing a framework for discussion of the research questions.

**Table 5.4: The discursive construction of ‘Traditional delivery’ versus ‘College delivery’ approaches**

<b>Traditional Reading Paradigm</b>	<b>College Reading Paradigm</b>
Traditional	Progressive
Teacher-centered reading	Student-centered
Behaviourist bottom up approaches—e.g. Round Robin Reading (Textbook reading) and the alphabetic approach	Using a variety of approaches (interactive + behaviourist) (Shared reading, reading aloud, reader's theatre, phonics)
Accuracy	Fluency Reading with intonation, focus on meaning
Passive	Active – share the reading, role play, include props and instruments
Rigid	Flexible and adaptable, learn to improvise
Direct learning	Indirect learning through stories
Drilling of reading textbook Memorization	Developing a love of reading/reading for pleasure/authentic texts
Whole class choral reading	Introduce differentiated reading and scaffolding
Bare walls	Print and literacy rich environment
Listen, repeat and memorize	Challenged and scaffolded, develop criticality, reflection and questioning skills.
Grammar, comprehension exercises	Three Stages in a reading lesson: pre, while, post
One book – emphasis on course book	A variety of genre. Course book as a guide
Low motivation and self esteem	High motivation and self esteem/positive reinforcement
Reading happens in school	Reading happen at school and at home
Teacher correction	Peer and self correction Constructive feedback
Teach for exams – summative	Teach to learn Formative assessments
Many Arabic teachers unqualified	Qualified Emirati Teachers with a B.Ed.
Government teaching similar to traditional teaching of the past	College teaching similar to private school teaching

### 5.5.2: Transformational Teacher Education Pedagogy

Teacher education has been criticized in the past for its focus on learning ‘about teaching’ rather than ‘learning to teach’ (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997; Korthagen, 2001). Since the 1990s, there has been an increasing interest in innovative pedagogical approaches in higher education, with a shift in emphasis towards constructivist approaches for teacher learning

(Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Cannella & Reiff, 1994; Jones, Brader-Araje, 2002; Crandall, 2000, Lunenberg et al, 2007; conceptual framework p.38 & 61). Developing from the contemporary understanding of teacher education pedagogy using a Vygotskian constructivist approach, this study offers a view into how this can be implemented in the UAE.

Curricular and pedagogic changes made to the EDUC 250 course were examined for its planning, structure, content, resources and implementation of revised reading methodologies. The most influential factor mentioned by student teachers was the fact that they felt they were taught in the EDUC 250 course as they were expected to teach on Teaching Practice (See Chapter Five, section 5.3.6). By moving from understanding reading as a multifaceted, complex phenomenon to immediate practical application of concepts and methodologies, students were provided with a good foundation for the teaching of reading. This explicit linking of reading theory to practice was a recurring improvement, highlighted by student teachers, along with the diversity of reading approaches introduced to them (See Chapter Five, section 5.2.1). Transformational skills developed during microteaching practice and problem-based learning sessions for these student teachers included proactivity, resourcefulness, collaborative and self-reflection, peer-editing and improvisation, all within the context of teaching reading in an EFL Emirati environment. This learning was 'realized' in the sense of being put into practice or made real in the college classroom. Referring to Korthagen et al's (2001) realistic model of teacher education, (as outlined in the conceptual framework p. 47) student teachers' overall confidence in the structure of the programme as an alternation between school and college in an attempt to optimize the integration between theory and practice is exemplified in their responses.

A recurring theme highlighted in this study was the teacher educator's ability to intentionally challenge and motivate student teachers' beyond their zone of proximal development (ZPD) through scaffolding strategies such as constructive feedback, implicit modelling of positive attitudes towards reading and explicit modelling of reading approaches and strategies. In addressing key research question two; all student teachers cited modelled constructivist lessons in college as enhancing the quality of their learning in teacher education and a major influence on shaping what they did in the EFL classroom. Using manual inductive coding, effective elements of teacher education methodology, as remembered by student teachers, included 'Shared Reading', 'Reader's Theatre', 'Electronic books', 'Watching vodcasts/videos', modelling of 'Pre, while and post reading' stages, 'Modelled different

reading lessons', 'Total Physical Response' (TPR), using 'Intonation and Predictive Questions', 'Acted out with us' and 'musical instruments' (See section 5.3.2). Teaching Practice reports reveal that many of these modelled interactive strategies were trialled by student teachers during their teaching practice placements, thereby demonstrating that many student teachers taught as they had been taught to teach.

Some student teachers also made connections between modelled reading strategies observed in the college classroom with examples of best practice modelled in private English Schools. Adding to the previous research literature in which the case studies of Korthagen & Lunnenberg, 2004 and Lunenberg et al. (2007 cited in the conceptual framework, p.61) highlight the neglect of effective role modelling in teacher education, and its limited impact on the teaching practices of student teachers, this study has shown a confluence between student teachers' spontaneously constructivist approach to teaching reading and the course's constructivist pedagogical orientation (See Chapter Five). This aspect of the study has been transformational.

However, the influence of teacher education pedagogy varied considerably, for different ability groups of student teachers. Although connecting theory and practice through modelling, microteaching practice, problem-based learning, the Emirati government school primary curriculum and assessments, increased all student teachers' understanding and criticality of the learning-teaching cycle, it was only the confident reading teachers who displayed sophisticated knowledge of EFL reading approaches and were aware of the artificiality and limitations of situated college practices. They consciously raised challenges they may face when entering the real EFL classroom environment and related them to previous learning experiences in college. However, on the contrary, the majority of developing and reluctant reading teachers perceived teacher educator performance modelling as an exclusive way of teaching and lacked the ability to develop individual styles of reading teaching. They tended to compartmentalize their learning and lacked the synthesis, critical analysis and coherence, evident in the confident reading teachers' responses. On the contrary, the confident reading teachers began to develop eclectic styles of reading teaching, by combining both behaviourist and constructivist approaches. Referring back to manual inductive coding, these are referred to by a number of lexical items including a combination of approaches; interactive reading; repetition; promoting a love of reading; exposure to meaningful texts; differentiated groups and a print-rich and literacy-rich

environment (See Chapter Five, section 5.4.6). Again, the very presence of so many references to reading practices in its own right speaks volumes about student teachers' perceptions of the power of teacher education in shaping their teaching identities and teaching styles.

It still remains to be seen whether the influence of a Vygotskian constructivist teacher education reading course will have a short-term or long-term impact on Emirati student teachers' reading teaching styles and practices. Even when a sound theoretical knowledge has been achieved, effective modelling of approaches have been implemented, ample opportunities for micro-teaching practice and reflection on practice during problem-based learning has been provided, aligning college pedagogies with school pedagogies may be an unrealistic task, at least for the weaker student teachers. Also, whether student teachers' conceptions of practice exist a priori, or whether they are created through transformational teacher education experiences, this study suggests that both processes take place simultaneously and interactively. The depth of previous reading experiences only became apparent to Emirati student teachers when contrasted with new conceptions of reading teaching, challenged through teacher educator curriculum and delivery innovations including micro-teaching, performance modelling and problem-based learning. By providing student teachers with opportunities for discussion, collaboration and reflection on teaching, conceptions of practice as teachers are continually expanded and changed.

The next section explores this further.

### **5.5.3: Becoming Agents of Change through Reconstructing Conceptions of Practice**

There is an expectation on Emirati student teachers to contribute to the development of education in their country (Gallagher, 2007, p.74) and as pioneers; they are faced with the inconsiderable challenge of improving the quality of reading teaching and student learning outcomes. However, as evidenced in this study, becoming a versatile foreign language reading teacher that enacts pedagogic change, may be more challenging than expected. Conflicting beliefs and practices raised tensions for the reluctant reading teachers, who aspire to become agents of change and teach reading in an interactive, constructivist way (See section 5.4.6). Yet when confronted with the realities of the EFL class, they fall back onto old

patterns of behaviourist learning experiences, partly influenced by survival behaviour developed during the student teacher's own apprenticeship of observation, and partly influenced by stored images of current school mentoring teachers' reading approaches. When faced with pressures during teaching practice placements, feelings of 'fear' or 'stress' were influential, 'washing-out' any rationale intentions before a lesson and making it difficult to alter the apprenticeship of observation of pre-college experiences. This is one of the key findings of this study and one that extends Eilam's study in Israel, (2002) by showing the power of the apprenticeship of observation, especially for weaker Arabic student teachers. Therefore, the degree to which this group of student teachers will become agents of change in the school environment is uncertain. However, based on this study's findings, it appears that they will not make a remarkable difference to the existing government school delivery system.

However, the confident and developing reading teachers wholeheartedly embraced constructivist teaching methods introduced in college, took more risks with their teaching and predominately taught as they had reported in face-to-face focus group discussions and online discussions. In particular the confident reading teachers developed eclectic styles of reading teaching, that combined both their learning and teaching experiences, including behaviourist and constructivist methods of teaching reading (see section 5.3.5.3). In this way, they have learnt to assimilate and accommodate (Piaget, 1973) both past and present teaching influences and have also developed a personal orientation to reading which has shaped their choice of approaches and styles of teaching. Implementing an extensive reading programme while on Teaching Practice, setting up a temporary reading corner, creating a literacy-rich and print-rich environment and involving parents in literacy events were among the initiatives promoted by this group of student teachers. Their desire to become agents of change, as informed by their professional knowledge and beliefs and observed practices in the college classroom, already sets themselves apart from their past and present government school teachers. Also, unlike the reluctant reading teachers, participation in the Teacher Education Reading Methodology Course resulted in this group 'teaching as they had been taught to teach', rather than as they had been taught. This testimony of change suggests not only a personal embrace of the variety of reading methods promoted in the college classroom but a synthesis of past and present beliefs and practices. In addressing key research question three, they have created a new understanding and reconstructed their conceptions of practice (Johnson, 1999) in the reading classroom.

Their new view of reading teaching, however, has created a more complex view of learning to read in a foreign language than the previous view of ‘read the story and ask comprehension questions’. The custodial reading process that focused on control and management was an easier option’ that Emirati children are already familiar with. This college course has therefore created a tension that challenges the role of the reading teacher from that of ‘transmitter’ or ‘implementer’ of the curriculum (Suliman, 2000) to ‘facilitator’ of learning to read in a foreign language. Holliday (1994), Nunan (1989), Pennycook (1994) and Phillipson (1992) in the conceptual framework, p.44, cautioned against “the transplantation of particular language teaching methodologies from one context to another; typically a communicative approach to language teaching and typically from Western to non-Western contexts” (Gallagher, 2007, p.16). These concerns contradict the perspectives of the Emirati student teachers in this study who claim to what to become agents of change within a traditional system of education. In fact, they actively seek out and welcome outside influences.

## **5.6: Conclusion**

Chapter Five has presented a thematic hybrid analysis of the case study data, using both deductive and inductive processes. It systematically analyzed key themes under three stages of data analysis, providing a cumulative understanding into the main aspects and dimensions, relating to the construction of Emirati student teacher identities and the perceived influence of college pedagogical experiences upon developing reading styles. It also connected this analysis back to the research questions posed in this thesis.

Throughout the data analysis stages, a number of key understandings emerged from both focus group interviews (Using inductive discourse analysis) and online discussions and course evaluations (Using deductive analysis). First, it was evident that student teachers were consistent across the different colleges in what they were saying with regard to their past experiences as student teachers and prior reading experiences as learners, despite the fact that at college level, there were differences among the three sub groups of key participants in their linguistic abilities, elaborations, descriptions, depth of analysis and emerging reading teaching styles. Previous reading experiences in school for Emirati student teachers was cited as a major influence on shaping what they do or don’t do in the EFL classroom, with all student teachers aspiring towards progressive teaching approaches, in

contrast to their previous reading experiences in school, similar to the studies of Lortie (1975) Johnson, (1999) and Freeman and Richards, (1996).

Second, related to their teacher education pedagogical experiences and the positive impact of curricular changes and constructivist delivery innovations upon their own styles of reading teaching. Both teacher educators and student teachers felt that the new constructivist-based contextualized curriculum, modified for the academic year 2006-2007 better prepared student teachers with the skills and strategies necessary to teach reading in UAE government school classrooms, thereby increasing their practical knowledge (theory with a small (t), Korthagen et al., 2001) as discussed on p.47 of the conceptual framework. Pedagogically, student teachers felt they learnt by example through teacher educator performance modelling of interactive reading approaches, as much as through the content and activities presented. The influence of systematic microteaching was cited as giving student teachers the confidence to 'try out' different approaches in a non-threatening environment and thereafter minimizing the risk of failure in the EFL primary classroom. Problem-based learning activities were connected to issues of self-esteem, motivation and reflection on practice.

Third, was the degree to which student teachers viewed themselves as agents of change within a traditional system of primary school education. By synthesizing past and present beliefs, they all aspired to become innovative EFL student teachers. However, as discussed earlier, the degree to which they enacted pedagogic change into their reading teaching varied among the three ability groups: confident, developing and reluctant reading teachers, despite aspirations to do so.

The next and final chapter will draw together the findings of the study and consider some of the implications in terms of teacher education delivery approaches in the local and regional context as well as outlining possibilities for further research.

## **Chapter 6 - Conclusions, Recommendations and Future Directions**

### **6.1: Introduction**

This study has been about the influence of teacher education pedagogy within a Vygotskian approach to language teacher education, in stimulating and shaping student teachers' reading teaching practices, as evident in selected professional course evaluations, discourses and observations. In a context that is currently underrepresented in the research literature, this study devised its knowledge base from a range of influences including constructivism, Vygotskian teacher education pedagogy, Korthagen's model of realistic teacher education; second language teacher education and reading teaching pedagogy. A Vygotskian constructivist approach to the preparation of teachers of EFL reading for young learners evolved. This final chapter discusses the implications of the study in relation to the research questions, considering the complexity of factors operating within this singular case, relating the findings to other models of teacher education and suggesting ways in which this one case might speak to other cases of English language teacher education. The chapter also notes the study's limitations, along with outlining directions for future research in an emerging location.

### **6.2: Addressing the Study's Research Questions**

The research questions this study seeks to answer are:

1. What is the perceived impact of a revised (Vygotskian social constructivist) teacher education curriculum upon student teachers' reading teaching methods during teaching practice in UAE foreign language classrooms?
2. What is the perceived and observed impact of reforming delivery in the college classroom, using the constructivist delivery innovations of performance modelling, systematic micro-teaching and problem-based learning upon student teachers reading teaching methods during teaching practice in foreign language UAE classrooms?
3. How do student teachers interpret the impact of teacher education pedagogy upon their prior beliefs, knowledge and practices, i.e. the 'apprenticeship of observation' and how does this impact their beliefs and 'knowledge' about teaching reading in an EFL Emirati context?

Guided by these three questions, which ironically fit into the coincidental thrust of government determination to reform a failing government school system, the new reading methodology course is not an insignificant component in the move towards the realization of those national aspirations. While the establishment of this innovation in teacher education methodology draws on global forces in response to local needs, the perceptions of those student teachers who will be charged with improving the teaching of reading in government Emirati schools has been central to the EDUC 250 course's enactment. As discussed at the end of Chapter Five, three themes of 'becoming EFL student teachers' have synthesized the analysis and provides a framework for the discussion of the study's research questions. These include 'Contrasting the traditional behaviourist reading paradigm within the college constructivist reading paradigm'; 'Transformational teacher education pedagogy' and 'Becoming agents of change through reconstructing conceptions of practice'. A summary of the findings in relation to each key research question is provided below.

In addressing Research Question One and drawing on the work of Vygotsky (cited in Bodrova and Leong, 1996 and Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002, conceptual framework p.35, 63), student teachers from across the six women's colleges explicitly linked reading theory to practice in both curriculum and assessment as an improvement of the revised reading methodology course. The revised course moved from understanding reading as a multifaceted, complex phenomenon to immediate practical application of concepts and methodologies in the college classroom, thereby providing a foundation for student teachers' development as EFL reading teachers. Of particular note was student teachers' satisfaction with the diversity of reading approaches introduced to them, along with explicit practice during microteaching lessons before they went on teaching practice placements. Despite the fact that all participants felt there was an increased theoretical, methodological and practical knowledge of EFL reading teaching for student teachers, teacher educators felt this course could have been extended beyond Year Two of the B. Ed. To a lesser degree, experiential knowledge (Eraut, 1989) formed on teaching practice placements in private English schools emerged as a positive scaffold for student teachers, facilitating practice to theory and theory to practice (Korthagen et al. 2001, conceptual framework, p.47).

However, there were differences among the three focus groups. The developing and reluctant student teachers tended to make generalizations and assumptions about the suitability of reading approaches for different age groups and ability levels. They lacked the synthesis, critical analysis and coherence, evident in the confident student teachers' responses. For the

reluctant group in particular, new experiences and received theories may have only contributed to their learner knowledge and not transformed into their teacher knowledge (referred to in the conceptual framework p.56 by Prestage and Perks (2001) and Aubrey (1997 cited in Dickinson et al, 2004 p.1). However, the confident student teachers displayed sophisticated knowledge and criticality when choosing EFL reading approaches and took a strong ideological positioning that constructed their developing beliefs and practices. Therefore this study found that shifts in knowledge varied considerably depending on the ability level of the student teacher, thereby extending previous literature.

In addressing Research Question Two, this study has shown that the college delivery innovations of systematic microteaching, performance modelling and problem-based learning can effectively support Emirati student teachers' embodiment of learning to teach EFL reading as they develop systems of knowledge, beliefs and Vygotskian (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002) constructivist reading methods. These scaffolded teacher education approaches were found to provide student teachers with opportunities for discussion, collaboration and reflection on teaching. By providing greater opportunities to link theory to practice, student teachers not only felt they were taught in the EDUC 250 course as they were expected to teach on T.P. but they also made connections between modelling of reading strategies observed in the college classroom with examples of best practice modelled in private English schools. The teacher educator's ability to intentionally challenge and motivate student teachers' beyond what was just out of their reach was a recurring emergent theme within Emirati student teachers' responses. Not only was their own learning scaffolded, but explicit modelling of scaffolded constructivist reading approaches for young EFL was also observed and cited as a major influence on shaping what they do in the EFL classroom. Effective elements of teacher education methodology, as remembered by student teachers included 'Shared Reading', 'Reader's Theatre', 'Electronic books', 'Watching vodcasts/videos', modelling of 'Pre, while and post reading' stages, 'Modelled different reading lessons', 'Total Physical Response' (TPR), using 'Intonation and Predictive Questions', 'Acted out with us' and 'musical instruments'. Teaching Practice reports reveal that many of these modelled strategies were indeed trialled by student teachers during their teaching practice placements. These findings are therefore consistent with claims in the conceptual framework p.47 (Wilson, 1990, in Jay 2002, p1; Lunenberg et al. 2007) that student teachers may learn about teaching by example, as much as through the content and activities presented.

To a lesser degree, yet contradicting Lunenberg et al, (2007 cited in the conceptual framework p.47), the influence of implicit modelling of positive attitudes towards reading and constructive feedback on mini-lessons by the teacher educator was reported as increasing student teachers' confidence and motivation to learn. Other skills developed during microteaching practice included proactivity, resourcefulness and improvisation. Consistent with another study conducted in the Gulf by Al-Methen, (1995 as cited in the conceptual framework, p.70) both teacher educators and student teachers felt this practical experience in college minimized the risk of failure in the EFL primary classroom and provided an opportunity for their teaching to be analyzed and evaluated not only by themselves but through peer and teacher feedback. Student teachers' overall confidence in the structure of the programme as an alternation between school and college, in an attempt to optimize the integration between theory and practice is exemplified in their responses, where they use their already existing frameworks and incorporate both theory with a small (t) and capital (T) into their professional thinking. This mirrors Korthagen et al.'s (2001) realistic model of teacher education, as outlined in the conceptual framework p. 47. Together, they have developed their own 'language of practice' in which they have discussed, authored and even documented example cases within the context of teaching reading in an EFL Emirati environment.

However, there were differences among the three groups of student teachers, as highlighted in Chapter Five. Although connecting theory and practice through modelling, microteaching practice, problem-based learning, the Emirati government school primary curriculum and course assessments increased student teachers' understanding and criticality of the learning-teaching cycle, it was only the confident student teachers who were aware of the artificiality and limitations of situated college practices. They consciously raised challenges they may face when entering the real EFL classroom environment. However, on the contrary, the majority of reluctant student teachers perceived teacher educator performance modelling as an exclusive way of teaching and lacked the ability to perceive teacher education practices as merely a starting point, from which to develop individual styles of reading teaching, consistent with Loughran (1997) and Jay's, (2002) fears expressed in the conceptual framework, p.44. Also the confident student teachers displayed an ability to accommodate knowledge and skills (Piaget, 1973 cited in the conceptual framework p.55) by connecting previous learning experiences in college with performance modelling observed during the EDUC250 course, whereas the developing and reluctant student teachers tended to compartmentalize their learning from year to year. Teacher educator observations also revealed differences amongst

the three groups of student teachers. For example, the confident and developing student teachers attempted to take more risks with their teaching, in terms of interactive strategies used, classroom management and organization and enact pedagogic change in schools, in contrast with their previous learning experiences. While the developing student teachers had developed a true interactive style of reading teaching, the confident student teachers had developed an eclectic style, that combines both interactive and behaviourist styles of teaching. However, while the majority of reluctant student teachers advocated drawing a clean break with their past behaviourist learning experiences in focus group discussions, in favour of constructivist teaching approaches; teaching practice reports reveal that in practice many of them teach reading as they had been taught, rather than as they had been taught to teach. As recognized in the conceptual framework, p.56 student teachers can espouse particular knowledge and beliefs, yet still employ classroom practices that contradict these (Woods 1979). This distinction is one of the key findings of this study and one that shows the power of the apprenticeship of observation in influencing external behaviours of Arabic learners, especially for weaker student teachers. This leads to the third research question.

In addressing Research Question Three, previous reading experiences in school are cited as a major influence on shaping what they do or don't do in the EFL classroom which confers with authors such as Lortie (1975); Florio-Ruane & Lensmire (1990) and Grossman (1990) in section 2.4.1. In an Emirati context, student teachers recall teachers instilling students with fear and accuracy of choral reading was promoted to the detriment of making meaning accessible (Suliman, 2000; Mustafa's, 2002; McNally et al, 2002; Shannon, 2003; Taha-Thomure, 2003; Clarke et al, 2007; Barber et al., 2007; Beatty et al, 2009). Having a lasting impact on how student teachers define themselves as readers and developing reading teachers, the dichotomies of 'traditional' versus 'modern' are characterized by a startling degree of consensus. This consensus is reinforced by the shared discussions of the group which reifies certain ways of understanding EFL reading teaching, while simultaneously excluding others, such as behaviourist teaching methods. Similar to Clarke's study (2005 cited in the conceptual framework, p. 50), the findings therefore reveal a basic division between the 'traditional' teachers of the past and themselves as the new teachers of the future, that at times take the form of hostility and antagonism. Fleshing out the details of this overarching opposition include oppositions such as 'fluency' versus 'accuracy' of reading; 'student-centred' versus 'teacher-centred' teaching; 'traditional' versus 'modern', 'behaviourist' versus 'interactive' and 'passive' versus 'active'. Viewing themselves as enlightened practitioners, Emirati student teachers express a desire to 'make a difference' in

developing ‘a love of reading’ and voicing the type of classroom environment they want to create: a print-rich and literacy-rich environment that motivates and engages learners in the reading process, using student-centred interactive reading approaches, differentiated reading, an established daily routine for reading aloud and opportunities for home-school links. Based on their professional beliefs, student teachers offer a testimony of change that distinguishes them from the past, and propels them into a constructivist reading environment, as observed in the teacher education classroom. Their determination to become agents of change is unsurprising, given the negative memories of most student teachers of their own behaviourist style of previous schooling. Emerging from this study are pedagogically confident student teachers in terms of their growing awareness of a range of alternative constructivist strategies for teaching reading to young EFL learners. However, as highlighted in research question two above, while all Emirati student teachers embraced constructivist pedagogy as modelled in the college classroom, only some student teachers were able to transfer this awareness to actual classroom practices.

In addressing the study’s research questions above, the findings have clearly shown how this Vygotskian constructivist-based contextualized EFL model of teacher education reading pedagogy can better prepare Emirati student teachers to enact pedagogic change in the government Emirati reading classroom.

The next section considers the professional and conceptual significance of the study in a UAE foreign language context.

### **6.3: Professional and Conceptual Significance of the Study: Teacher Education Pedagogical Implications for Classroom Policy and Practice in a UAE Foreign Language Context**

Overall, this study’s contribution in relation to recent developments in teacher education pedagogy is significant in many ways. In relation to the impact of implementing constructivist teacher education pedagogy based on Vygotskian principles, it has afforded insights into the significant impact of performance modelling, systematic microteaching and problem-based learning upon student teachers’ reading teaching behaviours in a country that is part of an under-researched region of the world. Within the current literature on pre-service language teacher education pedagogy itself, comprehensive accounts of approaches such as

performance modelling are not readily available, apart from the case studies of Lunenberg et al, (2007) in the Netherlands, from which this study draws upon as highlighted throughout the thesis. However, this study is an example of how such innovative pedagogical practices can explicitly model, intentionally challenge and motivate student teachers' beyond what is just out of their reach and contribute to extending the range of possibility for 'best' practices within teacher education in a UAE context. It has closely examined the specific mechanisms by which Emirati student teachers construct new understandings of classroom practice through scaffolding, assisted performance and guided participation in the language teacher education classroom. Drawing on the study's key tenets, pedagogical implications for change and development of policy and practice within other education courses include: establishing the importance of building concrete links between reading theory and practice, engaging in curriculum review processes, implementing constructivist-based teacher education approaches while not excluding effective elements of behaviourist approaches and making the development of socio-culturally appropriate materials and pedagogy a priority. The organization, relevance and applicability of delivery approaches and resources chosen, if contextualized, may equip student teachers better for the realities of the EFL school environment. This in turn may set new ground for enabling student teachers, especially second language student teachers, to develop as confident EFL reading teachers. Teacher educators need to begin with the activity of language teaching and learning; the school and classroom context in which it is practiced; and the experience, knowledge, and beliefs of the teacher as a participant.

While having drawn on the insights and practices within Korthagen et al's (2001) model of realistic teacher education, for the first time from this region this study adds to the literature by showing an emerging constructivist-based contextualized EFL model of teacher education, aiming to enact pedagogic change in the government Emirati school system. It has therefore begun to address the recognized need to improve the quality of English teaching in the UAE (Loughrey et al., 1999). However, unlike international groups of educational consultants being currently employed to implement a new centralized prescribed curriculum throughout government school classrooms, this study has taken into consideration the contextualized and cultural needs of Emirati student teachers of English. It has afforded insights into the teaching of reading in a UAE context, both at college and school levels and the findings have shown that student teachers are already making a difference in increasing the quality of reading teaching in schools. However, it is not merely an approach to the development of reading teaching in a UAE context. There are important professional and theoretical

implications for developing other international teacher education programmes, particularly when the pressing need for change in college pedagogy has already been acknowledged in the international research literature (Crandall, 2000; Lunenberg et al, 2007). It is a novel, realistic, contextualized approach to teaching and learning which could be applied across disciplines and programmes within a college system worldwide. The following sections elaborate on its broader theoretical implications.

In relation to theorizations of teacher education within a Vygotskian socio-cultural perspective (Wells, 1999), as a process of identity formation, this study has academically offered a way of thinking about the formation of teaching styles as a dynamic process of identity development involving both past and present influences. This interactive process combines beliefs, experiences and reflections about teaching over the life of the student teacher and consciously doesn't exclude any experiences which may shape subsequent teaching styles. It has also highlighted the importance of developing in student teachers themselves, an awareness of the influence of prior beliefs and experiences upon their developing teaching styles. As evidenced in this study, this may be a core ingredient for the success of teacher education programmes in other contexts, prior to attempting to shift knowledge, beliefs and practices.

Extending the conceptual significance of identity formation and one that has academic relevance for international general education contexts beyond the UAE, is the idea that varying ability groups of student teachers respond differently to pedagogical approaches presented. This study highlights the extent to which confident, developing and reluctant student teachers of English begin to shift their reading teaching practices during their teacher education studies. It particularly reinforces for other teacher education contexts, the reality that paradigm shifts may happen for only some student teachers, regardless of quality of delivery and pedagogical approaches used. As evidenced in this study, the confident, higher ability student teachers began to shift their knowledge and beliefs associated with past behaviourist reading experiences, while espousing accommodated knowledge and beliefs from their present constructivist college experiences. This group of enlightened student teachers have begun to realize the limitations of their subjective interpretation of their previous "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975, referred to in the conceptual framework p.49). In contrast, while espousing constructivist theories and practices in the college classroom, the weaker student teachers unconsciously rejected constructivist practices during teaching practice placements, in place of their own, as based on previous

learning experiences. Conceptually, this highlights a number of issues for teacher education programmes worldwide, including the need for teacher education programmes to adopt a more realistic approach in terms of its philosophy, expectations of their graduates; development of tutor classes, identification of dominant teaching styles and appropriate pedagogy.

Another academic implication of this study includes the importance of developing a culturally responsive context for learning. This study has provided a cultural and contextualized rationale for the selection of reading approaches and strategies, based on local perceptions of what would be the best fit for an EFL Emirati school environment, despite its original course outline and content having derived from a first language Australian context. What has emerged is a predominantly constructivist-based contextualized EFL model of teacher education, aiming to enact pedagogic change in the government Emirati school system. While there is a worldwide move towards a constructivist model of general teacher education (as outlined in the conceptual framework p.39), a complete constructivist model may not be applicable in all contexts of teacher education, including EFL environments. As such, this study has not exclusively moved towards a constructivist model; it has also incorporated effective elements of behaviourism such as repetition, modelling and practice, seen by participants to be effective for an Emirati EFL context. The level of motivation and enthusiasm displayed by the participants in this study demonstrates the power of providing a culturally and contextually relevant inclusive teacher education programme that respects traditions and previous learning experiences, yet empowers indigenous student teachers towards change. This emerging model of teacher education could therefore have important implications for recasting the development of teacher education programmes in other countries by providing a more balanced, contextually relevant model of teacher development that not only draws on best practice of international models, but also considers more closely the local context and culture within which a course is delivered. This aspect of the present study is not only conceptually significant, but one that could have implications for subsequent professional practice in other EFL international teacher education contexts.

#### **6.4: Possibilities and Limitations of the Study**

A major strength of an individual case study is that its analysis of the atypical can extend the range of possibility in a particular field (Gallagher, 2007. p.169). With this in mind, Bassey (1999) has suggested that some degree of generalisability is achievable if the researcher infers from a singular case what is possible, or likely, or unlikely to occur in other cases.

Beginning with the likely features, there is the possibility that some of the pedagogical aspects of this case may have applications beyond the immediate context, despite the fact that the validity of the status of this case study is a snapshot of an instance of one English language teacher education course in an Emirati context.

A particular observation made in this study that is likely to have some relevance for similar EFL contexts is the particular importance of teacher educator assisted performance when learning to teach through the medium of a second language. As evidenced in focus group responses outlined in Chapter Five, performance modelling, systematic microteaching and problem-based learning activities assisted EFL student teachers to co-construct their understanding of the content material they were learning in their course along with preparing them for the practical realities of the EFL teaching environment. Notably, the positive backwash effect on student teacher learning caused by teacher educator performance modelling could be harnessed and applied in other contexts of teacher education and in so doing, extend the range of possibility in pedagogical practices for second language teacher education.

However, the danger of over-scaffolding, over-assisting performance and over-guiding participation raise questions for the course and indeed for other teacher education methodology courses - the question of just how much scaffolding and feedback on microteaching and problem-based activities is appropriate and feasible. As evident from this study, the reluctant student teachers lacked the ability to develop individual styles of reading teaching, perceiving teacher educator performance modelling as an exclusive way of teaching. Reflecting on Fullan's (1993; 2001) writing on the conditions needed for educational change, this might negatively affect student teachers' future ability to act independently as reading teachers in government schools; and thus mitigate against the courses expectation that they will become change agents locally. This tendency to shy away from individual action and cling to the security of assisted performance may well be something to be aware of in other similar contexts of educational innovation.

A further limitation of the present case as raised in the methodology chapter, involves the fact that the data for this study was collected over a six month period, representing a small chunk of the students' enrolment in their four year teacher education programme. However, as the teaching of reading was not explicitly focused on beyond the EDUC 250 course, i.e. beyond Year Two of the B.Ed. programme, it is therefore suggested in section 6.5 that there is a need

for further research into the delayed influence of teacher education pedagogical experiences upon student teacher/graduate reading teaching practices.

Increasingly, the dialogue between the local and the global permeates all of our consciousnesses (Gallagher, 2007) and so this case study speaks of, and to, both local and global contexts. However, idiosyncratic aspects of this case that make the application of a constructivist approach to teacher education apparently effective in this instance will not necessarily apply in other contexts. In this case, the group of student teachers is small and it is recognised that this is unlikely to be so in other contexts of undergraduate teacher education. Most pre-service teacher education courses involve large numbers of students, so that there are logistical problems in terms of the time and attention that assisted performance demands of educators, for example in the scaffolding and feedback on systematic microteaching that student teachers are provided with by their college teacher and peers, as described in Chapter Four. There are, nonetheless, instances of undergraduate teacher education in for example tutorial groups where participant numbers are relatively small and classes involve collaborative learning activities. However, as these experiences are often too few and not sufficiently focused on the realities of the classroom (Crandall, 1996; Eilam, 2002 in conceptual framework p.38), other methodology courses may evaluate the merits of using constructivist approaches to learning to teach using performance modelling, microteaching and problem-based learning, characterized by guided participation, assisted performance, scaffolding, collaboration and feeding back.

Similar to other studies conducted in the present research context (Clarke, 2005; Gallagher, 2007) other idiosyncratic aspects of this case include the fact that the student teachers featured here are amongst the first nationals to become professionally qualified English teachers; the fact of the widespread reform of their country's educational system, the small numbers of student teachers involved, the relatively few constraints on innovation in this case due to a new programme - all of these circumstantial factors have combined to produce a degree of scaffolding, assisted performance and guided participation that is perhaps unlikely to be replicated as fully in other contexts, beyond the UAE. However, other forms of constructivist pedagogical practices may be effective in other contexts of teacher education.

## 6.5: Directions for Future Research

Leaving aside the limitations of the research, this section considers the possibilities for future research that might emerge from this case study.

By helping to ensure that this teacher education course bears fruit in the form of effective reading teaching by novice teachers in UAE schools, further research could also document the pedagogical reading practices in UAE schools, focusing on the specific reading approaches and strategies of those graduate teachers who experienced the EDUC 250 curriculum review and delivery innovations implemented in 2006-2007. Examining whether or not this group of student teachers endorsed as graduate teachers, the same kind of student-centred, constructivist reading approaches that they learnt in their undergraduate EDUC 250 studies would warrant further research, along with comparing the reading practices and teaching styles of the three ability groups of confident, developing and reluctant student teachers as categorized in this study. Additional comparisons could be made between the current student teachers with those of previous years, who had not experienced the EDUC 250 curriculum review. The delayed perceptions of whether or not this revised constructivist methodology course better prepared them to teach reading in an EFL Emirati context would also merit further study.

While there has been an assumption amongst the programme's developers that the graduates of this programme will become change agents in schools, it remains to be seen as to whether the student teachers continue to implement as graduates, interactive reading approaches that may go against existing government school policies, assessment procedures, traditional colleagues and parental requirements. Referring to what Smith (2000, p. 12) termed "the folklore about student teachers 'changing' the schools", whether or not these student teachers will actually effect change in the teaching of reading in UAE schools will need researching in future.

An initial follow-up study on the general impact of the College system's B.Ed. programme in schools conducted by Clarke, Hamston and Love (2007) in the present research setting found that graduate teachers were experiencing difficulties in combining the roles of new teacher and agent of change, especially when colleagues at their schools did not endorse the kinds of pedagogic approaches advocated by the B.Ed. programme. Despite this, many graduate teachers were reported in their study as having a positive influence on their school

communities and initiated change in the form of professional development for colleagues about the role of storytelling, integrating English with other subjects and establishing processes for sharing curriculum materials. As the research literature indicates that the provision of systematic support for new teachers can increase the effectiveness of their performance in schools (Boreen et al., 2000; Wong and Breaux, 2003) and that it is possible for beginning teachers to become change agents when they are supported by communities of teacher learners (Corrie, 2000), then an extension of this research could involve assisted performance at the teacher educator-to-student level, as has been shown to be so characteristic of this case, through providing sustained professional development reading workshops for graduates, establishing concrete links between the college classroom and graduate classrooms through involvement in special events in schools (such as book week), involving parents in home-school literacy events, promoting bed-time story reading practices and providing access to a wealth of reading resources. The early and sustained involvement of teacher education in professional development activities is likely to effect change more quickly where change is sought from the bottom up using a collaborative approach, with the long-term aim of revitalising the teaching of reading in Emirati schools.

However, as this thesis is being completed there are changes sweeping the country in terms of educational reform with international groups of educational consultants being employed to implement a new centralized curriculum throughout government school classrooms. Initial research could be conducted into the practical difficulties and growing needs of graduate teachers in implementing this prescribed curriculum, thereby aiding their transition from college to classroom and promoting an understanding of hybridity between the graduate teachers, existing school teachers, educational consultants and ministry officials. This would also entail the deconstruction of the framework that student teachers have constructed around the binary opposition of 'traditional' and 'modern' or 'behaviourist' and 'constructivist' reading teaching approaches, as evidenced in Chapter Five. However, the potential struggle to maintain their current beliefs as they take up roles within an environment predicated upon a differing set of educational beliefs would warrant further research. In terms of identity formation for future cohorts of student teachers, it may also be worth considering other ways of assisting student teachers' formation of identities as reading teachers in the college classroom, along with assessing the influence of school mentor teachers and the nature of the school environment itself on student teachers' developing belief systems.

## **6.6: Contributions to Professional Growth: Self Reflection**

This case study has been conducted from my perspective primarily as a teacher educator and its reflexive dimension has represented a significant personal involvement in the case. As the site of my work as well as of my study, I assumed various roles in the methodology course: as a teacher educator, a teaching practice mentor, a course developer and curriculum leader, which eased my access to data as a researcher, although my time 'on site' has been substantial, at times almost overwhelmingly so. However, the doing and writing of this case study has involved me in a much deeper level of reflection on my professional practice than I would otherwise have engaged in. Martinez (1998) has called on teacher educators to model the critical reflectivity that they expect of their student teachers and as evident in Chapter Four I too sought to reflect on my work as a teacher educator, along with modelling reflection using the 'think aloud approach'. As a researcher I stand back further to reflect about my pedagogical choices than I might do as just a reflective practitioner in the case, and I have therefore adopted a consciously reflexive stance in the methodology employed. Drawing on writers such as Florio-Ruane (2001) and Samaras (2002) who use autobiographical approaches to critically examine their contexts and their actions as teacher educators, a vein of self-study runs throughout this case study, a dimension which has strengthened my understanding not only of this singular case, but of teacher education pedagogy in general.

As a form of practitioner research that is institutionally situated, the stance I have adopted is an 'interested' one into the study of an instance of teacher education pedagogy in action. Along with conveying the participants' perspectives on the impact of revising teacher education curriculum and pedagogy upon student teachers' reading teaching practices during teaching practice in foreign language UAE classrooms, I have inevitably conveyed some of my own enthusiasm and perceptions. This I believe is a strength rather than a weakness of the study, because the depth and breadth of my involvement in the case adds to my knowledge and understanding of it.

Within this qualitative research paradigm, there is the assumption that "meaning is embedded in people's experiences and that this meaning is mediated through the investigator's own perceptions" (Merriam, 1998, p.6). As a teacher educator who is passionate about issues of effective teacher education delivery, particularly functioning as a model of best practice and teaching student teachers as they are expected to teach (Bransford et al, 2000, p.204), I seek

here to make my perspective overt on the valuable contribution that innovative college pedagogical practices can make to producing quality reading teachers. Previous literature highlighted that these experiences are often too few and not sufficiently focused on the realities of the classroom (Crandall, 1996; Eilam, 2002), yet it is always possible to attribute blame for lack of explicit focus on college pedagogy to institutional pressures that focus on aspects other than classroom practice, such as research output, administration or professional development (Korthagen & Lunenberg, 2004, conceptual framework, p.45). However, drawing on general psychology literature (including authors such as Byrne, 2006; Browne, 2008) this self-study has amplified my personal perceptions that whatever you practice most, you become. In the words of Byrne (2006) “Your current thoughts are creating your future life. What you think about the most or focus on the most will appear as your life”. In this research context, it is therefore my belief that in order to be a model of best practice for student teachers, one needs to concentrate on doing just that. There is much to reflect on in this case, and much to be interested in, and much to share.

As case studies involve the immersion of the researcher in the field for relatively long periods of time, it has the incidental effect that personal relationships are established with those being studied (Walker, 1986, p.163). Similar to a study conducted by Gallagher, (2007) in the present research setting, because my work as a college mentor brought me into government schools to observe student teachers in the classroom, and because my work as a teacher educator was situated in the college classroom, all of my observations as a researcher of this teacher education methodology course would be better described as opportunistic rather than purposeful. Opportunistic sampling has the advantage of not as strongly affecting the dynamics of the situation, as participant observer, as they would be by a non-participant researcher. Also, because of my daily involvement in the case, strong interpersonal relationships have built up with the key participants that helped in the ease of discussions in focus group interviews, therefore enjoying what Delamont (2002, p.5) has referred to as “the pleasure of good field relations.” However, there is also a danger that the student teachers in this case study were merely telling me what they thought I wanted to hear as their teacher educator. I cannot say if this was so.

## **6.7: Concluding Thoughts**

To go back to where this case study started, based on the rationale for this study and a review of related literature, it demonstrated an urgent need to begin investing in teacher education in the UAE due to outdated behaviourist methods of reading teaching that prevail in

government primary school classrooms (McNally et al., 2002; Taha-Thomure, 2003; Syed, 2003 ). This was compounded further for student teachers on teaching practice placements where they observed examples of reading teaching behaviours by school teachers, many of whom failed to provide the conditions that matter for good teaching. This case offers a view into how a Vygotskian constructivist-based contextualized EFL model of teacher education can better prepare Emirati student teachers to enact pedagogic change in the government Emirati school system. Drawing upon a wide range of influences including constructivism, Vygotskian teacher education pedagogy, second language teacher education, young learner pedagogy and reading teaching, the study shows how the range of possibility in teacher education pedagogy can be extended. It emphasizes teacher education approaches including systematic microteaching, performance modelling and problem-based learning, characterized by scaffolding, assisted performance, guided participation and feedback, all of which are “deeply human activities and which transcend cultural and methodological boundaries” (Gallagher, 2007, p.175). As Freeman (1990) reminds us in relation to teaching, teacher education is first and foremost a ‘helping profession’. While acknowledging that there are many ways in which the preparation of reading teachers for young learners might be carried out, initial teacher education Vygotskian constructivist methodology courses, such as the example in this study, are the first step in a professional journey that provides the nourishing conditions to support teacher development.

Inevitably, there are aspects of this case that have not been highlighted as much as others. In focusing mainly on the curricular changes made to the EDUC 250 reading course across six colleges and the pedagogy employed by one teacher educator, the influence of the mentor school teachers’ teaching practices on student teachers’ developing reading styles has not been as strongly attended to. In highlighting the significance of the Vygotskian constructivist thread underpinning this case study, other important areas of discourse in the course - such as reflective practice and student teacher’s own reading habits - are not much addressed either. Also, the prominence assigned here to certain areas of pedagogy, including systematic microteaching, performance modelling and problem-based learning, has meant that other areas of interest, including teaching practice issues have not been much attended to.

By nature, any educational case is complex, changing, and contextualized (Gallagher, 2007). While descriptions and analysis of selected aspects of this case have been documented, it is ultimately for readers to construct their own meanings from the evidence of the perceived

impact of this revised reading teacher education course upon student teachers' reading teaching, and to draw inference for their own particular pedagogical contexts. However, it is suggested by way of conclusion to this case study that performance modelling, systematic microteaching and problem-based learning may constitute the foundations of a paradigm of language teacher education pedagogy in action that is underpinned by constructivism, a specific perspective that is currently lacking in the research literature. Constructing such a paradigm from a singular case is paradoxical, yet when integrated with other similar studies from the region, this case can contribute towards providing a greater understanding of a Vygotskian constructivist teacher education paradigm in the UAE that may have resonance elsewhere. Exploring ways in which EFL Emirati student teachers learn to teach reading is the job of a lifetime. It is, nevertheless, a journey that will never end, because no matter how effective we are as teacher educators, we can always improve.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Application for Ethics Approval

#### Section 1 To be completed by applicant

1. Proposor(s): Fíodhna Hyland Supervisor: Kay Gallagher

2. Project Title: Preparing Pre-service Teachers to be Future Teachers of EFL Reading: Effectiveness of Teacher Education curriculum development and instructional delivery innovations upon student teachers' delivery methods during teaching practice.

3. Institution (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_ 3a. Time frame: Four years

4. Qualification (if applicable) (e.g. Undergraduate, Honours, Coursework Master's degree): PhD

5. Participants (describe the population from which the participants/sample will be selected): B.ED. Year Two student teachers

6. Participant data:  Identified  De-identified (e.g. linked code)  Anonymous

7. Sources of data:  directly from individuals  Internal data  
 Other (please describe) Documentation

8. Data collection method(s) (e.g. observation, interview, questionnaire):

1. Non-participant observation of student teachers' (Y2) reading practices on Teaching practice
2. Semi-structured focus group interviews with 16 Year Two B.Ed students
3. Online discussion postings
4. Documentation, e.g. T.P. reports; course outline, student and faculty course evaluations

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9. Privacy and confidentiality (please confirm the following):

(a) Data will be stored in a secure location (state where) (Library in my home)

(b) Data will be stored for 4 years

(c) Access to data will be restricted to student and supervisor

(d) Data will only be used for purposes as described in the participant information sheet

(e) Data will only be published in the format as stated in the participant information sheet

10. Participant Information Sheet:

(a) Participants will be given an information sheet

(b) Participants will be briefed verbally

11. Consent:
- (a) Consent is not required
  - (b) Participants will sign a consent form
  - (c) Participants will consent verbally
  - (d) Consent assumed if participants return a questionnaire

12. Attachments:
- Research methods and issues checklist
  - Information sheet
  - Instrument (Observational Record Sheet, Semi-structured Focus Group Interview Questions, Online Discussion Topics,)
  - Consent form

Investigator signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 25<sup>th</sup> April 2007

**Section 2 To be completed by research ethics coordinator/reviewers**

- Project meets ethical requirements and is granted approval From: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_
- Project requires amendments, to be resubmitted to reviewer for approval (*details attached*)
- Applicant required to submit further information (*details attached*)

Supervisor (in whose area the research is to be conducted): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Relevant Head of Instruction: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Director: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Application for Approval of Research

**RESEARCH METHODS AND ISSUES CHECKLIST:** *If you answer YES to any of the questions below, you may be required to submit further information for approval. Even if all questions are answered NO, the College may require that more details be submitted later.*

**Does your research involve any of the following?**

1	The use of questionnaire, interview, or procedure that might be reasonably expected to cause discomfort, embarrassment, or psychological or spiritual harm to the participants?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
2	Any form of physically invasive procedure on participation or the administration of any food, drink or medicine?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
3	Touching, physical pain, or emotional distress of any sort?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
4	Further participation of students, other than in the observation of normal college activity? (Students to participate in semi structured focus group interviews)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
5	Acquisition of data about institutions or individuals through any form of database and in which those institutions or individuals are directly or indirectly identifiable?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
6	Use of questionnaire or interviews which may be linked either directly (e.g. through recording of names) or indirectly (e.g. through a cross-linked code) to the individual?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
7	Processes that potentially exclude and/or disadvantage a person or group, such as the collection of information, which may expose the person/group to discrimination, misrepresentation or reduction in quality or amount of service?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
8	Collection or disclosure of personal information that might breach confidentiality of student or employee records?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
9	Payments of inducements, other than reasonable recompense, to participants for their participation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
10	Further ongoing reporting requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
11	Disclosure of the response outside the research that could place participants or institutions at risk of criminal prosecution or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, professional standing or personal relationships?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
12	Any other sensitive issue of the study, which has not been addressed in this checklist (e.g. ethical, cultural, or religious)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
13	Findings will be forwarded to the director?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Investigator

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
25<sup>th</sup>  
April  
2007

## Appendix 2: Participant Information Letter and Consent Form

### ‘Shaping and Contextualizing a Teacher Education Course’

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am currently enrolled in the University of Leicester’s PhD in Education, working on a doctorate in Teacher Education in the United Arab Emirates. My proposed topic of study aims to evaluate the impact of modifying curriculum and instructional delivery in a teacher education methodology course upon student teacher’s approaches to teaching reading during teaching practice. This study will therefore examine the impact of a revised reading methodology course (key issues involve linking theory to practice and introducing delivery innovations such as modeling, problem based learning and microteaching) upon students’ reading practices during teaching practice.

Documentary evidence from Teaching Practice observation reports, student and faculty course evaluations and curriculum documentation will be used in the study. Additionally, you may be requested to engage in online discussion postings and semi-structured focus group interviews.

Please be assured that in carrying out this research, I will observe the highest standards of personal, professional and ethical conduct, including respect for anonymity and confidentiality. The results of the research may be published but your name will not be used and your individual results will remain in confidence.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, please tick the ‘I agree’ option below, sign the slip and return it to me. However, if you prefer not to participate, please tick the ‘I don’t agree’ option below, sign the slip and return it to me.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions at [fiodhna.hyland@hct.ac.ae](mailto:fiodhna.hyland@hct.ac.ae) or at 050-3220697.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

Fíodhna Hyland

----- *Please detach and return* -----

I agree to participate in this research project

I don’t agree to participate in this research project

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix 3: Microteaching Reading Lesson Plan Template

Grade Level	
Lesson Focus	
Objective(s)	
Target language	(e.g. vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation)
Resources	

#### Lesson Procedure

Stage	Teacher activity (T will ...)	Student activity (Ss will ...)
Pre-Reading		
While-Reading		
Post-Reading		

## Appendix 4: Excerpts from Focus Group Discussions

### Confident Reading Teachers

#### Year 2 B.Ed Students Focus group # 1

**Fíodhna:** Here we are with the Year 2 B.Ed students, its 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2007 and this is Focus Group number 1. I will start with questions relating to the impact of curriculum changes in this program, as you know this course has changed from last year, many changes have been made including adopting reading approaches for EFL Emirati classrooms, linking theory to practice and taking your previous experiences into account. So, can I ask you the first question: **Do you think this course content is relevant to becoming an EFL teacher? Is your content relevant?**

**Student 1:** I think its relative to what we are study when we teach the young learners because in this course we study different methods and approaches that we could implement them in government school, for example shared reading and reading aloud, maybe we know about reading aloud but not shared reading. This is the first time we heard about it, even though we don't know the name of this approach, we know that we could interact with others, but now we know what the strategy is and we could use it in implementing .....

**Student 2:** I thought guide reading was new for me this semester because I've never seen guide reading before even though I was in English medium school, so it's very new to me. **But I think the content of the course teachers how to deliver learning, because we might know a lot about the education and about the curriculum is one thing but implementing that content by delivering a strategy I think it also important.**

## Developing Reading Teachers

### Year 2 B.Ed Students Focus group # 2

**Fíodhna:** I'm going to ask a range questions relating to the impact of the curricular changes made in the 250 course, that's the teaching of reading course. I will start asking you questions about the content of the course, do you think that the content in the 250 course is relevant to becoming an EFL Emirati teacher and the UAE curriculum?

**Student 1:** I think Yes, It's relevant it helped us more to know more about different ways of teaching reading and the importance of the three stages of reading, pre, while and post. Because **in the past we didn't learn how to read and how to answer and do activities, because they didn't use these stages.**

**Student 3:** Yes, it's challenging, I have this in my mind from my past experiences but also in my mind I am trying my best to be a different model.

**Student 2:** Yes of course...uh... Also we learnt many approaches and how to apply them in EFL classrooms such as guided reading, shared reading and reading aloud. When we were students we didn't have such approaches, only the teacher read and we repeated after her, so its important to learn and apply these reading approaches in our schools.

**Fíodhna:** This relates to your past experiences - in your primary and secondary schooling; could you elaborate on that Nour?

**Student 3:** In the past we used to copy the teacher's reading, but now with this course we learnt how to use different approaches appropriate to our students' level. This is the way I will teach. For example in the past we used only reading aloud but, now the teacher can use shared reading and guided reading, but I think it's difficult for EFL learners but if they get used to having reading sessions, they can promote this approach in the EFL learner class.

## Reluctant Reading Teachers

### Year 2 B.Ed Students Focus group # 3

**Fíodhna:** I'm going to ask you a series of questions about the impact of the new 250 reading course on how you teach in primary EFL schools. So, starting with -do you think this course content is relevant to becoming an EFL teacher? Is your content relevant? Feel free to talk and chat and agree and disagree among each other.

**Student 1:** The reading content that we studied is highly relevant to teaching EFL learners because it provides us with different approaches, different reading theories, styles and techniques. We did with them reading theater if you remember, guided reading and shared reading. I strongly agree with shared reading and reader's theatre because this is the way to interact with children and this will help the students to interact with you in terms to scaffold their reading and to share activities.

**Student 2:** For me I believe that using reading aloud is very beneficial for EFL learners in the classroom. From my previous teaching practice in Jaber Ben Hayan, the students still don't know how to read, so it's better for the teacher to use the reading aloud approach in her classroom, even though they don't have their own books, she can use any book to read aloud.

**Student 3:** Another thing important reading approach is guided reading where you have different levels; you divide the class in different levels, lower level, higher level .....

**Fíodhna:** Do you think that this is suitable for EFL Emirati learners?

**Student 3:** I think it's suitable because you can focus on one group and see the development of reading so by having this approach you will notice that they are learning.

**Fíodhna:** How has the course connected theory to practical experiences?

**Student 1:** When we are using shared strategy with EFL learners we are more likely to interact and they feel confident to speak with someone a little bit higher level than them and understand them. When they answer predictive questions, asking them about the cover, guessing questions that help the students to think about the story, engaging them with the story indirectly. Sometimes they try to guess the word in the story.

**Student 3:** In our school, they only gave us the information directly without asking us or get the information from us, or ask us to guess what will happen again.

## Appendix 5: Best Practices for College Mentors

### Guidelines for Effective Mentoring of Student Teachers during Teaching Practice Placements in Schools

*The following guidelines for best practice in mentoring within the context of the B.Ed Program have been established, based on shared reflective discussion of collective experience in mentoring student teachers during teaching placements in schools*

#### Best Practice *Pre-Placement* for College Mentor Teachers

##### ***Mentor College teachers are advised to***

1. Read over the allocated student teachers' previous TP reports in the students' academic files, available from the School Liaison Admin Support Officer based in Student Services.
  2. Consider the student teachers' strengths and weaknesses, and decide on appropriate initial foci for the placement.
  3. Meet with the allocated student teachers.
  4. Get a feel for where they are at in their development as teachers.
  5. Give them a copy of the competencies for their level, and discuss the relevant competencies with them.
  6. Outline your expectations of them as their mentor for the current placement, including contact arrangements; your expectations for the placement; and the procedures students must follow for informing both you and the SST of extraordinary absence from school e.g. due to illness.
  7. Inform the student teachers that they must discuss their plan for the next observed lesson with you (either face to face, which may mean coming into college in the afternoon, or via another form of communication acceptable to you) and provide you with a lesson plan (ideally in full lesson plan format, but an outline plan may be acceptable in certain circumstances) *before* the day of the observation.
  8. Plan for the first school visit, which should not be a graded observation, but which should involve meeting with the student(s) and SST(s) to discuss roles and responsibilities, and meeting the School Principal and English coordinator or Supervisor if relevant.
  9. Discuss the foci of observations with the student teachers. Areas for focus could include the student teachers' modelling and instruction-giving; the effectiveness of the student teachers in promoting pupil success in learning the target language; questioning techniques; classroom management etc.
  10. Discuss area where more competent students might try to extend their teaching e.g. project-based learning; role play, etc.
  11. Discuss how, when, and where you will provide feedback to the student teachers.
  12. Give the student teachers some concrete examples of best practice e.g. readings, sample lesson plans.
  13. Encourage peer observation, team teaching with mentors and/or peers, and sharing of resources amongst student teachers.
-

### **Best Practice *During Placement* for College Mentor Teachers**

***Mentor College teachers are advised to***

14. Introduce yourself to the school Principal and other key personnel and provide an overview of the placement on the first visit to the school.
  15. Bear in mind that the PR dimension to all school visits is important for the B.Ed Program.
  16. Arrange for the student teachers to meet you at a specific time and place upon your arrival at the school for a lesson observation.
  17. Inform the student teachers of your approach to classroom observation before the observation begins – e.g. “I will be unobtrusive and sit in the corner; I will write extensive notes as you teach; I may walk around at the end of your lesson to look at the children’s work.”
  18. Only intervene in a student’s lesson in extreme circumstances, i.e. if anyone in the classroom is in physical or emotional danger. (Unless you have previously agreed to team teach with the student teacher, or unless the student teacher or SST asks you to intervene.)
  19. Have a copy of the teaching competencies for the appropriate level on hand to refer to during the observation. (Copy a page for each observed lesson from the SCT TP booklet.)
  20. Co-observe with the SST. This not only develops good relationships, but also helps towards moderation of the SST’s TP grade towards the end of the placement.
  21. Give the SST two copies of the SST Observation feedback form, and remind her to fill these in for the student teacher on at least two occasions during the placement.
  22. Invite the SST to sit in on at least one of your feedback session with the student teacher. Encourage the SST to give her feedback too at this session.
  23. Arrange a time to discuss the student teacher’s approach to the placement in general, and her overall progress, with the SST.
  24. Be prepared to mediate between the SST and the student teacher in the event of unexpected situations.
- 

### **Best Practice *Post Observation Feedback and Follow up* for College Mentor Teachers**

***Mentor College teachers are advised to***

25. Give immediate (same day) feedback to the student teacher following an observed lesson if possible.
26. Make a specific positive statement to the student teacher before leaving her, if you have to leave immediately after an observed lesson (e.g. to attend another observed lesson)
27. Keep a chronological record of the lesson as it may assist in providing constructive feedback.
28. Focus on just *two or three* areas for development in any feedback session.
29. Elicit the student teachers’ own perception of the lesson in order to encourage reflective practice.

30. Give written feedback on the lesson e.g. provide a copy of your observation notes, and/or encourage the student teacher to take written notes of the key points you make in the feedback session.
31. Highlight positive aspects of the lesson in your feedback first.
32. Then discuss areas for improvement.
33. However, once it is apparent that a student teacher is not meeting the competencies, be *direct* and *explicit* about the areas of weakness early in the placement. Observe a student who is not meeting the competencies more frequently.
34. In the above case, keep detailed records of the issues e.g. the student teacher's lack of response to your communications, lateness, absences, unplanned lessons, etc.
35. Be aware that lack of professional responsibility, lack of effort, poor communication with you and with other professionals, and poor organisational skills are often significant indicators of a student teacher who is not meeting the competencies overall.
36. Alert the program supervisor early in the placement to borderline pass/fail students.
37. Call on a colleague to observe a lesson for a second opinion, and inform the student of the reason for this.
38. Be aware that the program supervisor is prepared to observe a borderline pass/fail student if required.
39. Sit with the SST while she fills in the SST report in order to give guidance on the appropriate grade for the student teacher, if possible.
40. Take the completed SST report with you to college.
41. Moderate SCT reports as a team, against T.P. competencies.
42. Give both the SST and SCT reports to the TP course teacher who collects all reports from all SCTs for the entire section.
43. The TP course teacher hands the completed SST and SCT reports to the student teachers in class to sign, and to add comments if they wish.
44. The TP course teacher then hands the reports to the program supervisor who signs them, and arranges for originals to be filed in the student teachers' TP files (housed with their academic files in Academic Services.)
45. The Academic Supervisor returns copies of the reports to the TP teacher who hands them to the students for their records.

## Appendix 6: Example Observation Record Sheet

**Student Teacher:**

**School:**

**Grade:** *Five*

**Reading Approach:** *Independent reading/reading aloud*

Observation Feedback
<p><b><u>Strengths of the lesson:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drew on the support of the school teacher and mentor college teacher by cooperatively planning the lesson. Presented lesson plan in a professional manner, illustrating clear connections between stages of the lesson.</li> <li>• Modeled the reading process for the students. Read aloud with intonation, pace and appropriate expression. Used pause for effect.</li> <li>• Checked students' understanding through appropriate recall and comprehension questions.</li> <li>• Encouraged students to read aloud independently.</li> <li>• Relevant, well-structured post-reading activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Areas for Development:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Encourage students to think critically when extending their answers:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- e.g. Ask further open-ended questions</li> <li>- Ask students to explain reasons for a particular answer</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Overall Impression:</u></b></p> <p>Student x, a very good start to T.P. in your second semester. You were well-prepared for the lesson and you read aloud with appropriate intonation. You used appropriate questioning throughout the reading to check students' understanding. Your lesson objectives were achieved. Keep up your work and try out the above suggestions for your next T.P!</p>

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Supervisor)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Student Teacher)

## Appendix 7: Example Teaching Practice Report for a Confident Reading Teacher

<b>Name of Student:</b>	
<b>Name of School:</b>	<b>Grade Five</b>
<b>Mentor College teacher:</b>	

<p><b>Dates of TP: 15/4/07 – 3/5/07</b></p> <p><b>Absences: None</b></p> <p><b>SCT Visits: 19.4.07; 25.4.07</b></p> <p><b>GRADE: A</b></p>
--

Supervising College Teacher .....

Chair, Education .....

Date .....

Student .....

**A Knowledge and Understanding**

Student X has demonstrated an excellent understanding of the organization and the functioning of the primary school classroom in an immersion bilingual school system. She has shown to be committed to her ongoing professional development as a teacher. During this placement, she drew on the support of her college teacher, when planning activities for her reading lessons. She got involved in the day-to-day running of the school and developed an understanding of the complete job of a teacher. She also demonstrated knowledge and understanding of an American style curriculum. She displayed a deep understanding of approaches to reading, the rationale behind adopting particular approaches in the classroom and reading relevant literature to continually increase her understanding and knowledge.

**B Planning for Learning**

Student X is extremely organized with her lesson planning. She spends a lot of time focusing on the pre-observation stage, discussing and modifying her lessons with her college mentor teacher. This is also evident in her reading teaching as she is able to predict possible challenges and devise alternatives for maximizing delivery.

**C Implementing and Managing Learning**

Student X demonstrated an ability to use a variety of reading approaches, including reading aloud and guided reading. She tried at all times to maximize the reading experience by varying her pre-, while- and post- reading strategies. The children were actively involved

and stimulated through questioning, dialogue and journal writing. She communicated assertively to gain the attention of the learners and used appropriate reinforcement and repetition, where necessary. She set a purpose for reading by asking pre-reading questions. She then maintained the children's interest throughout the reading by varying the activities. Students were motivated and challenged. Her reading style was both interactive and behaviourist, depending on her aim at that particular time in the lesson.

#### **D Monitoring and Assessment**

Student X monitored students' involvement throughout the reading experience and she provided ongoing feedback to children to enhance their learning. She asked a variety of questions, including evaluative and open ended questions to assess students understanding of the storyline. She established an appropriate pace, which the children seemed to be comfortable with.

#### **E Professionalism**

She interacted with students through questioning, dialogue and conversation. She demonstrated an ability to build up good relations with the children, SST and SCT. She maintained a caring relationship with her students and created a friendly, positive learning environment. While reading, she communicated the storyline and aided comprehension by using appropriate intonation and expression. She realizes that she needs to relax more when asking questions and extend students' answers.

#### **F Critical Reflection**

Student X seeks and accepts feedback and guidance from her mentoring school teacher and her mentoring college teacher. However, her school mentoring teacher was not always there to support her. Despite this, she displayed incredible professionalism and reflection and saw this as an opportunity to also learn. She took on board recommendations made by her college mentor teacher. She was reflective and realistic about what reading approaches were suitable for a private school situation and discussed how some of these approaches would/would not be applicable to an EFL classroom environment. She was conscious of students' learning needs, not just on her own teaching strategies. She was extremely reflective and critical of her own abilities.

#### **General Comments**

Student X has excellent potential as a future EFL reading teacher. She maximized this teaching practice placement by observing a variety of teachers in the school, co-operatively planning with her college mentor, documenting new reading ideas and consulting with her peers. She showed herself to be extremely organized, conscientious and critically reflective. Combining her previous learning experiences as a learner with college experiences, her reading teaching style included a combination of behaviourist and interactive methods, using the best of both methods. She set up a temporary reading corner and created a literacy-rich and print-rich environment, while remaining enthusiastic and focused throughout the placement I wish her well in her future development as a student teacher and I hope that she will keep the above suggestions in mind next time.

## Appendix 8 – Excerpts from Online Discussion Postings

### 1. Memories of Past Reading teachers

**Message no. 8 Author: Date:** Saturday, May 26, 2007 1:14pm

Recall memories of previous reading teachers from your Primary or Secondary school experiences.

Describe a typical reading lesson focusing on:

- how the teacher taught
- how you learned to read

This is an anonymous posting of about 100 words, therefore do not mention your college.

**Message no. 19 [Reply of: [no. 8](#)] Author: Anonymous Date:** Sunday, May 27, 2007 9:12am

ADWC

I remember one teacher from primary school that was very effective. Even though there was a lack of teaching resources, she managed to have an effective learning environment. She tried to make reading lessons interesting by involving us in reading books outside the curriculum. Sometimes she brought books from home and read to us. I really enjoyed her classes. I believe that a typical reading lesson is one where students are truly engaged in the learning process. From my previous primary school years were the teacher used to read with expression and used gestures which were sometimes funny. This approach towards reading made me love reading time and got me totally focused. Therefore I believe that the delivery of the story is very important as it determines the success of the reading lesson.

**Message no. 20 Author: Anonymous Date:** Sunday, May 27, 2007 9:14am

I am a student in my second year at college. Last semester my teaching practice was in a primary school. My MST was a very good teacher she tried to get students' attention in the reading lesson. I remembered, one time when she taught her students a lesson about zoo animals. She did all the stages of the lesson she did pre reading stage by showing them a pictures of animals to teach them the new vocabulary before reading the book. while reading the story she asked the students several questions to check their understanding. After reading she gave them writing activity. I think, the effective teacher who can do the pre, while, post reading activities to encourage her students to be more enthusiastic in their learning.

**Message no. 34 Author: Anonymous Date:** Sunday, May 27, 2007 10:05am

In the past our teachers used to teach us by using different approaches such as traditional methods, behaviorism and bottom up approach which were not suitable for all learners' levels because by these ways teachers were focusing more on the basic things and the students would not have the general idea about the topic. Moreover, the students would be more accurate but not fluent as well that is because they teach them the words and the grammar rules but they do not know how to use them.

**Message no. 37 Author: Anonymous Date:** Sunday, May 27, 2007 10:09am

Honestly , my past experience was not the best . The teacher mainly used traditional methods which had a negative impact on the class motivation. She shouted at us and even hit us if we didn't remember the answers to the reading. However, the teacher educator used effective tools or resources to promote a the love reading . The teacher helped us by allowing us to choose our own books which we find interesting . I think this allowed me to enhance my reading and create a strong desire of reading . Plus, the teacher educator exposed us to a variety of genres to help enhance our reading .I believe by using these strategies could hopefully help scaffold the reading teaching abilities and allow us to step forward in our ZPD.

**Message no. 27 Author: Anonymous Date: Sunday, May 27, 2007 9:37am**

ADWC....

In the classes that I was in, teachers used traditional reading methodologies. They used traditional strategies which emphasized words in isolated form. They used memorization, repetition and drilling in order to teach new vocabulary without using or teaching it in a meaningful or authentic context. To explain more, the teachers that I had in my previous years did not have reading lessons including storybooks to teach vocabulary in a more authentic context, or teaching grammar in an indirect way. This affected me to use incorrect syntax when translating from my mother tongue language to a foreign language.

**Message no. 30 Author: Anonymous Date: Sunday, May 27, 2007 9:50am**

In schools we used to read after the teacher by copying her reading, without realizing the words' meanings. Teachers taught us to read word by word without using any reading skills like intonation, facial expressions and gestures. In addition we used to read at school only, so we have less opportunities to read and interact with English texts.

**Message no. 35 Author: Anonymous Date: Sunday, May 27, 2007 10:08am**

I am a student in year two B.Ed, actually our teachers in the Primary and the Secondary school were not taught to be an English teachers, they were studying English to be translators not teachers, as a result of that there was lack of moderns teaching techniques in schools. In addition, teachers weren't able to recognize the teaching leveled groups, so the students were mixed where bright students and weak students in the same group. I learned how to read because I was in a privet school for the first three years, and I learned most of the basics.

## Appendix 9 – Student Teacher Course Evaluations

Year: 2005-2006

Course Name: *Working with learners*

Course Code: EDUC 250

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
1. I found this course enjoyable	8	9		
2. The workload in this course is reasonable for its credit weighting and the year level that I'm in.	8	9		
3. I found the content covered in this course interesting.	8	9		
4. This course is relevant to my needs as a B.Ed (TEYL/IELTS) student	13	4		
5. The student textbook for this course is useful	8	9		
6. The assignments in this course are manageable	7	9	1	
7. The assignments in this course are relevant to the course goals.	13	4		

### Any other comments that you'd like to make about this course?

1. This course showed our talent and creativity especially working on displays. The teacher provides us with different activities and books.
2. **We need more input on skills and strategies necessary to teach reading in UAE English language classrooms.**
3. The course was enjoyable and manageable with the teacher's guide.
4. This course is very important and we learnt many things that helped us in school.
5. **Very heavy and we cannot use some of the approaches we learned about in government schools e.g. guided reading and emergent literacy.**
6. I appreciate all the interesting things the teacher did to make the heavy input much interesting.
7. **The course was interesting, but challenging.**
8. More practical activities needed.
9. **More practice is needed on teaching reading itself.**
10. I found the course heavy but we learnt a lot from it.
11. We need more useful books that describe different EFL reading approaches in a simple way.
12. Too many assignments. More practice is needed on teaching reading itself.
13. I would recommend the book "Essential teaching skills" by Chris Kyriacou.
14. We need to learn more about approaches that work in an EFL environment.
15. **Reading approaches need to be suitable for an EFL context.**
16. Guided reading, emergent literacy and the whole language approach are more suitable for private schools. There is no time for these approaches in government schools and also we do not have the appropriate resources.  
**I learned how to teach reading by trial and error on T.P., not from college**

Year: 2006-2007

Course Name: *Working with learners*

Course Code: ELED 250

**Q.Q3: Please indicate how you feel regarding this course by checking the items below. (You will have an opportunity to give comments supporting your feelings later in this survey.) - A**

Topic	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Answered	Not Asked
A. I am enthusiastic about this course	29	11	2	0	0	0
B. The workload in this course is reasonable	22	14	4	1	1	0
C. The content matter of this course is appropriately delivered	21	20	0	0	1	0
D. This course is relevant to my needs as a student	30	11	0	0	1	0
E. The learning resources for this course are appropriate (e.g., texts, handouts, online resources, etc.)	28	11	1	0	2	0
F. The assignments in this course are a good measure of my learning	26	14	1	0	1	0

**Q.1 "I am enthusiastic about this course:"**

- It is really a rich course full of usefull information and tips to overcome difficultties in reading and diversity of reading approaches presented helped us alot.
- It is a very useful course. It focuses on reading and how we could apply approaches to EFL classes and to improve students' reading in Arabic as well as in English.
- the course is so beneficial and we learn a lot from it
- this course is a very good one, because of the content. It is all about how to teach and apply different types of reading approaches to suit EFL children. It also enhances self-improvement towards reading.
- This course included some intersting things e.g. reading strategies. However, there is some repetition in inputs and that sometimes make us feel bored.
- This course taught me alot about reading like what are the reading approaches? how can we use them? where? and many others. It would also have been better if there was enough time to know more about them before teaching practice in private schools. I still felt stressed when I had to teach something new to young EFL learners.
- It showed us different approaches that we can follow to teach reading which I find very intereting.
- Of course yes, because the assignments were really helpful, because they included many good things about teaching.

**Q.2 "The workload in this course is reasonable:"**

- In my opinion the work load is reasonable .
- Yes. It is very reasonable because we learn many useful information about how can we motivate the students to read as well as us. Furthermore, we can apply it in Arabic reading.
- yes it is because there is a plenty of time to study the course
- I think that it is reasonable because there is always enough time to accomplish the work, but sometimes it gets overwhelming and it is hard to do any work. what is amazing about this course, because everything is done at the end of the semester with the help of the teacher.
- It is true that it included lots of hard work, but we tried our best to make it manageable.
- It is reasonable but more time is needed. The reason for that during teaching practice in private schools, we had to do many things and totally forgot about the assignment of the two reading approaches, more time is needed for the students.
- It is reasonable there is a written project, presentation and one about making vocabulary activities.

**Q.3 "The content of this course is appropriately delivered:"**

- Yes it is well chosen.
- The teacher used a vary of resources to teach us this course and to make easy to understand.
- **It was easy to understand and was delivered very well. In fact the teacher was a model.**
- I understood everything because the teacher showed us how to teach reading.
- What makes it so benefical is how it is delivered to the students. The way the teacher showed us how reading is such an interesting habit that a person can get used to doing and that is what this course delivered, and that's what makes it so easy and smooth to teach in my future.
- **Microteaching lessons provided a sound foundation for developing as a reading teacher.**
- **The teacher did a great job by doing her best to deliver all what she planned for us. She is a very helpful person and especially I personally found amusement when she was introducing the shared reading approach. All reading approaches fulfilled me but shared reading was the best.**
- Lesson plans helped us to structure our reading lessons druing micro-teaching. I became confident as a reading teacher through micro-teaching practice.**

**Q.4 "The course is relevant to my needs as a student:"**

- As a students I found the course helpful as a key to learn more about reading and methodologies.
- It is very relevant to my needs as student teacher.
- It will help us in our future career and show us how to read and motivate students to read
- It is indeed what I personally need to to be tought, becauae what every teacher needs to develop is her/his own reading process and this could impact on the students themselves.
- It was relevant to our needs as student teachers when planning reading lessons.
- **Not all of the course inputs were relevant to our needs in schools during Teaching Practice. To be fair some inputs really helped us, but unfortunately, some of them didn't.**
- This course is extremely important and especially for students who don't know anything about reading. Moreover, it's also helpful and needed during teaching practice. **We as future English teacher could use those approaches when we teach in the future.**
- **Knowing different kinds of reading approaches and their related theory helped me in understanding the needs that I should be aware of while planning my lessons**

- The course was very interesting and relevant to my needs as a future reading teacher.

**Q.5 "The learning resources for this course are appropriate (e.g., texts, handouts, online resources, etc.):"**

- The resources provided for this course were appropriate and available.
- Very Very Very Very wonderful handouts and powerpoints as useful reference to me as student.
- It is very useful. The teacher gave us alot of useful handouts that we can use for the course and in the future as teachers.
- the books are not enough - we would like more books to help us with our projects, having worksheets from the teacher has helped us with our project
- every and each class we as students are expected to have power points, hanouts, searching through the net and soo many things. **That is why there is no way that any one will get bored during these classes, because it is a student- centred classroom where every body shares their ideas.**
- The teacher gave us as many resources as she could which we really appreciate and thank her for. She got us some useful handouts and texts to help us during our assignments and even to read for pleasure. She also gave us the opportunity to search by ourselves for more interesting and useful websites during the assignments. I personally thank her for that.
- Our teacher gave us alot of papers to help us do the projects. She is very helpful. But,I think it would be better if we had a book about reading approaches only.

**Q.6 "The assignments in this course are a good measure of my learning:"**

- no, because I think that 10 activities are too much
- yes I discovered lots of weakness that I have to imporve them and the assignments made it easier to figure it out.
- It helps me to understand the approches and to think deeply about how can I apply it in EFL classrooms.
- magenable
- magenable
- I think that assignments is a good measurment for the students learning process.
- I think that assignments is a good measurment for the students learning process.
- In fact they were really a good way of measuring. NB. the timing of some assignements would be better if they were changed.
- Yes, it is.

**Q.7 Are there any other comments you would like to make about this course?**

- The vocabulary pack assignment needs some modifications in terms of reducing the number of activities required for the pack and also the instructions.
- non
- Generally, this course provided us with many beneficial inputs.
- I think that it's better if there was enough time for giving out each assignment and giving them in good times, not when there are other assignments and all of them due at the same time. There should be from the beginning of each academic year or semester an agreement between all teachers to decide when will each give their assignemt and when is needed to handed in.

## Appendix 10 – Teacher Educator Course Evaluations

### Bachelor of Education Course Team Meeting Feedback 2005-6

The meeting chair will discuss these questions with the team. Once a consensus view is reached this should be recorded. If no consensus is reached then the differing views should be recorded.

**What do you feel are the strengths of this course?**

*Interesting, thought provoking course.*

Provides an understanding of reading as a multifaceted, complex phenomenon.

Tries to link theory with practice.

The students can clearly see the link between theory and the immediate practical applicability of the concepts / methodologies discussed on this course to local EFL contexts

It provides the basic foundations for the teaching of reading and links well with Teaching Practice

**How appropriate is this course's content and level for this particular year of the B.Ed. TEYL/ELTS degree?**

Very appropriate. Students have enjoyed this course.

*Most of the readings required extensive scaffolding and quite a lot of teacher input. Practical examples and hands on activities to explain theories and concepts were necessary in this course for students to make sense of and how to use theories in practice.*

Very appropriate but many of the readings required quite a lot of teacher support and practical/hands on activities for SS to "get it". Time consuming.

Although the course is accredited with the University of Melbourne, Australia, it is not necessarily contextualized for an Emirati context.

**What improvements do you feel could be made to the goals and objectives in this course?**

All agreed on:

1. *Create a new Goal: Evaluate a range of reading approaches and their potential value in Second/Foreign language classrooms.*

2. *Examine a range of pre-during and post-reading activities*

3. *Integrate this course with the college lesson plan and focus on the teaching of reading/integrate with the reading component of New Parade. This could be a possible assessment using a particular Reading Approach and would ideally fit after TP so they can apply the knowledge gained to fit with Govt schools.*

4. *Include microteaching of reading lessons as an objective.*

5. *Remove Goal 5 on Classroom Management this will give more time to cover other content.* The 2 weeks allocated for classroom management wasn't anywhere enough to do it justice. Need a course on management...not just fitting it into the short time allotted to TP...suggest a first year subject in second semester that then is built explicitly into TP in later years. Another suggestion is to increase the TP hours to allow time to cover this effectively. There is no real link at all with the rest of the course. It needed to be integrated with the Learning Centers. The time saved could be then transferred to Goal 2, which requires a lot more time if students are to have a sound working knowledge of the basic fundamentals in the teaching of reading. The students need to do a lot of work in this area. Also the students have requested for more time to be given for this goal.

**What is the rationale for the suggested changes?**

1. Students need to be more aware of the differences between reading approaches. The time allotted only enables us to a limited understanding of each approach. Therefore, the theoretical overview needs to be reduced.
2. Although this course is of a high academic standard, it needs to be tailored more to suit the needs of Emirati student teachers.
3. The students have limited knowledge or practical experience on how to teach reading. Therefore they require extra time for what we would perceive as known strategies or processes through one's own personal experiences as a child being taught reading. They need to be competent in the teaching of reading before they graduate and unless more time is given this will not happen.
4. Most Ss don't read for pleasure and are not exposed to how to teach reading in TP in Government schools so the more time we can devote to this subject in college, the more it will equip them in for their future as EFL reading teachers.
5. To expose them to a variety of response activities which then can be applied to their teaching. Having a knowledge of reading and reading approaches is essential for becoming an EFL teacher—how can a student promote reading in a school and how can they create a conducive environment for reading development if they do not have a knowledge of the different EFL approaches?
6. Connect this course more closely with T.P. ELED 299, where reading is the focus and give them the experience in how to organize different reading approaches and adapt these to fit New Parade.
7. Microteaching will give students confidence to 'try out' different approaches in a non-threatening environment and give them experience in applying theory to practice. Most students are not exposed to the teaching of Reading during TP in the Government schools.
8. This would give more time to cover the Reading content. The classroom management goal is essential for effective teaching and needs a significant amount of time devoted to it. This goal is more suited to the T.P. course instead. However, 'How to organize different reading approaches' could be incorporated in its place.

**Could this course be better integrated with the other courses this semester? How?**

It was well integrated with T.P. How to plan reading lessons could be reinforced more in both T.P. and Education classes, as mentioned above.

Students need the experience in how to organize different reading approaches and adapt these to fit the 'New Parade' English course book used in UAE primary schools".

It would be worthwhile adding the 255 integration explicitly into the work plan.

**Did you feel there was sufficient time to adequately cover the goals of the course?**

No – the section on classroom management was taught by integrating it with learning centres because of time constraints and could not be covered as well as would have been desired.

More time needs to be allotted to teach goal 2. See previous comments.

**Did you feel you had sufficient resources to teach this course?**

Yes - more videos and user-friendly texts desirable.

Do you have a recommendation for an alternative resources / text for the course?

Literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: A balanced Approach. – Gail E Hopkins. Pearson Publications. ISBN: 0131190768

Recommended to purchase for library and possibly set as a text in 2006 – 7.

**Did you feel the assessments were appropriate, realistic and meaningful?**

Assignment 1 - 'Describing and analyzing methods adopted in the teaching of reading in an English medium School' was an excellent assignment that connected knowledge of reading approaches with T.P. experiences.

Assignment 2 –This assignment had little value. Students were already being assessed in T.P. and the weighting of the assignment could have matched this.

Assignment 3 – practical, valuable, enjoyable for students to set up learning centres. The Multiple Intelligences/Learning Styles need to be explicitly linked to the teaching of Reading/Literacy/Vocabulary. Possibly introduce this assignment earlier next year.

Students found it challenging completing 3 assessments in one semester. However it was clearly manageable.

Please outline any practical concerns, e.g. timetabling, administrative or scheduling issues.

Already mentioned above.

**Would you like to suggest alternative assessments or refinements to the existing assessments?**

Suggestions for electives:

- Micro – teaching – presenting a Reading lesson, using the HCT format (which was recommended at the Ed Forum for review to fit Reading better), using a particular Reading approach and integrated with the Reading component of New Parade.

- Creating a Resource Pack/Learning Centre demonstrating a variety of ways to implement vocabulary according to a theme from New Parade.

- Integrated with ELED 255 - Micro Teaching using the Story Bag demonstrating either the Reading Aloud/Shared Reading approach.

- An assignment related to ways of promoting reading/setting up an extensive reading program in a school. Students plan for a book week/literacy event – write a rationale, highlight possible events and activities, how to create a print-rich environment, consider organizational implications etc.

### Bachelor of Education Course Team Meeting Feedback 2006-7

(This form should be completed by the chair of the meeting, i.e. the course coordinator, curriculum leader or course team leader and circulated to team members before submission to the Divisional Academic Team.)

The meeting chair will discuss these questions with the team. Once a consensus view is reached this should be recorded. If no consensus is reached then the differing views should be recorded.

#### What do you feel are the strengths of this course?

The content of this course is highly relevant to becoming a reading teacher of English in a foreign language setting. It focuses on developing students' own reading skills as well as providing them with the skills and understanding necessary to teach reading/vocabulary in an EFL setting.

Very comprehensive for TEYL

The new course relates very well to teaching practice in UAE schools.

The strengths of this course is the curriculum itself. The content of the new course is not only comprehensible but highly relevant to becoming a reading teacher of English in a foreign language setting. The various aspects of reading and vocabulary development is essential for the students to be knowledgeable in as future teachers.

Excellent materials; projects are varied and support the concepts

Clear linking of reading theory to practice. Integrates extremely well with 255/299.

#### How appropriate is this course's content and level for this particular year of the B.Ed. TEYL/ELTS degree?

Highly appropriate. However, it is a pity that the focus on the teaching of reading is not explicitly focused on beyond Year Two of the B.Ed. programme.

Very

Very appropriate

Extremely appropriate!

good

Very....

#### What improvements do you feel could be made to the goals and objectives in this course?

(NB: Please suggest wordings for any amendments to current goals and objectives.)

None

None

Possibly include in Goal 4/ create a new goal, the idea of developing ideas for a special event in a school, e.g. book week; reading workshops and involving parents in their child's literacy. Course very comprehensive but needs to include a focus on teaching reading in preparatory context as well.

New course format worked extremely well.

**What is the rationale for the suggested changes?**

N/A

N/A

Students observe special events such as this in private school settings and therefore providing them with an initial understanding of the rationale behind it would benefit them. They could also develop their creativity by developing suitable activities for such an event. 2. Parental involvement is an important part of literacy development in school.

N/A

**Could this course be better integrated with the other courses this semester? How?**

No. This course is already well-integrated with Teaching Practice and EDUC 255 (Children's Literature).

I feel this course is at present very well integrated with the TP 299 and the Children's and Adolescent Literature course.

our TP school setting does not fulfill what the students need to see as far as a model reading program; in fact, they do not have reading programs; the video that Fíodhna sent out -- Successful Classrooms -- filled a great gap for us and we could use more of those

It's done this way at SWC and was an easy task as all 3 subjects for intergration were taught by one teacher. Do we need the 3 subjects explicitly integrated on a workplan?

**Did you feel there was sufficient time to adequately cover the goals of the course?**

Yes

Yes

Yes

Yes I had an organised team leader keeping on track as there was a lot to complete

yes

Yes...but you can always do more... With the removal of MI/LS allowed more time to cover content more effectively.

**Did you feel you had sufficient resources to teach this course?**

Yes - between library books, micro-teaching activities and supplementary readings there are more than enough resource for this course.

Yes **great new course textbook**: Hopkins, G.E. (2006)Literacy for the 21st Century: A Balanced Approach, Pearson Publications, 4th edition.

Yes

Yes , but more Childrens' and Adolscent Literature needed in our LRC and I would like to have access to the video that integrates with a text I used called On Solid Ground , Strategies for Teaching Reading by Sharon Taberski

yes except for 6

Yes...thank to the organised folder provided....no time wasting looking for resources, and all colleges had the same resources...

**Did you feel the assessments were appropriate, realistic and meaningful?**

Yes they were meaningful, appropriate and realistic. Students especially enjoyed the mini-reading lesson which gave them experience of teaching reading before going on teaching practice. In the mini-lesson assignment, not sure if an oral rationale is also necessary. In the core assignment (essay on reading approaches), possibly remove 'guided reading' as one of the options to choose from as some students wrote about 'guided reading' as observed in private schools but not sure if this is relevant or manageable in an EFL context.

Yes

Yes

Yes...good balance...essay/microteaching/resource pack

Would you like to suggest alternative assessments or refinements to the existing assessments?

**Suggestions for electives:**

N/A

N/A

N/A

N/A

- An assignment related to ways of promoting reading/setting up an extensive reading program in a school. Students plan for a book week/literacy event – write a rationale, highlight possible events and activities, how to create a print-rich environment, consider organizational implications etc.

## Appendix 11: Teaching Practice Grades and Categorizing of Student Focus Groups

Student ID	Grade	Focus Group
H00011770	A	Confident
H00021575	A	Confident
H00021579	A	Confident
H00009851	A-	Confident
H00009669	B+	Developing
H00009886	B+	Developing
H00011308	B+	Developing
200203247	B	Developing
200302769	B	Developing
H00009644	B	Developing
H00009899	B	Developing
H00010009	B	Developing
H00007625	C+	Reluctant
H00009791	C+	Reluctant
200301767	C	Reluctant
200326238	C	Reluctant

## Appendix 12: Example of Deductive Data Analysis Coding, using the cut and paste technique

Teaching Practice reports and course evaluations were analyzed using the 'cut and paste' technique (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990) where sections relevant to the research questions were identified and categorized into key themes. Colour coding was used to identify patterns across data.

### Key Research Question 2:

What is the perceived and observed impact of reforming delivery in the College classroom, using the constructivist delivery innovations of **performance modeling, systematic micro-teaching and problem-based learning** upon student teachers reading teaching methods during teaching practice in foreign language UAE classrooms?

### Key:

Reference to microteaching	Pre-, while and post
Reference to modeling	demonstrate
Reference to problem-based learning	Problems that are relevant

### College X, (TPCMR) (2007b) Excerpt from Teaching Practice College Mentor Report

Drawing on micro-teaching reading lessons practiced in college, Student X effectively engaged students in the pre- while- and post-reading stages. The children were actively involved and stimulated through questioning. She focused on her lesson objectives and gave many opportunities for students to practice both reading aloud and silently. During one of her lessons, she set up literacy centers, where small groups of students moved from one activity to the other, all based on her chosen text 'The cat in the hat' by Dr. Seuss. She rang a bell to catch students' attention and gather the all together as a whole class. Then they moved onto the next centre to continue responding to the story. In this way, she integrated the four skills. She also created an effective literacy display related to this lesson. I recommend that she model the reading process first to demonstrate to the students what a fluent reader does when reading, before encouraging them to read independently...

College System, Academic Services (STCE) (2007b). Excerpt from Student teacher course evaluations for EDUC 250 course, 2006-2007.

- Microteaching lessons provided a sound foundation for developing as a reading teacher.
- The teacher did a great job by doing her best to deliver all what she planned for us. She is a very helpful person and especially I personally found amusement when she was introducing the shared reading approach. All reading approaches fulfilled me but shared reading was the best.
- Lesson plans helped us to structure our reading lessons during micro-teaching.
- It was easy to understand and was delivered very well. In fact the teacher was a model.
- That is why there is no way that any one will get bored during these classes, because it is a student- centred classroom where everybody shares their ideas. We try to solve teaching problems that are relevant to our schools.

## Appendix 13: Example of Inductive Data Analysis Coding (Focus Group 1)

Sub-categories were formed while reading and analyzing the focus group data, using inductive manual coding methods. As relationships were identified, notes were written alongside excerpts of text, highlighting different themes and key words along with numbering where appropriate.

**Key:**

Key words	Strict
Negative sentiments	It still affects you
Positive sentiments	More flexible

**Researcher:** What memories do you have of your past teachers? Can you paint a picture for us about your past?

Student 4: It was a strict environment; the teacher was shouting, controlling, using behaviourist ways and teaching methods of reading, children sitting still in places. really don't want to implement this in my future. This reading course allows me to think about interactive models which I will hopefully implement in the future. *strang*  
*redirect*

Student 1: I think to be strict is not a good model to teach young learners, because we have to be more flexible while we teach them.

Student 2: Its surprising how your past experiences affects you, unconsciously. Even though you don't believe it and you think its wrong, it still affects you.

Student 4: Yeah I think this is what happening to me. It has had a very negative influence on me.

Student 2: I agree with you. But I'm trying to think about my past experience and even then all I think about is drilling of grammar.

Student 1: Also our view of reading teaching is different from our teachers. I mean they thought only comprehension exercises, pronunciation and grammar. We want students to develop a love of reading and not be afraid to make mistakes.

*passionate embrace of the type of classroom environment she wants to create*

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