

**Reflection as a teacher education concept, connotation
and implementation: a qualitative case study of a
postgraduate certificate in education (secondary)
programme at a UK university.**

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by

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Abstract

This thesis reports a qualitative case study exploring the connotation and implementation of reflection as an educational concept in a PGCE (secondary) programme at a UK university in the light of the perceptions of university tutors and student teachers. Reflection has been an important concept in many teacher education programmes but it has consistently been intricate in terms of its connotation and implementation and despite a vast amount of research aimed at deconstructing its complexity, the matter does not seem to have been resolved. Despite its conceptual complexity it has often been taken in its common sense meaning by practitioners in educational programmes and is, at times, turned into a slogan.

This study was, therefore, aimed at an exploration of the meaning and implementation of the concept and the various factors that influence it in the programme under study. The findings of the study reveal that, true to its reputation, the concept defies any agreed upon understanding. On a conceptual level there was recognition of its complexity among the university tutors, although this did not come out in the case of student teachers who predominantly defined it in its common sense meaning. At the implementation level the common sense practice-oriented connotation appeared to prevail among both groups. Factors influencing this orientation included the practical emphasis of the PGCE, the focus on response to the centralised QTS standards, the time-work balance and the under-appreciation for theory in its technical-rational conceptualisation in the predominantly skill-oriented and subject-teaching focused structure of the training.

The study implies that for reflection to be appreciated and implemented at the deeper, conceptual and critical level, it should be put into practice more overtly with elaborate theoretical underpinnings. This would call for changes in this and similar programmes in terms of structure, content and aims.

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Glossary of abbreviations

B.Ed: Bachelor of Education

DfE: Department for Education, UK

HEI: Higher Education Institution

ITE: Initial Teacher Education

ITT: Initial Teacher Training

M.Ed: Master of Education

NQT: Newly Qualified Teacher

OFSTED: Office for Standards in Education in England

PGCE: Postgraduate Certificate in Education

QTS: Qualified Teacher Status

TDA: Training and Development Agency for Schools in England

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all those who believe in, and promote the cause of free thinking and free expression, and uphold the cause of one humanity beyond the confines of race, religion, ethnicity, colour, and nationality.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

***'If future teachers are not to become robotic clones of present teachers, and if future schools are not to be mere replicas of present schools, teacher education must develop its own independence of thought and enquiry.'* ~ Schnur and Golby (1995:16)**

1.1 The personal journey

The journey which eventually led to the presentation of this thesis began in another country, at another time. In 2002, I read an article titled 'Our education system' published in a Pakistani newspaper. The article carried a cartoon as an illustration. The 'education system' was presented in the form of a book. Two students with school bags hanging down their shoulders were shown entering the 'education system' and coming out of it from the other side, still with their bags but their faces had transformed into donkey faces. In Pakistan a donkey is usually considered a symbol of idiocy and ignorance. That cartoon had a striking impact on my thinking regarding education, teaching, and learning, the purpose of educational institutions and of the teaching profession. Then, I was studying for my M.Ed (Master of Education) degree at the University of Peshawar, Pakistan. Once while our 'Philosophy of Education' professor discussed with us Paulo Freire's educational philosophy, his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970) and his 'banking' concept of education and how education is used to indoctrinate and oppress, I was thinking about how what he was saying was

relevant to that cartoon that I saw in the newspaper. The next day I brought and showed that cartoon to my professor, who enthusiastically recognised its relevance and presented it to the class. Freire's educational philosophy and its potential illustration through that cartoon initiated me, perhaps for the first time in my life, into asking myself questions such as 'What is education?', 'How was I educated?' 'Can I really call myself an educated person?', 'What is the role of teachers?', 'How do they educate children?', 'Do they really prepare them to be independent thinkers or is it that they themselves don't know what their profession is all about?' Why is education imparted in the way it is? And so on.

A few months later another article appeared in the same newspaper, written by a British educationist working in Pakistan, on the concept of higher order thinking and the role of questioning in education. I initiated email correspondence with her and consequently wrote a number of articles in the same newspaper highlighting what I perceived to be some of the flaws in our education system, our evaluation system, the role of our textbooks, the role of teachers in our educational institutions in Pakistan that I thought led to a culture of silent follow and acceptance of 'facts' without questioning on the part of students and teachers in a top-down model of education. Some of those newspaper articles (Khan, 2004a, b, c, d, e, f, g; Khan, 2005a, b, c, d, e; Khan, 2006a, b, c; Khan, 2008) are available in Appendix VIII. My first article published in that newspaper was entitled, 'Textbooks that kill creativity' (Khan, 2004a). I received very encouraging responses from readers in Pakistan and even further afield from countries including the UK, The USA, and Australia. As a result of my engagement

in this process, my thinking changed significantly regarding the aims and purposes of education. I suppose this was the beginning of my 'reflective' journey and, later on, of my interest in conducting this study as reflection on 'reflection' as an educational concept.

In 2005, I attained the post of Lecturer in Education at a Pakistani university, after serving as a school teacher for about eight years at primary and secondary school levels. Soon I realised that an improvement in the teacher education would have considerable impact on the overall improvement of the education system. I thought that my idea of a 'thinking teacher' (Tishman et al., 1993; Nickerson, 1988; Al-Qahtani, 1995) and consequently of 'thinking students', 'thinking schools' and on a larger scale a 'thinking society' could best begin through the inculcation of this concept in the teacher education programmes.

In 2008, I got a scholarship funding from the government of Pakistan for PhD studies abroad. My interest in exploring the concept of a 'thinking teacher' and understanding teacher education in a developed country such as the UK, led to my discovery of 'reflection' as a teacher education concept during the initial literature review. Reflection, though very well recognized and established in the Western education system, is not very familiar in our (Pakistani) context and I, as a student, as a teacher and later on as a Lecturer in Education in Pakistan, was not aware of the concept. During literature review, however, I came across a total of four articles (i.e. Rarieya, 2005; Vazir, 2006; Rahman, 2007; Ashraf and Rarieya, 2008) about reflection in the

Pakistani context all of them further confirming my view of the newness of the concept in Pakistan.

This, however, was just the beginning. The going was not very smooth in the start as soon I discovered that the topic I had selected for my research was quite elusive in nature. It was not before the seventh month of the first year of my PhD (also called the APG – advanced postgraduate – year at Leicester) that I began to somehow develop some elementary understanding of the topic. Writings such as Gore’s (1987) critique of Reflective Practice (Cruickshank, 1981) and Killen’s (1989) response to this critique played a helpful role in giving me a clearer understanding of the concept.

In January, 2009 I attended a one day workshop on reflection in the ITE (Initial Teacher Education) titled, *Reflecting on Reflection: To develop and extend our understanding of reflection*, held at the University of Gloucestershire. Delegates (about thirty in number) attending the workshop were from universities across the UK and comprised university instructors/ lecturers and research students. In the first part of the workshop delegates were given extracts from Ward and McCotter (2004): *Reflection as a visible outcome for preservice teachers*. The idea was to initiate delegates into identifying and classifying elements of reflection and to share ideas on how these extracts might be evaluated in terms of the levels/types of reflection. What I discovered during the proceedings of the workshop was that, firstly, reflection was very much a focus of debate as a teaching learning concept in the UK and, secondly, in consonance with related literature I read till then, the concept was defined and classified in many

different ways by professionals, teachers, practitioners and researchers coming from a diverse range of universities. That strengthened my thinking that the concept needed to be explored further.

I continued reading around the issue and came across two important sources which further reinforced my rationale for doing the study. One of those sources was an article by Hatton and Smith (1995), titled: *Reflection in Teacher Education__towards Definition and Implementation*. This article, my subsequent discovery of the journal *Reflective Practice* and further key articles, books and writings such as Van Manen (1977), Calderhead (1989, 1993), Zeichner (1981), Zeichner and Liston (1987,1996), Pollard et al. (1987, 2008), Valli (1992, 1997), Jay and Johnson (2002), Griffiths (2000), Halliday (1998), Freese (2006), Fendler (2003), Akbari (2007), Amobi (2005), Moon (1999, 2004) further focused my interest in the issue. The research issue being explored in this study, thus, began in my personal experiences and my reflection on those experiences and was formalised by my initial academic readings in the area. The following sections of this chapter will describe the rationale and significance of the research issue, the formulation of research question(s) and an overview of the remaining chapters.

1.2 Reflection: research issue and rationale

This section aims to explain the research issue, the main research question(s) and the rationale for the research site and the process. The research questions partly came out

of related literature and partly of the researcher's personal interest in the concept as a researcher and as a teacher educator. Initial review of related literature revealed three main issues regarding reflection as a teacher education concept: 1. It is variously defined, is a complex concept and has often been turned into a slogan (Zeichner and Liston, 1996); 2. A diverse range of practices and strategies have been associated with reflection (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Zeichner and Liston, 1996) and 3. The rationale for reflection in different educational programmes varies considerably depending on their particular aims and objectives (Gore, 1987; Killen, 1989; Calderhead, 1989). These issues and how they led to research questions are explored in the following lines.

Reflection has been one of the most prominent goals in many teacher education programmes 'but its definition and how it might be fostered in student teachers are problematic issues' (Hatton and Smith, 1995: 33). There are different models and conceptualisations of reflection and different practices related to reflection based on diverse theories regarding the concept (Van Manen, 1977; Cruickshank, 1981, 1987; Gore, 1987; Schön, 1983, 1987; Zeichner, 1987, 1994). In terms of its implementation and development, a variety of practices and strategies have been associated with reflection. These range from basing whole teacher education programmes on the reflective paradigm to devoting specific courses, and components to develop beginning teachers as reflective practitioners (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). According to Hatton and Smith (1995) 'A wide variety of approaches has been employed in attempts to foster reflection in student teachers and other intending professionals'. They identify four broad ones: Action research projects, Case studies and Ethnographic

studies, Microteaching and other supervised practicum experiences, and structured curriculum tasks. Within these strategies found variously across the approaches, Hatton and Smith (1995) identify specific practices aimed at developing reflection. These include journal writing (Kaminiski, 2003; Clarke, 2004), narratives and biographies, reflective essays, and use of metaphors of teaching. Other reflective practices include development of portfolios and now e-portfolios (Klenowski, 1998), blogs (Williams and Jacobs, 2004), group discussion/reflection (Clark, 2004), mentoring (Moran and Dallat, 1995). Fendler (2003: 22) identify 'reflective devices' such as journal writing and 'autobiographical narratives'. There is, hence, a range of practices, strategies and devices associated with reflection and these have been used variously keeping in view the aims and objectives of particular programmes. Besides aims and objectives, the structure and types of particular educational programmes and the availability or otherwise of resources is also likely to play a role in the selection and implementation of one or another reflective practice or strategy.

Thus reflection as an educational construct has been lending itself to more than one interpretation on both the conceptual and practical level. It was, therefore, of considerable interest to this researcher as someone new to the concept to explore it further from the perspectives of practitioners after having some theoretical understanding of it through literature review. This led to the decision to study the concept through the perspectives of university tutors and student teachers, involved in a PGCE programme at a UK university, as a case study (For details on methodology and the rationale for case study as a research design see Chapter 3). This decision was

made for two main reasons. Firstly, to explore the general issues coming out of literature review regarding the connotation and implementation of reflection in the programme under study and two, in agreement with Harrison (2008: 8) who argues that 'we do need to be clear about what it [reflection] means. Whether we are beginning teachers, university education tutors or school mentors involved in the school-based training...', this researcher aimed to explore if that 'clarity' regarding reflection was evident in the programme under study. Further, as Hatton and Smith (1995: 35-36) argue 'the theoretical frame work for reflection adopted by a particular programme will depend upon its purposes and focus, and, therefore, in turn upon the assumptions about teaching and teacher education upon which these are based'. Hence, it was interesting to explore the purposes, focus and meaning of reflection as an educational construct in the programme under study.

Moreover, as a result of the ideas coming out of literature review and this researcher's personal reflection regarding the connotation and implementation of reflection, the possible obstacles in the way of its implementation and the potential ways and means of dealing with them also became the focus of exploration. An appraisal of the overall suitability of the programme, the effective conceptualisation and implementation of the concept and the factors impacting this process as well became areas that seemed to merit exploration. These included factors such as the impact of standardization and management through government agencies such as the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and Teacher Development Agency (TDA), on the implementation of the concept in the programme. Other factors such as the duration of the PGCE and

the enactment of reflection in that context, the school-university partnership and the role of school co-tutors, the theory-practice interaction, the conditions in the schools and their impact on reflection were also deemed important for exploration.

1.3 From research issues to research question(s) and aims of the study

According to Bassey (1995: 54) a research enquiry can begin with any one of the following three sources: 'the research hypothesis, the research problem, and the research issue'. In the case of exploring an 'issue', he suggests that initially simple research question(s) need to be asked which could subsequently be followed by detailed questions. The research issue explored in this current study revolved around an exploration of reflection in terms of its connotation and implementation in the PGCE (Secondary) programme at a university in the UK.

This study was aimed at exploring possible answer(s) to the following main question:

How do university tutors and student teachers perceive reflection in terms of its connotation and implementation in a PGCE (Secondary) programme at a university in the UK?

This main research question was divided into three principal sections aimed at exploring the *what*, the *how* and the *why-and-so-what* of reflection. These three aspects came partly from the researcher's personal interest in exploring and

understanding the concept and partly from initial literature review as mentioned in Section 1.2. The *what* part was aimed at exploring the meaning and interpretation and the subject-matter of reflection. This part also sought to explore the perceived qualities/characteristics of reflective practitioners and the possible existence of any theoretical framework(s) being followed in the programme. The *how* was to look at the implementation process of the concept in terms of the various strategies and practices in the programme. This part also aimed at exploring the various factors impacting the process of implementation such as the structure and duration of the programme, the theory-practice interaction and the impact of the site of the programme, the availability or otherwise of resources, the impact of government policies, the aims and objectives of the programme and the attitudes of the people i.e. tutors and student teachers involved in the programme. Further, this part was to explore the possible ways in which reflection was assessed and potential hindrances in the way of useful implementation of the concept. The *why-and-so-what* part was related to exploring the aims, rationale and importance of reflection in the PGCE. This part also aimed at seeking suggestions for possible ways and means of improvement in the useful implementation of reflection. Besides, exploring these specific research questions, this study at a broader level aimed at a clearer understanding of reflection as an educational concept both in theory and practice on personal, professional and academic level for the researcher.

1.4 Significance of the study

As noted in the above sections, reflection as a teacher education concept has been studied in different ways by researchers mainly on a conceptual level (Van Manen, 1977, 1995; Calderhead, 1989; Smyth, 1989; Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Fendler, 2003; Akbari, 2007). Most of the writers have been focusing on exploring the nature and meaning of reflection in theoretical terms generally, with reference to other writers and researchers on the concept (Marcos et al., 2011). Some of the writers have focused on analysing, measuring and quantifying reflection (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Kember et al., 1999; Kember et al., 2000, Kember et al., 2008) which again is in the realm of theoretical exploration of the concept. The outcome has been a plethora of research about the concept on the one hand and on the other an emergence and accumulation of evermore complexity around it. Some writers, however, have explored the concept from both practical and conceptual perspectives (Moore and Ash, 2002; Moore, 2004; Pedro, 2005). The focus of these studies, nonetheless, has primarily been exploring the *meaning and types* of reflection from the perspectives of practitioners (student teachers in both cases) in the light of different theoretical models. The significance of this present study, therefore, is that the concept is being studied beyond its theoretical interpretation and classification, through its exploration from the perspectives of two important stakeholders: university tutors and student teachers, simultaneously. The aim has been to get an insight into how university tutors perceive the concept, how is it interpreted and implemented by the student teachers and what (if any) are the points of convergence or divergence between these two groups. Secondly, the study goes beyond the deconstruction of reflection in terms of its meaning(s) and interpretation(s) and examines possible factors affecting its

practical implementation in the campus and the practicum. These factors include the role of theory and practice, the time and work interaction in the PGCE, the structure of the programme, government policies regarding ITE, and the environment in the campus and the practicum.

This study, thus, is significant in providing a more comprehensive view of possible factors impacting the implementation of reflection. Although the above is aimed to show the significance of the study on a more academic level, on a personal and professional level as a qualitative researcher and teacher educator coming from another country (and hence being new both to the concept of reflection and teacher education in the UK) the study would hopefully contribute to this researcher's better understanding of the concept on the one hand and of the teacher education of a developed country on the other. In that sense it is likely to have impact on the personal, professional and academic course of this researcher once back in his country. This could, thus, translate into possible changes in the teacher education programme(s) in the educational institution(s) where this researcher works/will work in Pakistan and further into possible future professional, academic and research collaboration with people and institutions involved in the academic and research fields in the UK both on a personal and institutional level.

1.5 An overview of the remaining chapters in the thesis

Chapter 2 aims to provide a review of the related literature and to establish the rationale and relevance of the study further. This chapter will also discuss the conceptual framework of the thesis. Relevant literature is reviewed keeping in view the main research question(s) and the focus of the present study in terms of the issues that it aims to explore. An ample array of literature has been reviewed encompassing issues ranging from the varied definitions and interpretation of reflection, to its different types and characteristics, the factors influencing the concept, the rationale and importance that have been attributed to it and the critiques of different models of reflection.

Chapter 3 sets out to describe in detail the research methodology followed in this project. This includes a description and critique of the choice regarding the research design, the paradigmatic, the ontological and epistemological considerations, the choices made for research methods and techniques, sampling issues, access to data sources, data collection and analysis techniques and procedures, the ethical issues relevant to the study and issues regarding the validity and reliability of the study. This chapter also describes the research site and discusses the conceptual framework of the study.

Chapter 4 aims at a presentation and analysis of data gathered from university tutors through interviews. The data is presented and analysed in the light of main research

questions and the sub-questions and incoming themes are discussed using qualitative data analysis techniques. Chapter 5 focuses on a presentation and analysis of data gathered from student teachers in the form semi-structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The presentation and analytical process resembles that in Chapter 4 and themes once again mainly reflect the *what*, the *how*, and the *why-and-so-what* of reflection while the *what* represents the connotation, the *how* the implementation and the *why-and-so-what* the rationale for reflection as an educational concept in the programme.

Chapter 6 is focused on two main issues: theoretical discussion of the various themes that came out during analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 on the one hand, and on the other, an exploration of possible comparison and contrast of themes coming out of the two main sources of data, that is, the university tutors and student teachers. This chapter also focuses on theoretical interpretations of the main findings in chapters 4 and 5. Lastly, Chapter 7 provides the overall implications of the study, considerations for further research, and the researcher's personal reflections on the study.

References

Appendices

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

'Reflection... is not easily pinned down. In fact, educators have spent more than two decades just trying to describe it...A student teacher may ask, "What is the reflective thing to do?" to which a reflective teacher educator would reply, "Do what a reflective teacher would do." The student teacher responds, "Who is the reflective teacher?" which is answered, "The teacher who practices reflectively"...'~
Birmingham (2004: 318)

This chapter aims to present a synopsis of related literature regarding reflection as an educational concept. It has six sections. Section 2.1 will focus on the definitional aspects of reflection. The next section, that is, section 2.2 will discuss the main factors that impact reflection in terms of its connotation and implementation. Section 2.3 will present the literature elaborating the aims and uses of reflection as an educational concept. In section 2.4 the focus of the presentation is on the role of reflection in teacher education specifically. Section 2.5 aims to present reflection in terms of teacher education particularly in the UK and the last section, that is, section 2.6 presents reflection in terms of the PGCE programme under this current study.

2.1 What is reflection?

2.1.1 Definition of reflection

Everyday definitions of reflection include words such as thinking, deliberation, consideration and contemplation. The online version of The Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (<http://www.oxfordadvancedlearnersdictionary.com/dictionary/reflection>) contains a number of meanings for reflection. These include its scientific connotations such as 'an image in a mirror, on a shiny surface, on water...', and 'the action or process of sending back light, heat, sound... from a surface'. The more metaphorical meanings of the word included descriptions such as 'a sign that shows the state or nature of something', and a 'careful thought about something, sometimes over a long period of time'. Valli (1997: 67-68) traces the word reflection back to its Latin root 'reflectere' which according to her means 'to bend back'. She also refers to its use in physics, grammar and psychology in different ways. She cautions against confusing it with 'reflex' which is an involuntary response and considers it a 'conscious and systematic mode of thought'. Valli (1997) explains reflective thinking through two terms: *sequence* and *consequence* associated with it by Dewey (1933). 'Thought is reflective only if it is logically sequenced and includes a consideration of the consequences of a decision' (Valli, 1997: 68). Finding out the cause of a phenomenon and evaluating or foreseeing its effect are thus at the root of reflective thought.

Works that helped in an initiation into the technical meaning of reflection i.e. reflection as an educational construct included Moon (1999, 2004) which provide a

wide-ranging discussion on the nature of reflection. According to Moon (1999: 4) ‘...we reflect on something in order to consider it in more detail’, a common sense meaning denoting a mental process couched in a framework of purpose or outcome. This process, however, is applied to ‘relatively complicated or unstructured ideas for which there is no obvious solution’ (Moon, 1999: 152). Moon also provides an extended definition of the term: ‘It is often a process of re-organizing knowledge and emotional orientations in order to achieve further insight’ (Moon, 2004: 82). Adler (1993: 162) argues that ‘Reflection, or inquiry, is the attempt to grasp the essential meaning of something and that meaning is multi-dimensional and multilayered’. Her definition takes reflection in terms of its purpose and points out the complexity of the concept. Others associate it with the process of understanding and problem solving. According to this view it is a process that aims ‘to untangle a problem or to make more sense of a puzzling situation; reflection involves working towards a better understanding of the problem and the ways of solving it’ (Loughran, 1995 cited in Jay and Johnson, 2002: 84).

Harrison (2008: 40), defines reflection as the ability ‘to see one thing in another’, to describe and perform, to change and to self-evaluate against some standards. Her definition seems to encompass both the common sense meaning of the concept and its consequences in terms of the ability to ‘describe’ and ‘perform’. Moreover as her work concerns reflection as a teacher education concept, where student teachers need to achieve certain standards in order to qualify as teachers, she, therefore, includes self-evaluation against those standards in this definition of reflection.

An older version of the 'general' definition of reflection as an educational concept comes from Ross (1989: 22) who, drawing on the works of Schön (1983), Kitchener and King (1981), Zeichner and Liston (1987) and Goodman (1989), describes it as 'a way of thinking about educational matters that involves the ability to make rational choices and to assume responsibility for those choices'. Thus the process of reflection according to Ross includes recognition of problematic and dilemmatic issues, making comparison with other such situations, 'framing and reframing' of the dilemma, experimentation and looking for the consequences and implications through a continuous process of evaluation. Jay and Johnson (2002) offer a very wide-ranging definition of reflection. This enfolds reflection as an individual as well as a collaborative process that involves seemingly opposing notions such as experience and uncertainty. The process includes 'identifying questions' and issues and then individual and collaborative dialogue keeping in view the conditions in which the questions arise. The result of this process according to Jay and Johnson (2002: 76) is 'clarity, on which one bases changes in action or disposition. New questions naturally arise, and the process spirals onward'.

Reflection has been consistently traced back to John Dewey (1933). Drawing on the work of Houston (1988), Hatton and Smith (1995: 33) argue that Dewey '... himself drew on the ideas of many earlier educators such as Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Lao Tzu, Solomon and Buddha'. Dewey defines reflection as a process 'which involves active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or practice in light of the grounds that support it and further consequences to which it leads' (Grant and

Zeichner, 1984: 4). According to Valli (1997: 69), 'Dewey's language [upholding the cause of reflection] is so powerful that one wonders how teacher education could be based on anything other than reflective thinking'. Dewey argues that reflective thinking guards against the un-critical, un-questioning attitude of following the routine. Distinguishing 'reflective action' from 'routine action', Dewey elaborates that the latter 'is guided by factors such as tradition, habit and authority and by institutional definitions and expectations. Reflective action on the other hand, involves a willingness to engage in constant self-appraisal and development' (cited in Pollard and Tann, 1987: 4).

Hatton and Smith (1995: 34) identify four key issues regarding reflection and its scope. The first is the question of whether reflection is thought of as a process *about* action or is it something bound in action itself. The second issue deals with the contention about the time-frame for reflection whether it is immediate and short-term or long-term and strategic in nature. The third question is whether reflection by its nature is 'problem-centred' or not. The final issue is whether reflection goes beyond the immediate technical purpose of the term for problem-solving to issues such as taking account of 'wider historic, cultural and political values or beliefs in framing and reframing practical problems to which solutions are being sought, a process which has been identified as critical reflection'. Hatton and Smith trace these issues to the essentially different interpretation of reflection by different authors and to the aims that different educational programmes might have with respect to the inclusion of reflection as an

educational concept. In other words the interpretation of reflection would depend on the purpose for which it is employed in an educational programme.

The contemporary discussion on reflection has mainly been associated with Schön (1983, 1987) who coined terms such as 'reflective practice', 'reflection-in-action', 'reflection-on-action', 'reflection-for-action', 'knowing-in-action' and 'technical rationality'. The most significant among these seems to be his concept of reflection-in-action which is the 'almost unconscious, instantaneous reflection that happens as a more experienced teacher solves a problem or dilemma' (Harrison, 2008: 10). Reflection-on-action takes place after the event (for example a teaching session) and is a more deliberate and conscious process. Reflection-for-action means the deliberation involved in the pre-action deliberative/planning phase of teaching. Knowing-in-action refers to the subtle or intuitive knowledge that practitioners demonstrate as an outcome of long term practical experience in a professional role. By technical rationality Schön means the application of research-based propositional knowledge in a practical teaching or learning situation. An example of this might be the implications of propositional knowledge such as theories of learning or personality development for teaching students with different personality traits or different socio-economic backgrounds.

Summary

The presentation so far indicates that the seemingly simple-looking concept is actually rather complex, involving multiple meanings and conceptualisations in educational contexts. Its meanings range from the common-sense individual thoughtfulness about ideas and practices to more systematic, collaborative and dialogic interactions and active participation in a process of analysis and evaluation of complex phenomenon. The common thread around these different definitions, however, is the conceptualisation of reflection as careful consideration, questioning, deliberation, and rationalisation of phenomenon aimed at a better understanding and clarification of the issue(s) and practices. The concept, however, does not seem to have any agreed upon definition mainly due to its purpose driven nature but also due to the complexity of reflection as a construct itself. This complexity which seems to have led to the multiple conceptualisations of the concept has been explored further in the following section discussing the levels and types of reflection.

2.1.2 Levels/types of Reflection: the hierarchy

Diversity in terms of its meaning and conceptualisations (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Calderhead, 1989; Jay and Johnson, 2002; El-Dib, 2007; Moore, 2004; Mann et al., 2009) has led many writers to analyse and categorise reflection in several different ways. This has resulted in elaborate but often intricate models of reflection in educational programmes aimed at categorising it into different types and levels (Van Manen, 1977; Hatton and Smith, 1995; Valli, 1997). A widely acknowledged categorisation of the concept has been that of Van Manen (1977) who has put forward

three levels of reflection: technical, practical/interpretive and critical. The first level or technical reflection is concerned with the efficiency of means to achieve ends, which (ends) themselves are not open to criticism or modifications. El-Dib (2007: 23) argues that at the technical level teachers, using reflection, are 'primarily concerned with applying knowledge in order to achieve predetermined educational objectives'. According to Van Manen (1977: 226) 'on this level the practical [the process of the application of theoretical knowledge to practical teaching learning situation] refers to the technical application of educational knowledge and of basic curriculum principles for the purpose of attaining a given end'. The second level of reflection goes beyond the scrutiny of means in their capacity to lead to prescribed aims and deals with the 'value commitment' (or aims) behind the educational experience. At this level, Van Manen argues, '...the focus is on an interpretive understanding both of the nature and quality of educational experience and of making practical choices' (Van Manen, 1977: 226-7). The third level, also termed as 'critical reflection' (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Gore and Zeichner, 1991; Adler, 1991), besides considering the first two concerns, also takes into account the moral, ethical and political basis of the 'practical' and examines practices in terms of justice, equity and morality. Luttenberg and Burgen (2008: 543) argue that 'reflection can be restricted to teaching in the classroom [Van Manen's first two levels] or extended to the social and political context of teaching...' According to El-Dib (2007: 26), at this presumably highest level 'the teacher is not simply concerned about the goals, the activities and assumptions behind them but he [sic] is rather reflecting upon the larger context where all education exists. He is incorporating moral and ethical questions into his line of thinking'. Reflection at the critical level or critical reflection is 'a process of becoming aware of one's context, of the influence of societal

and ideological constraints on previously taken-for-granted practices, and gaining control over the direction of these influences' (Calderhead, 1989: 44).

Atkinson (2004: 380), using the terminology of hermeneutics, has further elaborated this categorisation of reflection by identifying three notions about the reflective practitioner. A simple understanding of the term 'reflective practitioner' means someone engaged with a single hermeneutic process of reflection upon classroom practice with an aim to improve it; a more complex notion of 'reflexive practitioner', following a double hermeneutic process, as someone not just reflecting upon classroom practice but also upon 'the effect of institutional structures on teaching as well as reflection on the self in action in terms of interrogating one's beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, prejudices and suppositions that inform teaching' (ibid.); and finally 'critical practitioner' as someone who's concern goes into 'interrogating political, ideological and social processes that frame educational work in order to expose, for example, power relations in which teachers function, discriminatory practices, victimization and inequalities' (ibid.). Similarly, Ross (1989) identifies and elaborates three developmental levels of reflection in terms of teacher education. Ross's categorisation is based on practical functions at which the student teachers' reflection is aimed. This includes low level reflection (e.g. giving examples, describing practices and agreeing with propositions in the literature); moderate level (e.g. providing good critique for practice from a single perspective, analysing practices in some detail and varying instruction in response to the demands of different situations and different students) and high level (e.g. the ability to analyze situations from more than one

perspectives and the understanding for classroom action and its impact going beyond the classroom setting). This categorisation, however, indicates the, at times, indistinct nature of reflection itself. For instance, one could argue that associating 'giving examples' with low level reflection is difficult to accept on at least two counts. One, this is essentially a process of elaboration which could be reflective of a deeper level understanding, clearer thinking and hence high level reflection and two, the process could extend into the higher levels of reflection if the examples given link classroom practices to broader educational objectives.

Jay and Johnson (2002: 77-79) in suggesting that the 'complexity' of reflection should not be reduced to the level of a 'technique' to keep its 'authenticity' intact, put forward their own typology of reflection, namely descriptive, comparative and critical. Reflection at the descriptive level according to them is concerned with problem identification and setting. A significant question that reflection at this level tries to answer is 'What is happening?'. At the comparative level reflection enfolds 'thinking about the matter for reflection from a number of different frames or perspectives'. The most important question at this level is, 'What are alternative views of what is happening?' The third level, 'critical reflection', is aimed at arriving at a 'decision' after comparing the issue from different angles. This decision could either be in the form of some action or an 'integration' of the resultant 'learning' into a 'better understanding of the problem'. Jay and Johnson (2002), however, caution against the conclusion that this kind of classification of reflection could be deemed as some sort of mutual exclusivity of the various levels. Reflection, they suggest, is a composite concept

instead (Noffke and Brennan, 1988; Zeichner, 1994). This is an interesting assertion and on the face of it seems contradictory (using the language of typology and then denying mutual exclusion of various types). Further, it seems, their focus is more on the *process* or the *how* rather than the *content* or the *what* of reflection (Jay and Johnson, 2002) although the two are not essentially mutually exclusive. Secondly, there seems to be different interpretations of the various levels and types of reflection itself. For instance 'critical reflection' as defined by Jay and Johnson does not in effect carry the same meaning as is associated with it by other researchers such as Van Manen (1977), Hatton and Smith (1995) or Valli (1997). Thus some associate it with looking into a teaching-learning situation through multiple perspectives while others take it with an ideological frame of reference (Hatton and Smith, 1995). The trend, nevertheless, seems to be the association of higher levels of reflection with a more multifaceted conceptualisation and comprehension of the educational phenomenon.

Moore (2004: 103) identifies three historically dominant discourses in teacher education in the British context: The teacher as a 'charismatic subject'; as a 'competent craftsperson' and as a 'reflective practitioner'. He associates the 'competent craftsperson' with modernism (see Moore, 1998a) and the 'reflective practitioner' with post-modernism. However, he, argues that these two discourses are not completely oppositional, or mutually exclusive; that 'philosophically, the two discourses may be closer to one another than at first appears' (Moore, 2004: 103) and that teachers and student teachers might be encouraged to be both *competent* and *reflective*. Moore (2004: 105) then identifies four kinds of reflective activity in the context of a PGCE programme at a British university: ritualistic reflection, pseudo-

reflection, productive reflection, and reflexivity. Ritualistic reflection is defined as reflection through evaluation forms which themselves represent the externally imposed standards agenda. Pseudo-reflection focuses on issues 'which might lie outside the parameters of imposed boundaries, but which did not lead to genuine development or change.' In this kind of reflection the student teacher internally sets 'the parameters or topics' for reflection rather than that being imposed externally (Moore, 2004: 109). The third type of reflection that Moore (2004: 111) identifies is 'productive/constructive/authentic' reflection. This kind of reflection 'actively seeks to problematise situations and to challenge existing views, perspectives and beliefs—promoting or leading to development or change in terms of work-related understandings and/or outlooks'. In this sense Moore (2004: 112) suggests it is closely allied to *action research*. The last form of reflection that Moore identifies is 'reflexivity' which 'takes the reflective practitioner beyond the immediacy of the here and now by locating reflection within wider personal, social and cultural contexts...' This is similar to Van Manen's (1977) understanding of the term 'critical reflection'. Moore (2004: 114) has also identified various *forms* of reflection such as 'reflection-in-action', 'in-the-head-reflection', and 'verbally articulated reflection with other professionals'; verbally articulated reflection with other student teachers; 'verbally articulated reflection with non-professionals, including friends and family members; and various forms of written reflection'.

Valli (1992, 1997) identifies five types of reflection in terms of teacher education programmes in the United States of America. These include 'technical reflection',

‘reflection in and on action’, ‘deliberative reflection’, ‘personalistic reflection’, and ‘critical reflection’. The focus of ‘technical reflection’ is ‘general instruction and management behaviour’ (Valli, 1997: 75) and the decisions are based on guidelines from research. Performance is matched to external guidelines such as academic research. In ‘reflection in and on action’ decisions are based on personal understanding of ‘one’s own unique situation’. Deliberative reflection has a broader scope enfolding a ‘[...] whole range of teaching concerns including students, the curriculum, instructional strategies, the rules and organization of the classroom’. The quality of reflection in this type of reflection is based on ‘[w]eighing competing viewpoints and research findings’ (ibid.). ‘Personalistic reflection’ is a kind of self-reflection aimed at personal and professional growth. The actual focus of reflection is the teacher’s own person and personal subjective experiences as well as the person and experiences of the students.

The last type of reflection identified by Valli is ‘critical reflection’ which has a much broader scope beyond the practical classroom and school-based issues and looks at issues of justice and equity and hence educational institutions are explicitly viewed as ‘political constructions’ (Valli, 1997: 78). This type of reflection according to Valli (1997: 78) has its origin in the political philosophy of Habermas (1974) who regarded it as the highest form of reflection aimed at not just understanding but ‘improving the quality of life of the disadvantaged groups’. All these types, Valli argues, can be included in the teacher preparation programmes and it would be useful if prospective teachers were introduced to all of these various types of reflection. Thus the sphere of reflection

according to this typology ranges from issues at the technical level to the ultimate ends of the process of education which goes beyond the classroom into the arena of social, economic and political make up of the society.

Galvez-Martin et al. (1998 cited in El-Dib, 2007: 27) provide a seven-level scheme of reflection ranging from zero where a student teacher does not have a clear idea of pedagogical concepts to seven where s/he is able to see instructional strategies from several perspectives. Knowles (1993: 84) identifies four kinds of reflection: *Technological reflection* which 'considers choices centred on economy, efficiency and effectiveness of working in classrooms', *practical/problematic*, which, 'occur within the regular contexts of teaching, yet defy easy, routine solutions', *personal reflection* which 'considers the interpretations of personal meanings, assumptions and judgements when making decisions' and *critical reflection* which 'considers the political, ethical and social contexts questioning the taken-for-granted conceptions of teachers'. At this level reflection according to Knowles is aimed at the 'construction of educational communities based on democratic ideals'. Similarly, Knowles (1993: 84) report the three 'hierarchical' levels of reflection identified by Biermann, Mintz, and McCullough (1988).

The levels of reflection in this hierarchy are represented in metaphorical terms: first, *production* which is aimed at the attainment of 'technical skills' for the delivery of knowledge and where they 'tend to perpetuate the models of teaching they have experienced and are primarily concerned with outcomes of instruction rather than

processes'; second, *choice*, where teachers 'possess and use first-level skills but also practice appropriate, consistent and defensible instructional decision-making' and where emphasis is on thoughtful independent decision making, critical thinking, freedom of choice, respect for individual differences and personal growth; and third, *liberation* at which level, the teacher 'applies moral and ethical criteria to educational decisions, assumes personal responsibility, provides leadership, resolves inconsistencies between beliefs, values and behaviours through reflection, and experiments and takes risks' (Knowles, 1993: 84-85).

Summary

Overall in the review above it could be seen that efforts have been made to tell apart reflection into a complex array of different types, levels and forms. The different *types* of reflection, it could be argued, refer to the *process* of reflection while the *levels* could be associated with the *content* of reflection. The categorisation across these models, however, does not come out clearly and conclusively seemingly due to the conflating nature of levels and types as terminology. Further, the different levels of reflection have been associated with different levels of involvement in and understanding of educational phenomenon. There are instances where dissimilar terminology is used for articulating a similar level and form of activity and also where a particular term such as *critical reflection* provides diverse interpretations. The focus and subject-matter of reflection also varies considerably across these models and it is difficult to make a clear and distinct identification of one or another type or level of reflection with one or another activity or aim across the models. The various types and levels identified, nevertheless, seem to echo Van Manen's (1977) hierarchy of the technical,

interpretive and critical levels of reflection with slight contextual and interpretive variation. An interesting point that can be noted in the discussion so far is the predominantly hierarchical mode in which reflection has been generally categorised in all of the above classifications of the concept. There are, however, some writers who have criticised this kind of classification with an argument that reflection is better understood as one whole with various *dimensions* rather than different and distinct levels or types. This adds another level of diversity to the conceptualisation of reflection and needs to be deconstructed further, which is attempted in the following section.

2.1.3 Criticism of the hierarchical models of reflection

A number of writers have cautioned against the hierarchical division of reflection as artificial and simplistic that does not take into consideration the complexity of the concept and the possible overlap between its various levels. Noffke and Brennan (1988: 26), for instance, offer an alternative model based on 'dimensions', 'planes' or 'fields'. Reflection, conceptualised thus, is '[...] a dynamic, multi-dimensional and social activity.' It is complex and 'relational' in nature not 'linear'. They demonstrate this multi-dimensional nature of reflection in the form of a cube with different planes representing dimensions of reflection such as the 'sensory dimension' signifying 'actors in the social world, their material reality, skills and actions' (cited in Knowles, 1993: 85). Noffke and Brennan (1988: 22) call this sensory dimension because, 'it includes all of those things one can perceive [for instance] people, artefacts, skills, other actions, knowledge that can be written down or otherwise seen'. The second dimension of 'ideals' 'connote to moral and ethical principles such as caring, justice and equality'

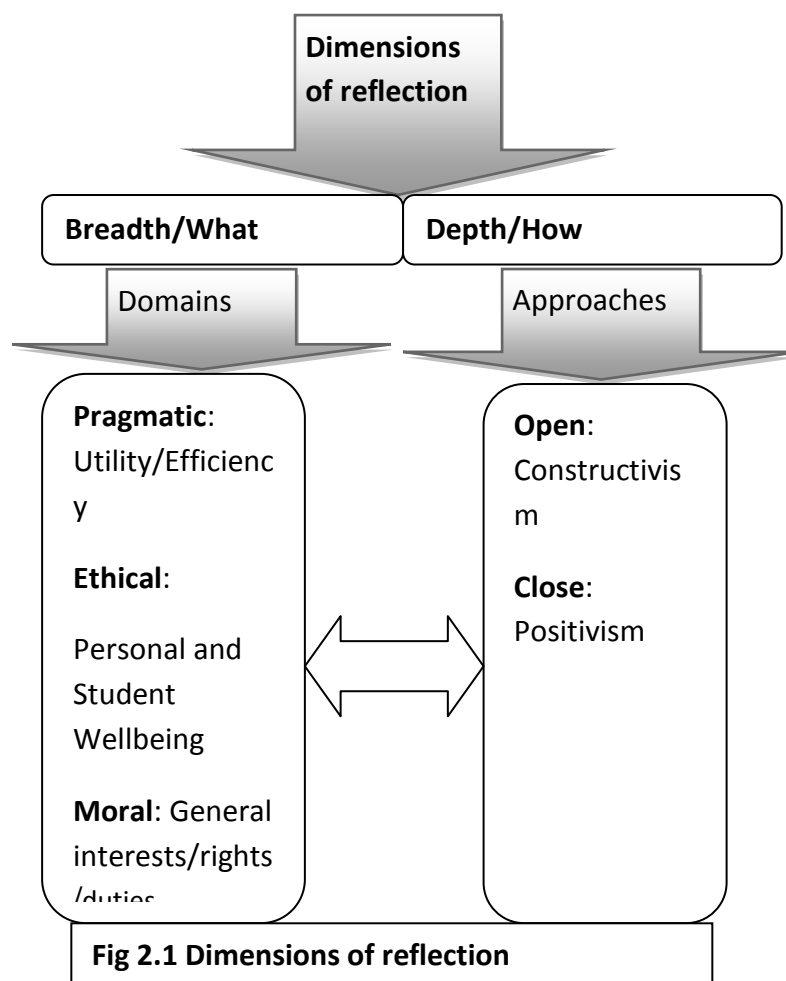
(Knowles, 1993: 85). The third dimension identified as 'historical dimension', 'looks at how educational practices evolved and came to be developed' (ibid.). The fourth dimension of reflection, 'determinants' is aimed at 'the structures of the cultural, political and economic spheres as they intersect with class, gender and race dynamics' Noffke and Brennan (1988: 24). Reflective inquiry involving this dimension for instance would aim at analyses of textbooks for issues such as 'racial, gender or class bias' (Noffke and Brennan, 1988: 25).

Luttenberg and Burgen (2008) have distinguished reflection in a two-dimensional way, on the basis of its 'breadth' and 'depth' where the 'breadth' of reflection refers to the content of reflection and the 'depth' to its 'nature'. In other words this distinction is based on the *what* and the *how* of reflection. The *what* refers to the subject-matter of reflection i.e. things that are reflected upon in a particular situation (i.e. in teaching and learning) and the *how* refers to the way the subject-matter is reflected upon. They have also identified three domains of reflection with reference to this initial typology of 'depth' and 'breadth' (Luttenberg and Burgen: 562). These domains are 'pragmatic', 'ethical' and 'moral' where the pragmatic refers to reflection on 'utilitarian' and 'efficiency' basis aimed at achieving given educational goals; the ethical aims at reflecting on the 'wellbeing' of the teacher him/herself and that of the students; and the moral considers 'the general interests, rights and duties of all those involved...' (Luttenberg and Burgen, 2008: 546). Besides, Luttenberg and Burgen (2008: 554-555) have identified two approaches ('open' and 'closed') to these three 'domains' of reflection. The open approach has its origin in the constructivist philosophy of

knowledge and reality and the closed one in the positivist understanding of knowledge and reality.

In an open approach to reflection there is space for some doubt or uncertainty 'about the most suitable, good or just and the route to this' while in the closed one 'a fixed idea exists of the most suitable, good or just and the path to this'. Thus, with three 'domains' and two 'approaches' (open and closed), the authors come up with six types of reflection.

Figure 2.1 below is an attempt at a diagrammatic representation of the model.



In terms of dimensional approach to reflection and as summary of the various levels, types and models of reflection, Mann et al. (2009: 597) identify two 'major dimensions': 'an iterative dimension' in the sense of Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning cycle, 'within which the process of reflection is triggered by experience, which then produces a new understanding and the potential or intension to act differently in response to future experience'; and a 'vertical dimension' 'which includes different levels of reflection on experience. Generally, the surface levels are more descriptive and less analytical than the deeper levels of analysis and critical synthesis' (ibid.). Both of these dimensions seem to coincide with Luttenberg and Burgen's (2008) view of reflection in 'depth'. This is the kind of dimension that is discussed above in detail. Once more, however, it does not seem these two dimensions can be treated as mutually exclusive. They might be looking at the different phases/stages of the process of reflection in different (e.g. cyclic v/s linear progressive) ways, but there seems to be an element of integration between the two dimensions with respect to the aims of reflection at least, if not in terms of the very processes involved in both. Luttenberg and Burgen (2008: 545) also indicate this possible connection, the mutual inclusivity of these dimensions and the breadth and depth of reflection and so according to them 'a significant degree of coherence exists between the nature and the content of teacher reflection. Given a higher level of reflection, not only the nature of the reflection changes but also the content of the reflection, (i.e. just how the matter to be reflected upon is defined)'.

Summary

Overall, the comparative exposition of the diverse conceptualisation and categorisation of reflection in terms of both the hierarchical and dimensional models seems to reflect (or rather consolidate) the multifaceted character of the concept. There seems an overlap as well between the two ways of defining and analysing the concept as these hierarchies, levels and dimensions essentially refer to the various degrees of cognitive involvement in the processes of teaching and learning. The realisation and conceptualisation of reflection as a multifaceted educational concept, thus far, has been in terms of how educational researchers and theorists appreciate the concept. These elaborate analyses of reflection and the consequent diverse range of conceptualisations are useful in developing our understanding of it as a multi-layered, intricate and fascinating educational concept. The review above further shows various models of reflection are aimed at exploring and relating different facets of teachers' professional practice ranging from practical *skills* related to classroom teaching to critical *attitudes*, awareness of and outlook on life beyond the classroom. How much awareness educational practitioners, such as university tutors, preparing and initiating student teachers into the profession; and student teachers, have of this diversity of meaning regarding reflection and its implications for their personal and professional development, therefore, is an interesting issue to explore. Further, what factors influence the enactment of reflection as perceived by these practitioners of the concept in teacher education programmes, also comes out as an interesting matter to examine in this study.

2.1.4 Attributes/characteristics associated with reflection as an educational concept.

Different attributes/characteristics have been identified with reflection as an educational concept. (Ross, 1989: 22) drawing on Dewey (1933) suggests that reflection requires 'the development of several attitudes and abilities, such as introspection, open-mindedness, and willingness to accept responsibility for their [the reflective practitioners'] decisions and actions'. Explaining introspection as a reflective attribute in the teaching learning situation, Ross (1989: 23) describes an introspective teacher as someone who 'engages in thoughtful reconsideration of all that happens in the classroom with an eye towards improvement'. An 'open-minded' teacher is 'willing to consider new evidence...and is willing to admit the possibility of error'(ibid.). The implication is that such a teacher does not have fixed views either about the aims of the subject-matter or the teaching method, and is open to possible failures in either case and so to the exploration of possible alternatives on both counts. According to Adler (1993: 160) 'The best teachers are researchers able to continuously reflect on their own teaching'. Taking and accepting responsibility is also advocated as a quality for reflective teachers. Pollard et al. (2008: 14-15) provide an ample list of key characteristics of the reflective (teaching) process. They argue that reflective teaching actively takes into consideration both means and ends of the educational process. This seems an attempt at reconciling diverse models of reflection such as Cruickshank's (1981, 1985b) and Zeichner's (1987, 1994). Pollard et al. also delineate the process as a cyclic process of continuous monitoring, evaluation and revision with an aim to improve (See also Kolb, 1984; Mann et al., 2009; Harrison, 2008). Further, in order to continuously improve and attain higher standards of teaching, Pollard et al. (2008: 14-15) argue that the process 'requires competence in methods of evidence-based

classroom enquiry' which is based both on teachers' judgement and insights from research. This is an interesting observation and seems to reflect an attempt at finding a mid-way between the more technical/practical (Cruickshank, 1985; Killen, 1989; Schön, 1983) and critical (Gore, 1987; Zeichner and Liston, 1996) interpretations of reflection. Reflecting Dewey's (1933) views, Pollard et al. present attitudes such as open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness as essential characteristics of the reflective practitioners. These qualities are reflected in the practicalities of the process such as dialogues and collaboration that Pollard et al. present as essential for the process (See also Hatton and Smith, 1995; Adler, 1993; Jay and Johnson, 2002).

The final attribute that Pollard et al. (2008: 15) list is that the process 'enables teachers to creatively mediate externally developed frameworks for teaching and learning'. This again shows the pragmatic approach of the authors towards the concept on the basis of its practical utility. For instance, there are concerns that centralisation of education and the imposition of external standards and frameworks potentially stand in the way of the creative development and independence of practitioners and teachers (Wilson, 1989; Stevens, 2010; Harrison and Lee, 2011). This concern goes against the tide of increasing centralisation since the late eighties and early nineties in the field of teacher education in England. Pollard et al., therefore, seem to see reflection as the ability of teachers that will help them in creatively reconciling this increasing centralisation of education with their independence, a desirable characteristic for teachers as professionals (See also Lawes, 2003 for a critique of this understanding of reflection in teacher education).

Day (1993: 84) also identifies four attributes associated by researchers with the process of reflective teaching which:

- (i) [...] involves a process of solving problems and reconstructing meaning; (ii) [...] is manifested as a stance towards inquiry; (iii) [...] exist[s] along a continuum or 'reflective spectrum'; and (iv) [...] occurs within a social context.

The first and second attributes mentioned above seem to coincide with Dewey's (1933) concept of reflection as a process of the reconstruction of experience and of reflection as a process of inquiry, experimentation and problem solving. The third attribute identified seems to relate to Kolb's experiential cycle of reflection and problem solving (Kolb, 1984; Dymoke and Harrison, 2008). The fourth coincides with models of reflection where its scope goes beyond the self and the immediate classroom/school-based issues of practical import taking reflection in its more collaborative form and where it enfolds issues of broader social beyond-the-classroom nature (Zeichner and Liston, 1996).

Others stress the relativistic notion of characteristics associated with reflection. Knowles (1993: 84) for instance argues that characteristics of reflection in terms of different teacher education programmes depend on their aims and orientations. Knowles identifies a number *frameworks* with different interests and consequently different characteristics such as *technological reflection* which considers issues such as 'economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of working in classroom'; *practical/problematic reflection* concerned with resolving issues of immediate nature which 'defy easy, routine solutions'; *personal reflection* aimed at the 'interpretations of personal

meanings, assumptions and judgements when making decisions'; and *critical reflection* aimed at considering issues associated with the 'political, ethical and social contexts' of the educational process. Hussein (2006: 14) explains this kind of reflection vis-à-vis the 'banking concept' of education (Freire, 1970). In the banking concept of education the teacher takes facts and figures from a central authority, usually the state, for granted and tries to fill the 'empty' heads of the students with this information who are expected to 'receive, memorize and repeat it'. The reflective teacher, in contrast, 'questions the historical and contextual bases of the knowledge he/she teaches and his/her instructional activities' (Hussein, 2006: 14).

The 'characteristics' of the reflective process and by extension of the reflective practitioner thus would vary depending on the situation and the aims of the process. This notion regarding the characteristics of reflection and the reflective practitioner is in line with the multiple conceptualisations of the concept itself. Thus reflective characteristics such as 'open-mindedness' (e.g. Dewey, 1933; Ross, 1989; Adler, 1993) could very well mean different things. For instance in terms of finding solutions to immediate practical classroom issues this 'open-mindedness' is likely to be associated with more hands-on skills of practical import and in terms of its implications for issues which have wider political, ethical and social contexts this would mean having a broader philosophical perspective on issues.

On the whole, the analysis of literature so far shows that reflection as an educational concept varies in terms of the ways in which it is conceptualised in different contexts

and for different purposes. The conceptualisations range from its common sense meaning as a form of ‘thinking about things’ to highly intricate models for formal educational purposes. This has led to, on the one hand, a complexity around its nature and what it actually means, and on the other to attempts at its deconstruction which has resulted in various models. The models represent different levels, types and dimensions of reflection which, although helpful in understanding the intricacy of the concept have in turn added to the perception of its complexity. Alongside this conceptual diversity are practical considerations and implementational factors such as the aims of particular educational programmes and how these may impact the meaning of reflection within the context of a given course. Some of the factors impacting on reflection on a more conceptual level have been mentioned in the above discussion. While theoretical considerations cannot be entirely dispensed with when exploring such a multifaceted concept, the following section focuses more closely on factors influencing reflection in a more practical sense.

2.2 Factors influencing reflection

2.2.1 Reflection and the theory-practice interaction

Eraut (1994) argues that, ‘The concept of the “reflective practitioner” (Schön , 1983, 1987) has gained wide currency, but the role of theory in guiding or informing the process of reflection has yet to receive the attention it deserves’. Related literature since then reveals a diverse and complex picture of the theory-practice relationship in teacher education and in the preparation of teachers as reflective practitioners (Carr, 2006; Carr and Skinner, 2009). The complexity of reflection is also visible in it being

associated on the one hand with more theoretical, broader and beyond-school teaching and learning issues (e.g. Zeichner, 1987; Zeichner, 1994; Zeichner and Liston, 1996); and on the other with more technical and practical conceptions of education (e.g. Schön, 1983, 1987; Cruickshank, 1981, 1985; Van Manen, 1995). In terms of teacher education two contrasting views are discernable. One view comes from writers who advocate a more practical emphasis in initial teacher education (e.g. O'Hear, 1988; Lawlor, 1990; Carr, 2006). Such writers argue that what beginning teachers need is exposure to practical experience in schools and that theoretical knowledge is of little use at this stage.

The argument is that theoretical and propositional knowledge remains irrelevant to beginning teachers as it comes to them out-of-context. O'Hear (1988: 22) attacks the idea of including theoretical elements in the initial teacher training in a formal university based programme, asking: 'Is there any evidence that the theoretical studies of education undertaken in formal teacher training, as opposed to the studies of one's subject and the teaching practice, actually help to make better teachers?'. The answer he suggests is negative. O'Hear (1988: 22) also criticizes theoretical elements in educational studies because of their irrelevance, and for their role in developing a culture of critical consciousness with 'an emphasis which is surely unhealthy in its implicit assumption that education is to be seen in terms of its potential for social engineering rather than as the initiation of pupils into proven and worthwhile forms of knowledge'. The emphasis is on the role of beginning teachers as effective implementers of curriculum in a model of education where the curriculum is centrally

controlled and with a focus on technical skills, subject-matter expertise and practical classroom experience.

The justification for such a model is based on the value that a teacher attaches to what she or he teaches on its own and not just as a means to an end. In a similar vein to O'Hear and Lawlor's position regarding the irrelevance and futility of educational theory in teacher training programmes, a more recent supportive argument is that of Carr (2006: 137), who suggests that educational theory is an outcome of an attempt 'to ground our beliefs and actions in knowledge that derives from some authoritative, external and independent source'. He further argues that no such source exists and hence, 'educational theory is nothing other than the name we give to the various futile attempts that have been made over the last hundred years to stand outside our educational practices in order to explain and justify them...' (ibid.) In writing off educational theory and its outcome 'foundationalism' as an exercise in futility, Carr dissociates it from its philosophical roots, beginning with the ideas of ancient philosophers such as Plato and coming down to the works of Rousseau and others associated with the late nineteenth century modernity. Terming the contemporary era 'postfoundationalist', Carr argues that educational theory, a foundationalist project does not have any place in it.

There are, however, other researchers who see a role for teachers beyond technical efficiency, teaching skills and subject-matter expertise, envisaging them as social reformers and critical thinkers. Teachers, they argue, should be able to think beyond

issues of delivery and technical implementation of the curriculum, to consider the broader aims and purposes of education as a process for developing critical consciousness and for promoting justice and equity in the society (Zeichner, 1983, 1987; Pearson, 1989). Pearson (1989) proposes an interesting model of teacher education that comprises four components: 'general education', 'subject-matter knowledge', 'the professional knowledge' and 'reflective practical experience'. This model presents a much more comprehensive view of what teachers need to know to be able to teach effectively. In contrast to the view presented by O'Hear (1988) and Lawlor (1990), Pearson (1989: 147) argues that the job of a teacher is not just to understand and teach a particular subject or subjects but to understand it 'in its relation to other subjects and as part of the overall education of students'. It is here that the role of theory becomes visible in the useful preparation of beginning teachers for their job. According to Pearson (1989: 149) it is reflection that relates theory to practice and hence a mere provision of practical experience is not enough, rather 'these experiences should be reflective as well'.

In terms of the comparative role of theory and practice in the development of teachers as reflective practitioners, views vary depending on factors such as different interpretations of the very conception of education, the nature of theory and practice and their interrelationship, the aims and purposes of particular teacher education programmes and on a closer level the particular understanding of reflection which itself means more than one thing to researchers, teacher educators and practitioners. There are multiple conceptualisations regarding the respective roles of theory and

practice vis-à-vis the development of reflective practitioners. Overall, in the literature reviewed for this study three competing (but not exclusive) positions are discernable on the theory-practice relationship in teacher education programmes. First, the more practical, technically focused approach (Cruickshank, 1981, 1985; Killen, 1989; O'Hear, 1988; Lawlor, 1990; Carr, 2006); second, the more critical approach (Dewey, 1933; Zeichner, 1987; Pinar, 1989; Smyth, 1989; Beyer, 1989; Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Gore, 1987; Valli, 1997; Lawes, 2003; Carr and Skinner, 2009); and third, a compromise position represented by the 'practical theorising' model (McIntyre, 1993; Eraut, 1994; Carr, 1995).

The first position advocates preparing teachers on more technical grounds with the aim of giving them training in teaching skills, classroom management, and survival techniques. The aim is to prepare beginning teachers to deliver curriculum rather than to question and transform the process of education and its aims and objectives. The second position supports the more critical perspective where the main aim of teacher education is the preparation of new teachers as critically reflective practitioners and as transformative intellectuals as compared to technical functionaries (Giroux, 1988) with deeper understanding of teaching, learning, education and the ability to reflect on and shape the broader socio-political aims and objectives of the process of education. Advocates of this position are in favour of strong theoretical grounding of the beginning teachers. In representing these two differing positions, two earlier articles, Gore (1987) and Killen (1989) provide an interesting debate on the issue. Gore (1987) supports the more critical approach of Zeichner (1981) which argues reflection should

consider issues beyond the technicalities of classroom teaching such as socio-political aims of education and issues to justice and equity in the society. This, she argues, is not the case with the 'technicist' Cruickshankian (1985a, 1985b) model of reflective teaching which 'essentially restricts the focus of reflection to means, that is, methods for achieving pre-specified goals...' (Gore, 1987: 37) and, therefore, not fully representing the original concept of reflective teaching as proposed by Dewey (1933).

Killen (1989: 49) counters much of Gore's criticism of Cruickshank and dismisses associating 'technocratic rationality' with reflective teaching arguing that like other teaching approaches, it is primarily 'instructor driven' and it is very much in the capacity of the instructor to 'ensure that adequate attention is given to all aspects of teacher development, including the development of the ability to distinguish means from ends in a teaching situation and the wisdom to decide what ends to be pursued' (Killen, 1989: 50). Incultation of reflective abilities, Killen argues, will make student teachers life-long learners instead and not restrict them to immediate teaching learning technical aims. Killen, however, emphasises that reflective teaching as originally proposed by Cruickshank is primarily skill-driven and 'the important matters of ethics and politics in teaching are better dealt with in a forum devoted to such issues' (ibid.).

The third position that seems to be a compromise between these two divergent positions represents the concept of teaching as a craft rather than a positive science based on 'technical rationality' (Schön, 1983) or a critical/moral science (Zeichner, 1981, 1987; Tom, 1985; Beyer, 1989) and that of a teacher as a technical craftsperson

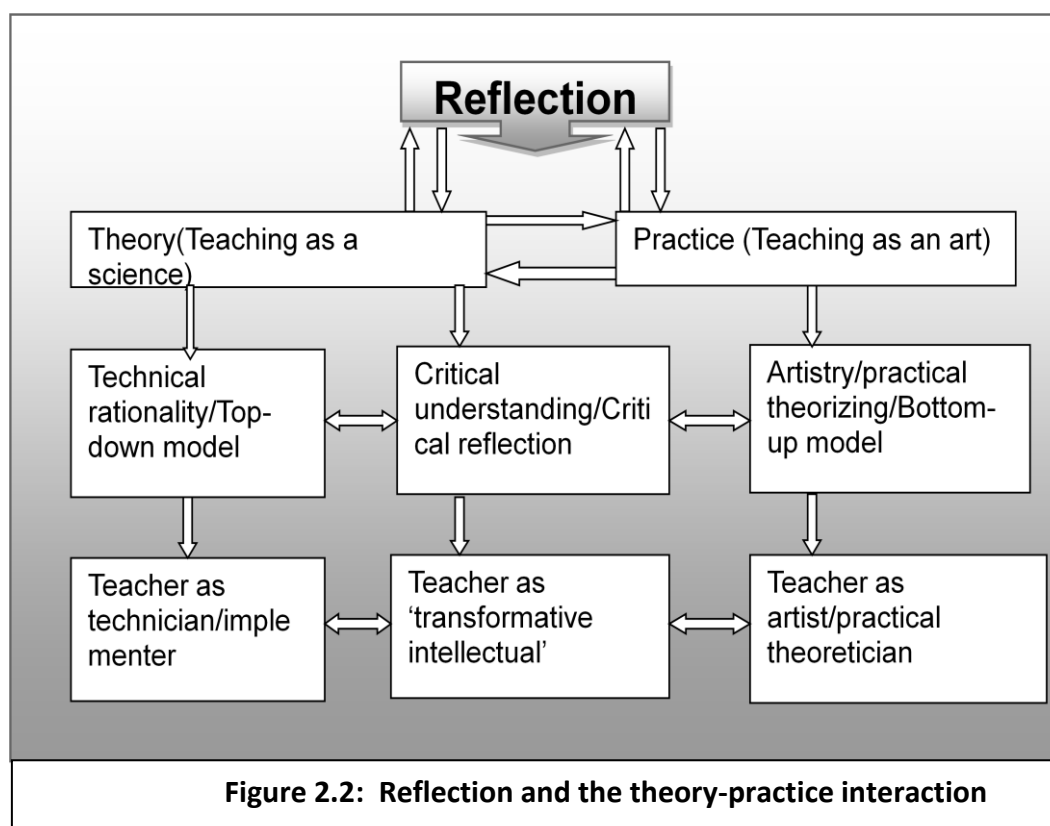
who learns best during action and through 'practical theorising' (McIntyre, 1993; Eraut, 1994; Carr, 1995) and 'practical rationality' (Laursen, 2007). Theory in this conception seems to mean more of a process rather than a product and propositional knowledge (Lawes, 2003, 2006) and thus serves as mid-way between the previously held view of 'technical rationality' (or theory-into-practice model) and the more recently popular technicist 'practical' approach to learning teaching on-job. The nature and meaning of reflection and the theory-practice interaction with respect to this also seem to be influenced by the aims behind its inclusion in educational programmes. For instance, Pollard et al. (2008: 14) advocate the usefulness of reflection for the novice teachers 'such as those in initial teacher training' at the immediate practical skills level, to competent teachers 'such as those who are newly qualified' as a means for more self-conscious understanding and improving of capability and for the expert teachers 'such as those who have passed more advanced competency standards thresholds' as means for deliberating about issues 'concerning children, curriculum, classroom and school'. Similarly, drawing on Tom's (1985) concept of an 'arena of the problematic', Smyth (1989: 4) argues that reflection can 'vary from a concern with the micro aspects of the teaching-learning process and subject-matter of knowledge, to macro concerns about political/ethical principles underlying teaching and the relationship of schooling to the wider institutions and hierarchies of society'. Smyth, nonetheless, cautions against 'technocratic' reductionism of the teaching learning process which can diminish the role of a teacher to that in a passive agent of a cycle of perpetuation and inertia.

In a similar vein, Moore (2004: 7) warns against the 'dangers of reductionism' vis-à-vis the teacher's role in terms of it being 'competent craftsperson' versus 'reflective practitioner' which, he argues, remains dominant in the 'official' discourses in teacher education. According to Moore, such 'reductionism' and exclusive support of one over the other would weaken both approaches and would 'marginalise alternative teacher-education discourses' such as that of the 'charismatic subject' based on the idea of idiosyncrasy, creativity, exceptionality and contingency in the process of teaching and learning. Arguing for the teaching as both 'an art as well as a science' conception, Moore, suggests a more pragmatic approach where these discourses are adopted in concert with each other for a more supportive role in the process of effective teaching and learning. He urges that all of these approaches have strengths as well as weaknesses and that one should benefit from the relative strengths of each while keeping guard against its weakness and potential problems. This, he suggests, can be achieved through a more pragmatic, open, inclusive and positive rather than an idealistic, exclusive and negative attitude towards one or another of these approaches. The 'pragmatic' approach, therefore, seems to suggest that these different models are not entirely exclusive.

The variation seems to be of degree reflecting the aims and objectives of particular teacher education programmes. There appears to be a number of congruent points in these various positions in the way they are being interpreted and implemented and in terms of developing reflection. This seems to support the view that, 'A concept of reflection [should be] robust enough to act as a guiding principle for teacher education

[and] must synthesize... rather than exclude, the multiple realms of reflection (Markham, 1999: 57).

The following diagram is an attempt to present a tentative illustrative model representing these three views regarding the role of theory and practice in the development of beginning teachers as reflective practitioners and the interaction and complexity involved there in.



The diagram in Figure 2.2 signifies the complexity involved in the relationship between theory and practice and their respective impact on reflection on the one hand and on the other the differing conceptualisations of reflection itself. Further, it aims to indicate that reflection is associated with theory and practice both as stimulus and

response. Theory and practice then have reciprocal impact on each other which could be interpreted to varying degrees in either direction. The impact of theory and practice and their mutual relationship has been explained in this diagram in three possible ways. According to the technical-rational model, theory carries a very central role, theory is developed empirically by social scientists, researchers and theoreticians and the practitioner's role is to understand its practical relevance and to find ways and means for its implementation during practice. According to this understanding of theory-practice interaction, in a teaching-learning situation, the teacher would play the role of the practitioner. This represents a top-down model of education. In the critical-theoretical model, the role of theory and hence of reflection goes beyond the practical implementation of theory encompassing issues such as questioning and critiquing the value of the educational experience and analysing the impact of the educational process on issues of wider import such as justice, emancipation and equity. The role of the teacher, hence, becomes that of the transformative intellectual (Giroux, 1988) whose job is not just the transfer of knowledge but also its transformation. In the third interpretation of reflection and its interaction with theory and practice, the emphasis is on 'practical theorising', where theory comes out more as an outcome of practice rather than the vice-versa. Reflection happens during the practice leading to an inductive and intuitive process of theory-forming. The role of the teacher thus becomes that of a practical theoretician and artist rather than that of a mere practitioner or a transformative intellectual.

Some authors (e.g. Korthagen and Kessels, 1999; Carr and Skinner, 2009) associate the different understandings of reflection and the impact of theory and practice on it on a

broader level to the different conceptualisations regarding the nature of knowledge itself. Korthagen and Kessels (1999: 21) for instance, with reference to Plato's and Aristotle's contrasting views of knowledge as episteme and phronesis or conceptual/theoretical and perceptual/practical knowledge, argue that the problem of theory-practice gap is due to our particular conception of knowledge. They suggest that in a phronesis conception of knowledge, no set of abstract rules and theories are applied to particular situations. They, however, do not downplay the role of episteme (theoretical/propositional knowledge) which they think can play the important function of 'the exploration of student teacher's perceptions' and because 'it can generate questions, points of view, arguments, and such' (Korthagen and Kessels, 1999: 21).

Broudy, Smith, and Brunett (1964) as reported in Eraut (1994: 74) have identified four categories of knowledge acquisition and its later use in life: replication, application, interpretation, and association. This categorization according to Eraut can be applied in 'discipline-based theories by beginning teachers'. The replicative model according to Eraut in terms of 'derivative approaches to essay writing' and exams are obsolete now. The applicative model which is in consonance with 'technical rationality' (Schön, 1983) has dwindled. The interpretive model seems to coincide with the 'practical-theoretical' model (McIntyre, 1993) and the 'practical approach' (Carr, 1995). This approach according to Eraut (1994) is based on interpreting practice in the light of theory and adjusting theoretical understanding as a consequence of practical experience. The 'associative model' is based on the use of knowledge in metaphorical terms. The

‘interpretive’ and ‘practical’ models as defined above seem to be favoured by both the university tutors and student teachers in terms of the theory-practice interaction in the development of reflection in the PGCE. The emphasis seems to be on the practical implication, relevance and application of theory rather than just its acquisition in a formal context as a public theory, that is, a theory that comes out of formal research.

The discussion so far indicates that the relation between theory and practice in terms of its role in the development of reflection in teacher education is an intricate one. The concurrence, however, seems to be that of an integration between theory and practice with reflection as a means for teachers and student teachers to ‘construct their own philosophy of education, integrating their experiences and personal practical knowledge with general theory’ (Shin, 2006 cited in Laursen, 2007: 3). This seems to translate into a model of ‘practical theorising’ (McIntyre, 1993; Korthagen and Kessels, 1999; Pring, 2000a; Carr and Skinner, 2009). Schön’s (1983, 1987) reflective models could also be included in this category but his emphasis appears to slant more towards ‘phronesis’ (practice preceding theory) rather than a concurrence (practice and theory going together) between theory and practice. In a broader teaching-learning context, Adler (1993) sums the interaction well when she argues that teaching is both thought and action and the interface between them through a process of reflection. The question that arises is, are ‘thought’ and ‘theory’ synonymous? The answer cannot arguably be yes for that would reduce theory to the level of the common sense, something that goes against the concept of theory as is it understood and defined in educational discourse. It is mainly due to this reason that it is difficult to move from a

‘foundationalist’ to a ‘post-foundationalist’ discourse in teacher education (Carr, 2006) and hence the theory-practice conundrum seems to refuse any simple either-or resolution. This theory-practice interaction in terms of the development of reflection among student teachers, therefore, is one of the central issues explored empirically in the present study.

2.2.2 Impediments to reflection

A number of problems/hindrances have been identified with respect to reflection as an educational concept. Authors such as Zeichner (1994), Zeichner and Liston (1996), Calderhead (1989), Calderhead and Gates (1993), Hatton and Smith (1995), Markham (1999), Fendler (2003), Moore (2004) and Akbari (2007) have variously identified issues ranging from the theoretical and definitional complexities associated with the concept to its practical implications and applications which make it difficult to understand and implement by practitioners.

Markham (1999: 60) has identified three categories of impediments to reflection: (1) the seductive simplicity of the *metaphor of reflection*, (2) *resistance to reflection* on the part of teachers themselves, and (3) the blocks to ethico-political reflection that teaching *environments and institutions* erect. The first refers to the simplistic way in which reflection is taken as an *individual* and *plain* process of looking back and examining one’s actions without taking into consideration the external and environmental influences on this process. Literature reviewed for this study indicates

the occurrence of this view regarding the common-sense or simple understanding of reflection in many educational programmes. The second is the resistance to reflection among some teachers and student teachers. According to this view every teacher does not have the necessary reflective dispositions and hence their resistance to reflection. This individual dispositional impediment to reflection has also previously been pointed out by Zeichner and Liston (1987) who reported that the teacher education programme they studied did not bring considerable change in the level of reflection of student teachers over the duration of the programme. This, however, more than pointing out the dependence of reflective development on individual dispositions, shows the possible inadequacy of particular educational programmes to respond to the individual needs of student teachers. This connects this 'individual' dispositional impediment to the third category of 'institutional' factors that Markham identifies. These include priorities in the institutions, time and resources available for reflective practices, environment prevailing in educational institutions such as orientation towards risk taking and openness versus playing safe and competitiveness in terms of league tables and market oriented performance of educational institutions. Absence of institutional support for a reflective environment, therefore, is likely to stand in the way of reflection on the individual level due to a sense of vulnerability on the part of student teachers (Hatton and Smith, 1995). Cole (1997, cited in Markham, 1999: 61) identifies impeding factors on a more practical level such as 'large class sizes, unreasonable curricular and other professional demands, lack of resources and support, and numerous and persistent outside interferences' as hindrances that make it very difficult for teachers to apply themselves to reflection on their practice (see also Olson, 1997).

Hatton and Smith (1995) identify a number of barriers to the development of a reflective environment. These include student teachers' preconceptions about teaching and learning and the issues of survival as new entrants into the teaching profession which can make them focus more on learning the technicalities of teaching to deliver in the classroom rather than reflect on issues of broader significance associated with reflection. In other words the argument is that student teachers are more interested in learning the *how* of teaching rather than the *what* and *why* of it at this initial stage. Teaching, they argue is traditionally associated more with practical performance and delivery rather than with developing reflection and deeper thinking about issues of academic import. This practical emphasis of teaching, they argue, is visible in initial teacher training programmes too, which result in the lack of time and opportunities for reflection in the usually hectic schedules of the training programmes (see also Moore, 2004); a lack of identification with the profession at the early stages and a suitable knowledge base are other factors identified by Hatton and Smith (1995) as possible hindrances. Hatton and Smith also identify different modes of reflection such as individual versus collaborative reflection and their impact on the learning styles of individual students. For instance the issue that some student teachers are better at reflection in a collaborative environment than when they are required to do so as individuals where they can fall prey to feelings of vulnerability. In identifying issues related to student teachers, as barriers in the way of reflection, Hatton and Smith thus present a more detailed list of issues than what Markham (1999) suggests, such as the simplistic understanding of reflection, on the part of student teachers. With respect to the individual capabilities and aptitudes and the aims of various teacher education programmes, Hatton and Smith (1995: 37) point out the difficulty in

the 'identification of a suitable knowledge base as starting point' for student teachers to understand the concept before its practical application'.

Further, and on a broader level, Hatton and Smith (1995: 35-36) identify the diverse range of interpretations of reflection across programmes as they argue that, 'the theoretical framework for reflection adopted by a particular program will depend upon its purposes and focus, and, therefore, in turn upon the assumptions about teaching and teacher education upon which these are based'. Referring to Valli (1992) and Zeichner (1990), Hatton and Smith (1995: 38) elaborate the purpose and focus of particular teacher education programmes on different approaches such a 'critically reflective approach' that 'demands an ideology of teacher education different from that traditionally employed, which usually involves models of "best practice", emphasis on competencies, and unrecognised conflicts between institutional ideals and workplace socialisation'. This, according to them, stands in the way of adopting any universally unifying definition of the concept across teacher education programmes. This, however, may not be a problem within particular programmes, where they have clearly defined frameworks with respect to the place of reflection in accordance with their specific objectives.

Akbari (2007) provides a perceptive critique of reflection/reflective practices as a teacher education concept. Akbari critiques reflection on two levels: one in terms of 'conceptual problems' associated with it and two, in terms of 'practical problems' linked to it. On a conceptual level one problem with reflection according to Akbari

(2007: 192) is the overemphasis on the rational aspect of the term which he argues comes at the cost of its 'critical dimension' (see also Zeichner, 1994). Tracing reflection to two important sources; Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983, 1987), Akbari (2007: 196) with reference to Fendler (2003) points out the conceptual difference between the two by arguing that while Dewey associates reflection with scientific professionalism and systematic rational actions as against those that are 'repetitive, blind and impulsive'. Schön in contrast considers reflection as an 'intuitive, personal [and] non rational activity'. This is an interesting observation keeping in view the contemporary understanding and adoption of reflection more in the Schönian rather than the Deweyan conception of it, that is reflection more as a practical skill rather than a theoretical disposition (Lawes, 2003). As a skill, reflection, Akbari argues, tends to have a retrospective focus which comes at the cost of its futuristic and creative value. With reference to Conway (2001) and Freese (2006), Akbari argues that the emphasis in such retrospective reflection is on memory with little attention to anticipatory reflection and imagination. This according to Akbari focuses reflection around practical/technical classroom-based teaching learning issues and skills-enhancement while its 'moral, emancipatory and ethical' (Birmingham, 2004 in Akbari, 2007: 197) aspects are not taken into consideration.

On a 'practical level' and in terms of the outcomes of reflective practice, Akbari argues that 'there is no evidence' regarding improvement in either teachers' or students' performance. Also in a top-down model of implementation of reflection, he argues, teachers'/practitioners' personalities and individualities are not acknowledged.

Associating the current concept of reflective practice with teachers' practical knowledge, Akbari suggests that too much emphasis on the concept might lead to negligence regarding research-based theoretical and propositional knowledge (see also Lawes, 2003). He further argues that exclusion of theoretical knowledge in the discussion of reflective practice will 'limit teacher development to matters of techniques and procedures' Akbari (2007: 204). With reference to Fendler (2003), Akbari's (2007: 201) view is that this is likely to lead to 'the real loss of reflective spirit...' as such reflection no more remains, 'a high order cognitive/affective/socially conscious activity'. One more problem identified by Akbari (2007) as also by Stanley (1999) is the neglect of the 'self', the 'affective domain' and emotions and the emphasis on the 'how' of reflection rather than the 'what' of it. This, it is argued, is problematic as "teachers may be fearful of reflecting on their teaching if they experience blame, guilt or anger at themselves for not having taught well or for having adversely affected the students' learning" (Stanley, 1999 in Akbari, 2007: 202).

Taken as a whole, researchers associate a number of problems with reflection as an educational concept. These include problems both on the conceptual and on implementation levels. On the conceptual level problems are associated with the complexity involved in the different conceptualisations of the term which range from its common sense meaning to its more intricate, theoretical understanding and the possible lack of awareness of such a complexity among practitioners. The implementation level issues appear mainly to be an outcome of the diversity in meaning on the conceptual level and thus reflective practices might vary according to

the level of understanding of the concept and in response to the aims and objectives of particular educational programmes.

2.3 Usefulness of reflection

Reflection has been hailed as useful by most researchers who have written on the subject. Leading writers on the concept from Dewey (1933) onwards to Schön (1983, 1987), Van Manen (1977, 1995), Zeichner (1981, 1987, 1994, 2010), Zeichner and Liston (1996), Valli (1997), and Calderhead (1989, 1993) have discussed the various benefits that reflection as an educational concept can provide to teachers and practitioners. Dewey (1933) for instance associates reflection with the development of useful qualities such as ‘open-mindedness’, ‘responsibility’ and ‘whole-heartedness’ (See also Pollard et al., 2008). Open-mindedness means being open to all possibilities in the process of understanding a situation, responsibility refers to the consideration of the consequences of one’s actions and whole-heartedness connotes looking at a phenomenon from all possible angles to have a holistic view. These characteristics are useful as they bring in thoughtfulness, depth, honesty and integrity to the process of teaching and learning.

Dewey regarded reflection as a useful practice also because of its help in bringing in a ‘thinking’ demeanour. This, he suggests, guards against routine and impulsive action. Reflection is hence a way that leads to deliberative action and to the use of scientific, rational and experimental means during the process of education. Although Dewey is regarded as a pioneer in reflection, recent works have explored the usefulness of

reflection beyond its grounding in scientific rationalism. Schön (1983, 1987) for example emphasizes the usefulness of reflection more due its intuitive and craft value than in terms of scientific rationalism, empiricism and experimentation. Schön argues for the usefulness of intuitive reflection-in-action in comparison to 'technical rationality', a concept closer to Dewey's philosophy of scientific rationalism. Thus there is a clear distinction between 'Dewey's scientific reflection' and 'Schön's artistic reflection' (Fendler, 2003: 19).

According to Luttenberg and Burgen (2008) reflection can play a role in enhancing the professional development and improvement of skills and competence of teachers. Reflection they argue can also help teachers cope with difficult situations and find solutions to problems that have not been dealt with by experts through research. In terms of the usefulness of reflection in teacher education programmes Luttenberg and Burgen (2008: 544) argue that it depends on the aims and orientations of the particular programme ranging from the personal growth and psychological maturation of teachers (such as in 'person-oriented programmes'); in the proper acquisition of technical, competence skills (in 'behaviour-oriented programmes) and in the development of a research oriented and 'inquisitive teaching attitude' which 'concerns the teaching profession in general'.

Farrell (2007: 7) provides a list of benefits that reflection/reflective teaching can bring to teachers:

- It frees the teacher from routine and impulsive action. [see also Dewey, 1933]

- It helps teachers become more confident in their actions and decisions. [presumably as a consequences of their action based on thorough thinking through and research about issues]
- It provides information for teachers to make informed decisions. [As often reflection involves inquiry-based approaches and action research in the teaching learning situation. [See also Kolb, 1984; Harrison, 2008]
- It helps teachers to critically reflect on all aspects of their work. [Presumably on issues of justice, equity and issues of wider socio-political consequences]
- It helps teachers to develop strategies for intervention and change. [This seems to be more of a technical take on the issue such as those aimed at in Reflective Teaching based on micro-teaching. [See Cruickshank, 1985, 1987]
- It recognises teachers are professionals. [See also Schön, 1983, 1987]
- It is a cathartic experience for practising (and novice) teachers. [See also Akbari, 2007; Fendler, 2003]

Regarding the value of reflection in pre-service teacher education programmes Knowles (1993: 82) asks: 'Why is it useful and important for teachers to engage in reflection?' Answering this question the author argues that teachers need to be prepared as reflective practitioners as 'schools and society are constantly changing... [And] teachers need to be reflective in order to cope effectively with changing circumstances'. Other factors include the fact that teacher education programmes cannot prepare new teachers for all kinds of situations in the schools and in the classroom, keeping in view the ever-evolving nature of schools and the idiosyncrasy of

human behaviour, which makes it almost impossible to think of a one-go professional development for teachers. Preparing them as reflective practitioners, therefore, would help them in thinking independently and in coping with circumstantial issues that arise during their professional life.

Reflection thus helps in the continuous professional development of teachers. Besides, exposure to the concept helps new teachers in looking at things critically and prepares them to challenge the status quo which leads to their taking control of 'environments and circumstances in which they work and students learn' (Knowles,1993: 82) and this brings emancipation and empowerment to teachers.

Overall the literature reviewed for this study reveals that reflection is being valued as an effective tool for bringing improvement in the teaching-learning situation by considering aspects of the process ranging from the immediate technical classroom issues to the wider critical issues of socio-political import such as justice, emancipation and empowerment for the teacher, the student and the society as a whole. This happens through as a way of teachers becoming independent thinkers who can explore for themselves and can come up with their own analysis of and solutions to the various issues that arise during their professional life. Reflection, it comes out, helps in the process of continuous professional development for teachers and practitioners.

2.4 Reflective teaching and teacher education

According to Korthagen (1993: 317) the concept of reflection and reflective teaching, in terms of teacher education became popular during the 1980's in response to 'calls for the professionalization of teaching and teacher education'. This, he argues, was in reaction to the idea that teachers be prepared as professionals capable of critically analyzing their own practices, as independent decision makers and as autonomous experts, with the competence to make systematic rational decisions, something that lie at the heart of professionalism. Thus the need was felt for 'a kind of teacher education which transcends mere training in the use of specific behavioural competencies' (Korthagen, 1993: 317). On similar lines, Hussein (2006: 17) argues that 'Reflection in [an] initial teacher education program is an alternative to the traditional models of training (behaviourist, craft and applied sciences) that promote good practice as the outcome of *technical rationality* (Schön, 1983) or *rationalism* (Elliott, 1979)'. Hussein argues that 'technical rationality' is a 'hegemonic' model of a top-down process of education which 'reduces professional practice to the application of formulas' (ibid.). This technical-rational view of teacher training takes teachers' practical knowledge and experience as 'trivial and a-theoretical' (Korthagen, 1993: 317). Reflective practice he suggests is a counter-hegemonic movement in teacher education that aims at the autonomy and empowerment of prospective teachers and by extension of the teachers as a whole as practitioners.

Valli (1997) traces down the idea of contrasting the traditional competency-based model of teacher education with the reflective model to Dewey (1933). Competency-

based teacher education according to Valli (1997: 69) is aimed at a technical preparation of prospective teachers by giving them training in competencies and skills such as classroom management, delivery of lessons, instructional strategies, application of prescribed knowledge, and in imitation of 'acceptable patterns of teaching behaviour'. This kind of teacher preparation according to Dewey would prepare them for the 'how' of teaching but not for the 'why' of it and 'they would be limited to blind experimentation, arbitrary decisions or rote habit' Valli (1997: 70). The reflective model of teacher education, in contrast is aimed at preparing prospective teachers to be thoughtful and to make decisions about the teaching learning process in a contextualised way, equipping them with skills and attitudes to question things and to critically look at actions they take and the decisions they make in the teaching-learning situation.

Many other researchers link the beginning of the current emphasis on training and development of new teachers as reflective practitioners to developments in the 1980s and 1990s (Smyth, 1989; Gore, 1987; Killen, 1989; Zeichner, 1981, 1994; Zeichner and Liston, 1987, 1996). This, it is argued, was in response to a growing concern about the usefulness of the then prevalent traditional system of teacher education representing the dominance of technical rationality (Schön, 1983, 1987) and a top-down theory-into-practice model (McIntyre, 1993; Lawlor, 1990; O'Hear, 1988; Partington, 1999). The teacher as a reflective practitioner and as a leader and initiator of the education and curriculum development process, with greater autonomy were concepts that got momentum during this period. Reflective practice in teacher education programmes

was, thus, incorporated for the purpose in different countries including the UK, the USA, Australia and Canada. Reflective practices such as action research, journal writing, seminars, reflective dialogues; discussions and inquiry-oriented teaching techniques were increasingly being adopted in teacher education programmes. The effect of this change according to Korthagen and Russell (1995) has been more emphasis on the development of creative individuality of a teacher than on the transfer of general theoretical knowledge about the education and teaching.

Abundant research has been done on concepts such as reflection, reflective practices, and teachers as reflective practitioners; and the preparation of reflective teachers, who are independent thinkers as opposed to those driven by tradition and authority, has been promoted as an important goal of many teacher education programmes since then (Cruickshank, 1987; Schön, 1983, 1987; Calderhead, 1989; Zeichner, 1981, 1987, 1994, Hatton and Smith, 1995; Zeichner and Liston, 1996). Reflection as a result became a part of the language of teacher education in a short period of time (Gore 1987, Korthagen and Wubbels, 1991). In an insightful article on the concept of reflection as a teaching-learning and teacher education concept, Calderhead (1989: 43) points out that the concept of reflective teaching has been associated with 'notions of growth through critical inquiry, analysis and self-directed evaluation'. Explaining the multi-faceted-ness of the concept and the 'process', 'content', 'pre-conditions' and 'product' related to it, Calderhead (1989: 44) argues that views regarding reflective teaching vary in terms of how they (the theorists) view the *process* of reflection (e.g., reflection-in action, curricular deliberation), the *content* of reflection (e.g., teachers'

own values, societal contexts, educational theory), the *preconditions* of reflection (e.g., the attitudes for reflection, the tutorial context in which reflection occurs) and the product of reflection (e.g., effective teaching, emancipation, an understanding of the relationship between values and practice).

Calderhead highlights that reflection has also been interpreted in teacher education programmes depending on its purpose and utility. Those who believe in behaviouristic approach (Cruickshank et al., 1981), Cruickshank (1984, 1985a, 1985b), Killen (1989) to teacher education take a technical view of the term for enhancing the skills of student teachers and others with more critical approaches (Zeichner, 1981; Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Gore, 1989; Smyth, 1989) extend the agenda for reflective teaching into bigger issues such as its use for 'emancipation and professional autonomy' (Calderhead, 1989: 45).

According to Zeichner (1994: 15) during the eighties and nineties terms such as *reflective teaching*, *reflective practitioner*, *action research*, *teachers-as-researchers* 'and a host of related terms [...became] fashionable...' and a 'slogan around which teacher educators all over the world [...] rallied in the name of teacher education reform'. Zeichner (1987, 1994) and Zeichner and Liston (1990, 1996) have identified five traditions of reflective teaching practice in the US teacher education context: the 'academic tradition', the 'social efficiency' tradition, the 'developmentalist tradition', the 'social reconstructionist tradition' and, the 'generic tradition'. The academic tradition according to Zeichner 'emphasizes the teacher's role as a scholar and subject-

matter specialist'. 'Disciplinary' knowledge is emphasized in this tradition; 'complimented by apprenticeship experience in a school' and 'the contribution of schools, colleges, and departments of education...' has been 'belittled' (Zeichner, 1994: 22). This tradition is primarily focused on thinking about the subject-matter of different disciplines and 'its transfer to pupils to promote understanding', although it 'does not necessarily ignore' issues such as pedagogical knowledge as an outcome of research, and broader issues such as 'social justice and equity' (Zeichner, 1994: 23)

The social efficiency tradition emphasizes 'the intelligent use of "generic" teaching skills and strategies which have been suggested by research' (Zeichner, 1994: 24). Feiman-Nemser (1990) as reported by Zeichner (1994: 24) has identified two ways in which this tradition has been interpreted: the 'technological version' which aims at reflection of teachers about how to conform their practices to standards provided by researchers and the 'deliberative orientation' in which teacher educators prepare teachers to use research-based knowledge but also to 'exercise their judgement about various teaching skills', using their 'experience, intuition, and their own values...' (Zeichner, 1994: 24)

The developmentalist tradition focuses reflection on the 'natural development' of the learner and its impact on the subject-matter and methodology of teaching. 'The selection and adoption of subject-matter and teaching method is determined by the careful observation and description of students' behaviour at various stages of development...' (Zeichner, 1994: 24). Perrone (1989 cited in Zeichner, 1994) associates

three central metaphors with this tradition: the teacher as naturalist, who focuses on closely observing the child behaviour and development and adjusting the teaching-learning process and content accordingly; the teacher-as-researcher who teaches through experiments and inquiry; and the teacher-as-artist bringing in intuitive creativity in the teaching-learning situation in the classroom (Zeichner, 1994: 24-25). Zeichner argues that this tradition has got strength with 'the growing influence of cognitive psychology' (Zeichner, 1994: 24-25).

The social reconstructionist tradition, recognizing the essentially political character of the education process in schools, emphasizes a broader scope for teachers' reflection enfolding issues such as justice, equity, and emancipation, upholding the cause of democracy and the maintenance or disruption of the status quo. 'In a social reconstructionist conception of reflective teaching, the teachers' attention is focused both inwardly at their own practice *and* outwardly at the social conditions in which these practices are situated...' (Kemmis, 1985 in Zeichner, 1994: 26). The teacher's classroom practice is thus linked with and shaped by the broader social aims of education. Further, the tradition is based on a 'commitment to reflection as a *social* practice' encouraging collaboration and co-operation among student teachers to 'support and sustain each others' growth' (Zeichner, 1994: 27).

The generic tradition of reflection according to Zeichner (1994: 27) emphasizes 'reflective teaching in general'. According to this tradition it is the process of reflection and not the product or subject-matter of it that is more important. Zeichner (1994: 27-

28) in order to explain this emphasis on the process of reflection in this tradition refers to Valli (1990b: 9) who points out the tendency in various teacher education programmes to focus on the process rather than the subject-matter or outcomes of reflection: 'How to get students to reflect can take on a life of its own, and can become *the* programmatic goal. *What* they reflect on can become immaterial...'. Zeichner also refers to the technical process-focused model of Reflective Teaching (Cruickshank, 1987), who, 'argued that teachers need to become more reasoned actors, without at all addressing the issues of the content, quality and context of reflection' (Zeichner, 1994: 27), as a model that belongs to this generic tradition of reflection.

Zeichner (1994: 29) cautions against this generic reflection as according to him '...all teachers are reflective in some sense' and that 'we must be interested in more complex questions than whether teaching is reflective or not'. This concurs with Gimenez's (1999:130) observation that 'it is imperative to specify what one really means when referring to reflection'. Both authors, therefore, emphasise the identification and recognition of the kind(s) of reflection offered in educational programmes. This is an important observation as it seems to recognise the sophistication of the concept, recognition of which is important as a safeguard against turning it into a slogan (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). This is of particular significance for this current study as an important goal has been to explore the subject-matter and the aims and focus that the participants associate with the concept of reflection in the PGCE. The above discussion also establishes that reflection in the teacher education context, as has been the case with the concept in general, carries multiple

interpretations and hence it seems to be an interesting issue to explore it in terms of its connotation and implementation in the PGCE programme being studied for the purpose.

2.5 Reflection and teacher education in the UK

Like in many other countries, reflection has been a popular concept and is recognised as one of the most important components of many teacher education programmes in the UK (Calderhead, 1989; McIntyre, 1993, 1995; Calderhead and Gates, 1993; Day, 1993; Moon, 1999, 2004; Atkinson, 2004; Harrison, 2008; Harrison and Lee, 2011). The increasing 'political control, curricular prescription, and the celebration of the practical' (Schnur and Golby, 1995: 14) in teacher education programmes by the government through its agencies such as the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) have been received with scepticism by educational researchers and teacher education providers with an apprehension that the development would lead to the preparation of new teachers on more technicist rather than reflective lines. It is also feared that increasingly school-based teacher training would deprive it of its intellectuality (Wilson, 1989; Schnur and Golby, 1995; Crook, 2002) and would reduce such teacher training programmes to producing teachers as technicians with a purpose of implementing a centralised curriculum rather than as reflective practitioners capable of making independent curricular and educational decisions. This tendency, it is argued, would also lead to weakening of the autonomous character of universities as teacher education

institutions and would result in a decline in the research and academic culture in educational institutions (Hartley, 1995, 1998).

But despite this increasing standardisation, top-down structure and centralisation of the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) the development of teachers on reflective grounds has been a consistent goal of teacher education programmes both on the policy and implementation levels. For example a number of 'standards' mentioned in the 'Professional Standards for Teachers' of the Teacher Development Agency (TDA, 2007), a policy document in vogue when this study began, mention 'reflection' and 'criticality' as attributes required for the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Under the heading 'Personal professional development', award of QTS require teachers to '[r]eflect on and improve their practice, and take responsibility for identifying and meeting their developing professional needs'(Standard Q7.a), to '[h]ave a creative and constructively critical approach towards innovation, being prepared to adapt their practice where benefits and improvements are identified' (Q.8). Similarly, under the heading 'Achievement and diversity', to '[u]nderstand how children and young people develop and that the progress and well-being of learners are affected by a range of developmental, social, religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic influences' (Q18). Under the heading, 'Assessing, monitoring and giving feedback', to 'support and guide learners to reflect on their learning, identify the progress they have made and identify their emerging learning needs' (Q.28) (TDA, 2007). Thus reflection has been consistently identified as one of the basic aims of teacher training programmes.

2.6 Reflection and the PGCE (Secondary-Level) programme under this study

The PGCE under study comprised four modules, two at the intermediate Honours ('H') level and two at Masters ('M') level. There were two semesters and each semester consisted of one 'H' level and one 'M' level module. The 'H' level consisted of professional school experiences. The 'M' level consisted of teaching, learning and assessment for learning in the secondary school (30 credits). Some of the aims of this module included developing the ability of student teachers to evaluate research that underpins current practice in teaching and learning; development of the practical pedagogical skills of the student teachers; to critically analyse and justify with reference to published research; and to develop the ability of students to reflect on their teaching and their students' learning. Further successful student teachers were expected to be able to reflect on and critique the planning, teaching and evaluation process used by them and others.

The aims of the second module at the 'M' level included the development of the ability of the student teacher for an engagement on a critical level with the relevant subject and involvement in action research. Reflection on the developing classroom practice, engagement in research and reading and writing at the M-level were other expectations from student teachers. Further, a successful student teacher was deemed to have developed the ability to critically evaluate pedagogic theories, and to reflect on, research and critique a critical issue in the teaching of their chosen subject. The assessment at the end of this module included demonstration of theoretical understanding of the subject matter and the pedagogical requirements to teach and

critically evaluate the teaching-learning process. In the specialist subject study student teachers were required to conduct an investigation into an aspect of their relevant subject for critical evaluation in the form of action research or critical incident analysis, which is being conducted during the Phase-B teaching practice placement.

Some of the distinguishing features claimed for the programme included preparation of student teachers for carrying out school-based studies of education and for evaluation and assessment of their teaching and the pupils learning informed by research. Preparing trainees as reflective practitioners was one of its primary goals. The course handbook also defined being reflective in terms of having the ability to analyse research and synthesise and apply findings to one's own practice. Further, this included the ability to conduct small-scale research in the classroom.

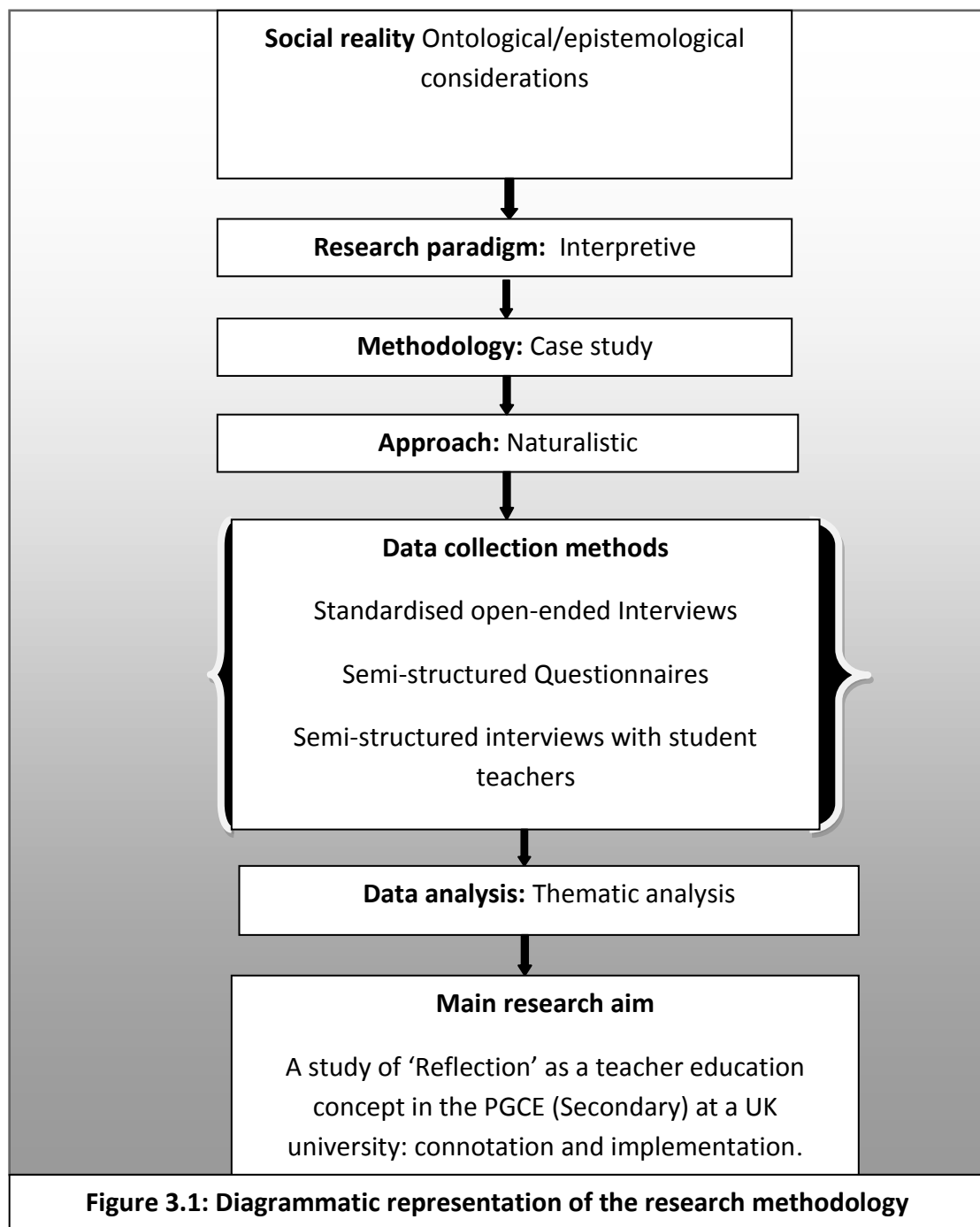
Thus 'reflection', 'critiquing', 'critical evaluation', 'research based learning' and 'analyses' were significant aims of the course both in terms of implementation and assessment. But keeping in view the multifaceted connotation and conceptualisations that reflection lends itself to, it was deemed interesting and worthwhile in this study to explore the meaning of reflection in this particular programme from the perspectives of the research participants: university tutors and student teachers. Secondly, as various practices/strategies have been associated with the concept of reflection in educational programmes evident from the previous sections of this literature review; it was considered valuable to identify the ways and means which are adopted in this programme for the purpose and the rationale for adopting those practices/strategies.

Another issue that was interesting to explore was the availability or otherwise of resources (both in terms of time and material) which help in creating an environment conducive for reflection and reflective practices. The implementation phase of reflection as a teacher education goal was thought to be influenced by the overall educational environment and especially policy and decision making at the government level. This study, therefore, also aimed to explore the various factors both in and out of the programme that may influence the concept. These included both conceptual and practical issues influencing the implementation of reflection in the programme. Besides, the rationale and aims of reflection as an educational concept in the programme also seemed interesting to explore.

Thus the overall aim of the study was to have a deeper contextual exploration and understanding of the concept, its different connotations and how are they associated with teachers' personal and professional development, the various practices/strategies associated with reflection and their perceived usefulness and the internal and external factors that might influence it as a teacher education concept in one way or the other. The purpose has been a much clearer understanding of the concept of reflection in this particular context, the various practices/strategies associated, their rationale and their relative usefulness or otherwise, the various possible factors influencing reflection and the conduciveness or otherwise of the overall setting in the programme for the conceptualisation and implementation of reflection.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

'Do case studies, but do them with the understanding that your methods will be challenged from rational (and irrational) perspectives and that the insights resulting from your case studies may be underappreciated.' Yin, R.K. (2003: xiii)



3.1 Introduction:

This chapter aims at an exposition of the research methodology adopted for this study.

The discussion will include the following topics:

- The ontological and epistemological positioning of the study, the choice of the research paradigm and its influence on research methodology.
- Research design
- Approach
- Research site
- Sample size and access
- Data collection process
- Data analysis process
- Validity and reliability
- Ethical considerations
- The conceptual framework

3.1.1 Research paradigm: The ontological and epistemological positioning of the study and the methodological considerations

Cohen et al. (2007: 8) identify two contrasting 'ways of conceiving social reality': the subjectivist (interpretivist) approach and the objectivist (positivist) approach. This translates into social reality being observed and interpreted in strikingly different ways. Elaborating on the work of Burrell and Morgan (1979), Cohen et al. (2007) argue that these conceptions are influenced by three assumptions regarding the nature of

social reality. These assumptions have roots in ontology, epistemology and human nature. The first, 'ontological assumptions', concern the very nature or essence of social phenomenon under investigation. Ontological considerations revolve around questions relevant to the nature of social reality such as what social reality is. Is reality objective and external or subjective and internal in nature, that is, does it carry an independent existence or is it an outcome of individual cognition and consciousness? According to Cohen et al. (2007: 7) the belief in the objectivity and independence or the subjectivity and dependence of the nature of social reality 'spring[s] from what philosophy terms the nominalist-realist debate'. The nominalist position, they argue comes out of a belief in the dependence of objects for their existence and meaning on individual, contextual and perceptual interpretation. The realist position, on the contrary represents a belief in the universality and independence of objects without the essentiality of their existence being perceived. In simple terms nominalists seem to believe in the subjectivity and realists in the objectivity of objects and by extension of social reality.

The second, 'epistemological assumptions', take into consideration the nature, forms, ways of acquisition and communication of knowledge. Again there are divergent views: one view is that knowledge is 'hard' based on facts, is objective and tangible in particular ways and the other that knowledge is personal, subjective and unique. In the first case the researcher tends to play the role of a distant observer and applies methods of natural science for inquiry and implementation while in the latter case s/he tends to have more personal involvement in the phenomenon under

investigation. 'To subscribe to the former is to be positivist; to the latter, anti-positivist' (Cohen et al., 2007: 7). 'To the positivist there is reality 'out there' in the world that exists whether it is observed or not and irrespective of who observes it' Bassey (1999: 42). On the other hand anti-positivists (interpretivists) see reality as a 'construct of the human mind'. Being an interpretivist means being in search of 'deep perspectives on particular events and for theoretical insights' Bassey (1999: 43-44). Positivism and interpretivism are thus presented as the two main paradigms underlying two contrasting views of reality. Paradigms, according to Basit (2010: 14), are 'models, perspectives or conceptual frameworks that help us to organize our thoughts, beliefs, views and practices into a logical whole and therefore inform our research design'. Pring (2000a, 2000b) identifies these two paradigms as paradigm A (the positivist/realist paradigm), and paradigm B (the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm) or 'naïve realism and radical relativism' Scott (2005: 633). Scott, however, argues against this 'false dualism' regarding reality in terms of educational research and comes up with his own 'meta-theory' of reality which he calls 'critical realism' (also see Bhaskar, 1979, 1989; Houston, 2001), a theory of reality following an objectivist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology. This means the permanence of a reality 'out there' (objective ontology) and our various/individual interpretations of that reality (subjective epistemology). Reality in this sense is, therefore, objective but our understanding of it is subjective and contextual.

The third set of assumptions according to this categorisation (Cohen et al., 2007) relates to human nature, its interaction with the environment and the role that human

nature and the environment play in shaping each other. Again, there are two competing views regarding this interaction. One assumption is that humans respond to their environment mechanically and deterministically while the contrasting view is that humans have free will and capacity which help them produce, shape and manipulate their environment. These different understandings of human nature probably have roots in the divergent conceptions regarding the nature of reality and knowledge as discussed above.

According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995: 21) as reported by Cohen et al. (2007: 5), 'ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions; these, in turn give rise to methodological considerations; and these in turn give rise to issues of instrumentation and data collection'. Research following an objectivist/positivist view of the nature of social reality would *tend to* use research methods and data collection techniques such as large scale surveys or would adopt experimental/quasi-experimental designs. On the other hand research that takes a more subjectivist/interpretive view would *usually* favour techniques such as personal accounts, in-depth interviews, observations and personal constructs (Cohen et al., 2007). The use and relevance of particular research strategy or data collection tools, however, have not been *universally and exclusively* attributed to the adoption of one or another paradigm. For instance, case study as a research strategy, suggests Bassey (1999), has been explored both with the more positivist assumptions (Yin, 2003) and with the more interpretivist assumptions (Stake, 1995). Accordingly, the latter conception would lead to the preference of qualitative data collection strategies such

as observations, interviews and document review (Stake, 1995), while the former position would permit or even limit the evidence in a case study to quantitative data (Yin, 2003). The selection of particular techniques/design for a research project, therefore, would depend on other considerations as well, besides the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher. These include issues such as the nature of inquiry/research question(s), the subject-matter under study, access to sources of data and the time and resources available for the research study besides other practical and pragmatic considerations. The adoption of the interpretivist paradigm and qualitative data collection tools has been explored in the following section.

3.1.2 Relevance of the interpretivist/qualitative approach for the present study

The interpretivist paradigm with a qualitative research strategy was selected for this study for two main theoretical reasons, alongside other practical considerations. Primarily, and keeping in view the purpose of the study, which was an exploration of the perceptions of the participants regarding the connotation and implementation of reflection, the inquiry seemed to fit more into the interpretivist paradigm. This was so as its basic aim was not to test any theory or to gather and analyse large-scale data but to explore the perceptions of participants in-depth regarding the issue under study. Secondly, as the worldview and the ontological and epistemological orientations of the researcher play a significant role in qualitative/ interpretive research so this researcher's personal orientations towards the interpretivist paradigm also played a role in selecting this as a paradigm of choice for the study.

Besides ontological and epistemological inclinations, practical and pragmatic considerations such as access to data sources, time and resources availability and the nature of the inquiry also played significant role in adopting the interpretivist paradigm. For instance as a foreign student researcher one practical issue was getting access to a large number of data sources across institutions in England in case a positivistic, quantitative research design had been adopted. Conversely it was more practicable to get access to one particular institution and study it in-depth. Further, as a student researcher, the cost involved in travelling to a wide field of research was also one such practical consideration that played its role in preference for the in-depth qualitative study. In terms of usefulness for in-depth study of situations, phenomena, qualitative methods such as in-depth, semi-structured interviews, unstructured observations and document analysis give the researcher more freedom to have deeper and more comprehensive access to participants' perceptions. Qualitative research helps in giving an insider view and enriches the researcher's ability to provide rich description, a prominent quality of such studies. This helps in contextualising the whole process of data analysis and interpretation through a closer access to perceptions and viewpoints of the research participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The suitability of qualitative/interpretive model for the present study also reflected the kind of questions that were being explored in the present study. Erickson, Florio, and Buschman (1980, cited in Borg and Gall, 1989: 406-407) suggest that qualitative methods are best at seeking answers to questions such as: What is happening in this field? What does that mean to the people involved? What do people have to know in

order to be able to do what they do in the setting? How does what is happening here relate to what is happening in the wider social context of the setting? And how does the organisation of what is happening here differ from that found in other places and times? Most of these questions fit into the aims and settings of the present study as it is an inquiry into the nature of a 'happening', a particular aspect of the teacher education programme under study, what does the 'happening'(reflection) mean to the people involved (university tutors and student teachers), what do they need to know, which could be an outcome of the study and how does the concept of reflection in vogue here, relate to wider interpretation of the term as is currently in use in other such/ similar programmes and in the theoretical models found in the literature?

3.2 Research design

According to Basit (2010: 35) the design of a research study is driven by its purpose. Design, according to her, includes considerations such as 'the paradigm we select, the methodology we choose, the approach we take and the methods we apply in our research' and all of these revolve around the purpose of the research. Theory, literature review, the development of research questions and practical considerations such as sample selection and access to data sources all play significant roles in research design (Basit, 2010), which Bogdan and Biklen (1998: 49) define as 'the researcher's plan of how to proceed'. The research design thus originates in and is driven by the research purpose and the consequent research questions. This, later on, culminates in the various processes and methods of data collection, analysis, the practicalities involved in such processes and the related ethical considerations. The first part of this

conceptual design, mainly alluding to purpose of the research, its rationale, significance and background, its ontological and epistemological considerations, and the theoretical background have been discussed partly in the previous sections of this chapter and in chapters one, and two. The second part of the design consisting primarily of data collection methods, sampling, ethical considerations, data analysis and interpretation procedures, and issues such as validity and reliability are discussed in the following sections.

3.2.1 Case study as a research strategy

This section will discuss the suitability of case study as a research strategy for this study. According to Nisbet and Watt (1978: 2) a case study is ‘a systematic investigation of a specific instance’. Case studies deal with situations where the researcher wants to give information about ‘real people in real situations’ rather than in abstractions and principles underlying a phenomenon (ibid). ‘Case study is study of singularity conducted in depth in natural settings’, Bassey (1999: 47). Merriam (1988: xii) argues that case study designs help in gaining an in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those involved. ‘The interest is in process rather than outcome, in context rather than specific variables, in discovery rather than confirmation’ and that qualitative case study is ‘an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena’, Merriam (1988: 2). Case study, however, can encompass the exploration and understanding of both processes *and* outcomes, and specific variables and context are not essentially exclusive. For instance, in this current study the phenomenon of reflection in the context of an

educational programme was studied both in terms of the processes/practices involved in its implementation and in terms of its outcomes, that is, its educational value. Further, case study can include elements of both discovery and confirmation, depending on the aims of the particular case study. In this present study - which aimed at an exploration of the nature and application of a concept 'reflection' in a particular context (the PGCE programme under study) - case study tilted more towards exploration of issues rather than confirmation. This seemed the most appropriate model, since the research aimed at exploring, in-depth, the perceptions of the participants in a field where such perceptions have hitherto been under-explored.

On a personal level, this researcher tends to agree with the view that 'the whole is more than the sum of its parts' Nisbet and Watt (1984, cited in Cohen et al., 2007: 253) and that 'human systems have a wholeness or integrity to them rather than being a loose connection of traits, necessitating in-depth investigation' (Sturman, 1999, cited in Cohen et al. 2007: 253). Another helpful aspect of the case study as a research design for this study was that it 'is a style of inquiry which is particularly suited to the individual researcher, in contrast to other styles which require a research team', Nisbet and Watt (1978: 8), for instance quantitative surveys and action research. Yin (2003: 1) argues that 'case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context'. All these features were relevant to this study.

Borg and Gall (1989) identify several kinds of case study in social science research such as 'Historical case studies of organisations', 'Observational case studies', 'oral histories', 'clinical case study', and, 'situational analysis'. 'Situational analysis', they suggest, is the study of a particular event / phenomenon from the viewpoint of the major participants and 'when all these views are pulled together', the result is deeper understanding of the event/phenomenon under study. In the present study the 'phenomenon' (reflection: its connotation and implementation) was studied from the perspectives of major participants: university tutors and student teachers with an aim to have deeper understanding of the what, how and why of the phenomenon under study.

3.2.2 Naturalistic approach

This case study took a naturalistic approach. The study was naturalistic in the sense that no attempt was made 'to manipulate the research setting' Patton (1990: 41). The research setting according to Patton (ibid.) 'is a naturally occurring event, program, community, relationship, or interaction that has no predetermined course established by and for the researcher'. Cohen et al. (2007) include naturalistic case study approach in the broader interpretative paradigm of research. Citing researchers such as Boas (1943), Woods (1992), and LeCompte and Preissle (1993), Cohen et al. (2007) mention some of the salient features of research in this paradigm such as construction of meanings by humans in context, the multi-faceted-ness of reality, the time-and-context-bounded-ness of hypotheses, value-bounded-ness of inquiry, thick description, the significance of the views of data sources in the construction of reality, the flexible,

open and tentative nature of the inquiry, the importance of process in the inquiry and not just the outcomes and, the inductive analysis of data. Reporting on the main kinds of naturalistic inquiry with reference to Anderson and Arsenault (1998) and Flick (2004), Cohen et al. (2007: 170) mention case study as, 'an investigation into a specific instance or phenomenon in its real-life context'. Most of these features of the naturalistic approach are relevant to the nature and course of this case study. For instance the study was conducted with a belief in the multi-faceted-ness of reality and its time and context bounded-ness. The design of the study remained open and flexible with an inductive analytical approach and with a focus on a specific phenomenon i.e. the connotation and implementation of reflection in a particular context.

3.3 The research site

The study was conducted at a Faculty of Education in a British university. The educational programme under study was a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE-Secondary). The PGCE (Secondary) is a one year initial teacher education course aimed at training graduates in various subjects for teaching in the secondary schools. The programme lasts for a maximum of 36 weeks out of which a major portion i.e. 24 weeks is spent by the student teachers in local secondary schools getting primarily practical teaching experience called teaching practice. This time is spent in two blocks in two different schools, one block in the beginning of the PGCE year and one towards the end. The remaining 12 weeks are divided between school and university sessions. In the university part student teachers get instruction in various areas of professional development besides subject-matter and teaching techniques related training in their

respective subjects under the supervision of their university tutors. The programme, therefore, is based on partnership between the university and the schools where the university plays the role of overall supervision besides providing training in subject-matter and educational studies and research and the school that of the practical provider of teaching practice and practical classroom experience. The student teachers remain for the most part in the supervision and guidance of the school co-tutors who play the role of mentors throughout the training year. As mentors the school co-tutors have a dual role as guides and supporters and as assessors of the student teachers' progress throughout the training duration.

During the university part of the PGCE the training is mainly provided in two ways: One, training sessions under the supervision of their respective subject tutors in relevant subject rooms/centres are conducted two days per week throughout their twelve weeks on the university campus. Two, whole-cohort sessions are conducted both under the supervision of the PGCE tutors and variously other resource persons both from among the faculty members of the university Faculty of Education and from members of academia and experienced practitioners from outside the university such as educational leaders and subject and curriculum experts. The whole-cohort sessions are guided by a centrally controlled programme of training sessions and mainly the Head of Secondary PGCE programme is responsible for providing training resources and resource persons for running and implementing this part of the training. On the other hand provision of training in the various subject areas is mainly the responsibility of the relevant subject tutor(s)/university tutor(s). The university tutor, too, has a dual

role as trainer/guide and as an assessor of the progress that the student teachers make on various stages of the training programme.

The present research is mainly focused on the university part of the PGCE programme, though efforts have been made to get an indirect insight into the school situation through student teachers and university tutors, to have an ample view of the issue under research. For example both university tutors, most of whom had been serving as school co-tutors before joining the university as tutors; and student teachers who had been going through training in schools, were asked questions regarding the role and impact of factors in the schools influencing the issue under research. This will be explained in detail in the discussion and analysis sections of this report.

3.4 Sample and access

According to Cohen et al. (2007) sampling and access are important research issues as the quality of research to a large extent depends on careful sampling of the sources of data. As research is always bound by considerations such as time, resources and access; it is usually difficult to include the whole of the population in a study. Consequently careful and effective sampling is the way out for the researcher to deal with these constraints. Cohen et al. (2007: 101) point out that there are no clear-cut rules for correct sample size and that this depends on 'the purpose of the study and the nature of the population under scrutiny'. But the size of sample also depends on the nature of the research study i.e. whether it is quantitative or qualitative or some

kind of a combination. Cohen et al. (2007) identify two main methods of sampling: probability (random sampling) and non-probability (purposive sampling). In the former every member of the population has an equal chance to be included in the sample, while in the latter; sampling is deliberate and purposive depending upon the will/needs of the researcher and the aims and scope of the study. Probability sampling is more suitable for quantitative studies where the central aim is generalisation, while non-probability sampling suits more the aims of qualitative research which lends itself to more in-depth analysis of the phenomena in the particular context and where deeper insight and not generalisation is the basic aim.

A number of qualitative sampling techniques such as purposive sampling at the beginning of the study and snowball sampling at a later stage were used for data collection from the university tutors (Cohen et al., 2007). The choice and adjustment of the sampling technique were influenced by the developing focus of the study and by issues of saturation and access to data sources. For instance purposive sampling was used in the beginning of data collection to get access to participants with expertise regarding the issue under study. Snowball sampling was later on used to approach other relevant people identified during interviews with participants accessed through purposive sampling.

A total of 14 university tutors were interviewed. In qualitative research no universal rules are available for determining the number of participant in the sample, the number instead depends on the quality of information coming through, the

researcher's judgement of that information in the light of research questions and the principle of saturation, 'the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data' (Guest et al., 2006: 59). Guest et al. (2006) also found in their study that saturation occurred within the first twelve interviews. Similar pattern was found in terms of the information and themes coming through the data collected in this present study. For student teachers, opportunity sampling (Cohen et al., 2007) was used in the beginning and later on purposive sampling was adopted (Cohen et al., 2007). Opportunity sampling in this case was adopted primarily in response to access issues while purposive sampling was used later on once access issues had been resolved and with an aim to get further information from selected participants. Use was made of e-mail correspondence to have initial access to and for data collection through questionnaires. Face-to-face interviews were then conducted with selected student teachers towards the end of the data collection process.

A total of 29 student teachers became the sample initially; however, later on the number was reduced to 21 in line with the research purpose and in response to the initial responses of student teachers. These 21 student teachers responded to semi-structured questionnaires on two occasions, once in the initial phase of the PGCE and then towards the end of the programme. The number of participant student teachers from different subject groups varied ranging from 01 to 06. Variation in the number of student teachers from different subject groups was not of much significance as the purpose was not an inter-group comparison rather the total number of student

teachers in the sample was considered as a sample from the whole cohort of the PGCE. In terms of in-depth post-questionnaire interviews, 6 student teachers participated.

Overall, the main data collection methods included standardised open-ended and semi-structured interviews and semi-structured emailed questionnaires. Data included for analysis in this study were collected from fourteen university tutors and twenty-one student teachers during the PGCE year. Data were collected from university tutors through in-depth individual interviews and from student teachers using semi-structured emailed questionnaires and follow-up in-depth interviews. The information gathered was aimed at exploring the connotation and implementation of reflection in the PGCE under study from the university tutors' and student teachers' perspectives.

The connotation and implementation of reflection were explored using a framework revolving around the *what*, the *how* and the *why-and-so-what* of reflection. The *what* focused on the definition and meaning of reflection, the *how* mainly aimed at exploring the implementation of reflection in the programme and the factors that influence this implementation; and the *why-and-so-what* part was aimed to explore the aims and rational of the concept in the programme and possibilities for improvement in terms of its understanding and implementation. The following section 3.5 aims to describe in detail the process of data collection.

3.5 Data collection process

3.5.1 Preliminary document analysis and introductory observations

During the initial stages of the literature review, most of guidance and reading material both regarding the whole PGCE course and in terms of the individual subject areas was accessed. As already noted, the researcher read and reread this material for greater part of the first year of his studies and tried to locate the concept of 'reflection' in the various curricular and reading materials. This exercise provided useful background knowledge regarding the issue under research. A second exercise that provided an initial insight and firsthand experience into the working, process and classroom practices involved in the programme were early observations of the various university-centred PGCE sessions in the beginning, before the formal data collection phase. Further observations were made during the various stages of the data collection process for gaining familiarity with the field.

Two types of PGCE sessions were observed: The subject sessions of respective tutors with student teachers in the relevant subject rooms and the whole-cohort sessions, aimed at cross-curricular issues in which all students of the PGCE secondary sat together in a main lecture hall normally with one or a group (in two's or sometimes three's) of subject tutors. Overall, a total of approximately thirty six hours of various PGCE sessions were observed. This extended time spent in various sessions of the PGCE in its university component helped the researcher in having a first-hand view of the actual processes of training that student teachers went through in their university-based training. The exercise was also helpful in making the subsequent formal data

collection procedure more useful and informed as was it in line with the nature of a naturalistic inquiry.

3.6 Formal Data collection tools

The formal data collection process comprised of individual interviews with the university tutors and e-mailed questionnaires for and subsequent interviews with selected student teachers. The main data collection instruments in this case study were the following:

1. Interviews with university tutors.
2. Semi-structured e-mailed questionnaires for student teachers.
3. Follow up interviews with selected student teachers.

The aims and objectives of and modus-operandi involved in the data collection process are explained in the following sections.

3.6.1 Interview as a data collection method

Scott and Usher (1999: 108) argue that interview is one of the essential tools for qualitative educational inquiry as ‘the preconceptions, perceptions and beliefs of social actors in educational settings form an inescapably important part of the backdrop of social interaction’. Two major uses of case study are to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of others and the best way to do this is interview (Stake, 1995: 64). Interview is a powerful tool for data collection for the researcher in social sciences as it is flexible and open to multi-sensory channels. Spontaneity is also one of its strengths (Cohen et al., 2007). Tuckman (1972) suggests that interview is a very useful

instrument for researchers as it helps them in getting insight into person's knowledge, perceptions, values and beliefs. This view of interview as a research tool was particularly suited to this part of the present study as the fundamental aim was to have direct and deeper access to the thoughts, opinions, feelings, attitudes, and beliefs of the university tutors and student teachers involved in the PGCE programme regarding the issue being explored.

Interview as a research tool has many types. Patton (1980: 206) outlines four: informal conversational interviews; interview guide approaches; standardized open-ended interviews and closed quantitative interviews. The standardized open-ended interview, Patton suggests, is one in which 'the exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance. All interviewees are asked the same basic questions in the same order'. Its strength comes from the fact that all participants answer the same questions, making comparison convenient. Secondly, all participants get a chance to respond to all questions related to the topic which 'facilitates organisation and evaluation of data'. The weaknesses of this kind of interview include lack of contextual and circumstantial flexibility which may affect the naturalness of questions as a result of standardization of wording.

In order to counter this weakness a mixed approach between standardized open-ended interview (Patton, 1980) and semi-structured interview (Cohen et al., 2007) was adopted. This approach made the interviewing process more flexible in letting the researcher move back and forth between the structure of this standardized open-

ended interview and the more flexible form of semi-structured interview adhering to the principle of the preference of ends over means. This approach helped in two ways: firstly it provided uniformity in terms of the essential information that I needed from the interviewees to get various views on the same issue, and gave the flexibility to further probe, discuss and seek elaboration and clarification at various stages during the interview process. Thus despite some variation and divergences in terms of the interview process and in incoming information, the basic information required were sought in the same way from all participants. A copy of the interview schedule can be found in Appendix I.

3.6.2 Semi-structured e-mailed questionnaires

In line with the interpretivist paradigm and the qualitative nature of the research, the initial plan was to conduct semi-structured face-to-face interviews with student teachers as well. This, however, was not feasible mainly because of access issues. It was, therefore, decided to contact student teachers via e-mail. E-mail according to Kitto and Barnett (2007: 357) 'can provide an efficient mechanism for gathering data online'. This was found to be the case here in this study. This way of communication, according to Bull and Grogan (2010: 302), 'provide[s] flexible and versatile method for delivering semi-structured interview schedules'. The researcher found e-mail correspondence very useful as an alternative to face-to-face interviews because on the one hand it resolved the issue of access and on the other requisite information were obtained in a more convenient manner. The technique also provided participants the

flexibility to respond at a time and place of their convenience. This was helpful keeping in view the very busy schedule that student teachers had during their PGCE year.

Another advantage of this technique was that the researcher had access to the participants' e-mail addresses for further clarification of issues they identified in their responses to the first questionnaire in the beginning of the programme and for the second part of the questionnaire sent towards the end of the programme. A possible disadvantage of the process was the relatively less flexibility in comparison to face-to-face interviews. This was, however, countered to an extent by conducting semi-structured interviews towards the end of the data collection process with a selected sample of participants using purposive sampling for clarifications and/or substantiation of issues coming out of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were sent along with an introduction and information regarding the aims of the research and a consent form. Participants were asked to read the information and respond to the questionnaire in case they agreed to participate in the study. They were asked to return their responses along with the consent form through e-mail. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix II.

3.7 Formal Data collection process

3.7.1 Piloting the research instrument(s)

The piloting of the interview schedule took place in three different ways in July and August, 2010. First, an initial interview schedule was discussed with other senior PhD

colleagues and was refined in accordance with their advice. This was followed by additional guidance from the supervisor. The interview schedule was further refined in the light of this advice. Further, a relevant person with experience of teaching in the PGCE was sought and found outside the sample of participants, working in another university department who agreed to participate in a pilot interview. Notes were prepared during the interview and the follow-up discussion helped in fine-tuning the interview further. The interview was also tape-recorded, transcribed and issues coming out discussed with the participant. On the whole the piloting process helped in refining the overall structure and focus of the interview schedule. For piloting the semi-structured e-mailed questionnaire and follow-up interviews with student teachers similar steps were followed such as discussions with fellow PhD students, taking their advice and comments, and discussions a number of times with the supervisor and the consequent refinement of the instrument. As the questionnaire was sent to a few student teachers, slightly earlier than the rest, initial feedback from some of them also served as a useful piloting process. No amendments were needed, however.

3.7.2 Interviews with university tutors

Formal data collection process through individual interviews took place between 19th August and 20th October, 2009. During these three months fourteen university tutors were interviewed.

The interview process

A majority of the tutors preferred to be interviewed in their offices during break time. Interview date and time were confirmed with each participant. Each participant was contacted through e-mail one day before the interview. The researcher reached the interview site about five minutes before the interview time, equipped with a voice recorder, a writing pad and two pens, the interview schedule, and the consent form. In the beginning of the interview, the researcher would briefly talk about his personal background, the purpose of the research, the purpose of the interview and the relevance of the interviewee's views to the aims of the study. The interviewees were then requested to read and sign the consent form before the formal beginning of the interview. The researcher sought the interviewees' permission to record the interview and to use ideas and quotes from it in the research report (s). Interviews would formally begin with questions from the standardized open-ended interview schedule. At times the interview would turn into discussion which required the flexibility that came from the mix of standardized open-ended interview and semi-structured interview discussed in the previous section. The researcher noticed after listening to the first two interviews that sometimes his constant 'yes, yes, hmm, hmm, ok' mingled with interviewees' responses and created difficulty in understanding what they actually said. The interviewing style was, therefore, adjusted in the subsequent interviews, for instance, after asking a question, and during the interviewee's response, the researcher, instead of saying words such as 'yes', 'hmm', and 'ok' would just nod to convey his attention, engagement and interest in the response. This was quite helpful in dealing with issue.

Another important point that was noticed was that the researcher could not understand the answering style of one participant who had the habit of pausing for longer periods of time during answers to questions. This was initially taken for the end of his answer and the next question was asked. After a while, however, the participant asked if the researcher was in a hurry. The researcher realized the issue and adjusted his style to waiting for longer time for the interviewee to complete his replies. Interviews lasted variously in duration ranging from roughly 45 minutes to over 90 minutes depending on factors such as the level of discussion, the interest of the interviewees, the length of their responses and the time available with them. The standardized open-ended feature of the schedule, however, made it possible to explore key issues with all participants.

3.7.3 Data collection process from student teachers

Data were collected from student teachers in two main ways:

1. Semi-structured e-mailed questionnaires to student teachers.
2. Semi-structured follow up interviews with selected student teachers.

Initial data collection from student teachers took place over a period during October and November, 2009. The PGCE began in September, 2009 and hence it was in the initial phase of the programme that this data were collected. At this stage most of the student teachers had their initial observation sessions in the schools but had not yet begun their teaching practice. They, however, had been attending a number of

subject-related sessions and whole-cohort sessions in the university for about six weeks till then.

In mid March, 2010, when the student teachers had spent roughly about two-thirds of their PGCE year and were in the schools for the second term of their teaching practice, a second questionnaire (Appendix II) was sent through e-mails to those 29 of them who had responded to the first questionnaire. An important purpose of this questionnaire was to see if there was any change in their thinking regarding reflection, its connotation and implementation after they had been involved in practical teaching in the school for a greater part of the PGCE programme. Another purpose was to see what (if any) factors influenced their reflection in the practical teaching learning situation and in comparison to their understanding of the concept at the beginning stage of the PGCE programme, when they were introduced to it during university sessions, removed from the practical life in the school context. A total of 21 student teachers responded to this second questionnaire that became the final sample for analysis.

3.7.4 Semi-structured follow up interviews with selected student teachers

Having done a preliminary analysis of the data collected through the questionnaires, a selected group of those student teachers who offered particularly detailed and interesting responses to questionnaires were identified for in-depth interviews to further explore their perceptions. Another purpose of this exercise was

methodological triangulation. Ten participants were contacted for the purpose, seven agreed to be interviewed. In the end, however, five could be interviewed. Three of the students were from the PGCE English cohort, one from History and one from Science.

The interviews lasted between 50 minutes to 80 minutes. Prior to the interview date each participant was sent his/her responses to the previous two questionnaires for a pre-interview reading. At the start of the interview each participant was provided with a printed copy of his/her responses to the questionnaires with highlighted texts. During the interview explanations were sought regarding their perceptions expressed in responses to the earlier questionnaires besides further questions regarding the connotation and implementation of reflection in the programme.

3.8 Data analysis procedures

Data analysis, according to Basit (2003: 143), ‘...is the most difficult and most crucial aspect of qualitative research’. Making sense of qualitative data is a testing but creative, insightful and at times engrossingly interesting process. The processes involved in the data analysis are complex and researchers come up with various ways of doing this. Some of the works that helped in understanding the complexities involved in the process include Creswell (1998, 2005), Basit (2003, 2010), Cohen et al. (2007), Charmaz (2006, 2008), Merriam (1988), Miles and Huberman (1994), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Patton (1990, 2002), Rubin and Rubin (2005), Smith (2008), Ely et al. (1991) and Braun and Clarke (2006). Though the works listed here cite different

sources, and vary in their context and structure regarding the analysis processes, a common thread seems to run through them. All of these works point to the lengthy, creative, evolutionary, and idiosyncratic nature of the qualitative data analysis in which the researcher plays a major role during all stages of the analysis, interpretation, and contextualisation of the data. As Ely (1991: 143) puts it, 'Whatever your approach to analysis, it seems fair to say that you, the researcher, are in charge of making meaning, of making sense of your data...all qualitative data analysis is idiosyncratic'. Qualitative data analysis is iterative, evolving and nonlinear process. It is a process of getting an increasingly deeper and finer understanding of the issue under research in the light of the evidence coming in the form of the sources of data collected during the various phases and through various means in the research project.

The main procedures for data analysis in this study were guided by the works of Miles and Huberman (1994), Ely (1991) and Braun and Clarke (2006). Miles and Huberman (1994: 10-11) suggest three main data analysis procedures

1. Data reduction
2. Data display
3. Conclusion drawing and verification

Braun and Clarke (2006: 87) come up with the following 'thematic analysis' procedures:

1. Familiarizing yourself with your data
2. Generating initial codes

3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Data Reduction according to Miles and Huberman (1994: 10-11) refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming data present in written-up field notes or transcriptions. These procedures were followed to varying degrees in bringing order and making sense of the data collected in various phases of the research process. This reduction process continued throughout the research process including anticipatory reduction that Miles and Huberman (1994: 10) suggest continues, 'as the researcher decides (often without full awareness) which conceptual framework; which cases, which research questions, and which data collection approaches to choose'. This is also a process of preliminary analysis as it requires the researcher to think deeply about the relevance of data and information that has been collected, to make sense of it and to look at them in the light of research questions and the purpose of the inquiry. During this reduction some of the processes in the 'thematic analysis' as devised by Braun and Clarke (2006: 87) such as familiarisation with data, data transcription, 'reading and re-reading the data and noting down initial ideas' were also invoked. These processes are explained below.

3.8.1 Familiarisation and transcription

For initial familiarisation with the data each interview was listened to at least twice before beginning the process of formal transcription. In the beginning the process of transcription felt cumbersome as the interviewees, being mostly native English speakers, spoke too fast for the researcher's expectations. An interview lasting about forty-five minutes to one hour on average took between six to seven hours of transcription. Each interview was transcribed verbatim before listening to the tape again at least two times while reading the transcript and making corrections for missed words or words that were originally transcribed and were found incorrect, sentences that were left, and sentence structures that were not transcribed correctly the first time. This process of refinement took considerable time. On average every single interview took about eight hours for a satisfactorily accurate transcription. Each transcribed interview was then sent to the relevant participant for participant validation (Elliot, 1991) with a request to him/her to read and check if the interview has been transcribed correctly and nothing that s/he would want to be conveyed has been left out. This was followed by a read and re-read exercise for every transcript again, noting down initial ideas (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.8.2 Data reduction, display and categorisation

Data reduction according to Miles and Huberman (1994: 10-11) 'refers to the process of selection, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming that data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions'. Although Miles and Huberman (1994) extend the focus of data display to the whole process of research, this is particularly

essential at the formal analysis stage of the qualitative data. The transformation of data comprises their classification and categorization. Initial categorisation of data was done on the basis of the specific questions that were asked from participants. The format of the standardized open-ended interview helped in this process of initial categorisation. This categorisation of the main concepts was done for each interview. Each category was then analysed for significant themes keeping in view the research questions while also looking for in-vivo themes i.e. themes that emerged out of responses without being specifically sought from participants. This was similar to the within-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989). The two processes of 'searching of initial codes' (interesting features in the data in terms of words, sentences, and paragraphs) and 'searching for themes' (patterns within data) Braun and Clarke (2006) were combined.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994: 65), 'Codes are efficient data-labelling and data retrieval devices. They empower and speed up analysis'. Basit (2003: 145) refers to Miles and Huberman (1994) who according to her suggest two methods of creating codes: the first one is the grounded approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) when the researcher does not try to pre-code any data. The second approach that is preferred by Miles and Huberman (1994: 58) is to create a 'start list of codes prior to fieldwork. That list comes from conceptual frame work, list of research questions, hypotheses, problem areas, and/or key variables that the researcher brings to the study'. In this initial within-case analysis of the interview transcripts this latter approach was used. Selected chunks of data were searched keeping in view variously the conceptual

framework of the research, the main research questions, and the variables in terms of the interview questions that represented various themes in the research and also emerging ideas that participants came up with and that they were not overtly asked about during interviews.

The same basic processes of familiarisation, reading, re-reading, initial coding and reduction of data were repeated with all the fourteen interviews in terms of within-case analysis before moving to cross-case analysis for further reduction of the data, for comparison and for searching for common themes/concepts across the transcripts. Data reduction essentially involved the process of 'display' which Miles and Huberman (1994: 11) define as 'an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing'. This according to them includes extended texts and 'many types of matrices, graphs, charts, and networks' (ibid.). Similar procedures of analysis including data reduction, and display were used in this study. Extended texts of data were reduced into manageable chunks of relevant data using MS Word functions such as 'review' and textboxes for selection of text, and 'font colours' for colouring and highlighting purposes, for displaying the data selected and for organising themes and categories (See Appendices V, VI, VII for an illustration)

3.8.3 Cross case analysis

The initial process of familiarisation, reading and re-reading and the consequent reduction of data during the within-case analysis helped in two ways: it provided

deeper insight into the meaning of data collected and its relevance to the research questions on the one hand and on the other hand it made cross-case analysis and comparison relatively easier. In this research the focus was both on the individual participant's unique understanding and interpretation of the issues under investigation and on the overall understanding and interpretation that the whole cohort of participants had of the issue. That is why cross-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989), which was aimed at this cumulative understanding of the issue, was of particular interest in this study. Cross-case analysis looks '...beyond immediate impression and see[ing] evidence through multiples lenses' Eisenhardt (1989: 533). This process also included looking for similarities and differences in themes coming out of responses placed under relevant categories. Similar procedures were followed for analyzing data collected from student teachers through questionnaires and interviews with the exception that data collected through questionnaires did not have to be transcribed.

3.9 Validity and reliability of the method

3.9.1 Validity

According to Cohen et al. (2007) validity and reliability are important issues for any research to be regarded as trustworthy. Likewise, Basit (2010) emphasizes the importance of validity in research suggesting an invalid research as worthless. In qualitative research the issue of validity 'might be addressed through honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher' Cohen et al.(2007: 133). Depth and richness were sought in a number of ways such as

data/respondent and methodological triangulation as explained in earlier sections of this chapter. The objectivity, mentioned in the above quote from Cohen et al (2007), is not being taken in its positivistic meaning where the researcher 'brackets out' his/her views/position at the data collection and analysis stages. Rather objectivity here mainly refers to the attempt on the part of the researcher to be open – in a non-judgemental way - to ideas coming from the research participants and to report them with honesty and contextual detail. This researcher, having adopted an interpretivist position, therefore, acknowledges that there nevertheless remains some element of subjectivity in the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation. However, triangulation of data sources and methods on the one hand, and a thorough analysis of the data in the light of an in-depth literature review on the other, together contribute to an authentic presentation of the participants' perceptions regarding the issue being explored. Further, writers such as Mishler (1990) and Maxwell (1992) (cited in Cohen et al., 2007: 134-135) suggest that in an interpretive stance, *understanding*, rather than validity, usually is emphasised.

This *understanding* comprises aspects such as 'factual accuracy of account', ability of the researcher to catch the real meaning of data gathered, the extent to which research explains the phenomenon, and generalisability in terms of usefulness for understanding similar situations or transferability. This researcher, therefore, made efforts to enhance this *understanding* by exploring the issue in detail through methodological and data source triangulation as described above and through participant validation. To achieve the latter, transcripts were sent to participants

before their further analysis and inclusion in the study. In a few cases, participants made slight changes to transcripts. These included filling in missing words, restructuring certain sentences, deleting a few sentences here and there and adding other. However, on the whole this process did not bring any substantial change in the content of the transcripts.

In the questionnaire responses of the student teachers, an inherent validity-enhancing mechanism was that they responded to questionnaires on two occasions: one in the beginning of the PGCE and then again towards the end. Also there was less chance of 'listening' and transcription mistakes in this case as these questionnaires were sent to them in an electronic form as MS Word document and they typed their responses in textboxes given below each question. Overall, triangulation both in terms of methods of data collection and data sources is deemed to have brought greater *understanding* on the part of researcher and hence validity to the research process.

3.9.2 Reliability

According to Basit (2010: 69), 'Reliability denotes that the research process can be replicated at another time on similar participants in a similar context with the same results'. This resonates with a requisite feature of scientific researches in the positivistic tradition where generalisability is one of the most important features of the research process. Reliability and validity in positivistic, quantitative approaches to research have different connotations than they have in qualitative research. For

instance, in quantitative approaches to research, reliability is usually an outcome of tight structure and uniformity in the research process, data collection, analysis instruments and quantitatively oriented sampling. These are not generally features that belong to qualitative research. Hence reliability in qualitative research does not carry the same meaning as it does in the case of quantitative, positivistically oriented research. Instead, reliability in qualitative research according to Basit (2010: 70) depends on 'trustworthiness, honesty [...] comprehensiveness, detail, and depth of response, and significance of the research to the participants'. Detailed description, honest reporting, comprehensive contextual organization and focus on the particular are features that add to reliability associated with qualitative research. In this study efforts have been made to include these features. Thick description and detailed reporting regarding the overall background of the research setting and a thorough representation of the participants' views regarding the issue have been included with an aim to present a comprehensive, vivid and honest picture of the issue in its context.

Reliability is also interpreted in terms of the generalisability of the research process and outcomes of large scale quantitative researches where enumeration of frequencies and quantification is usually accounted for. This is, generally, not the case with small-scale case studies which, as is suggested by Stake (1995) and Thomas (2011), are not usually conducted with an aim to generalise to a population of cases. However, writers such as Yin (2004) and Stake (1995) have referred to terms such as 'analytic generalisation' where the researcher aims to 'expand and generalize theories...[on the basis of possible replication rather than] to enumerate frequencies'

(Yin, 2004: 10); and 'naturalistic generalization' (Stake, 1995: 85-86). In 'naturalistic generalisation' the process of generalising is mainly left to the reader of the report who is expected to generalise from the insights and details provided by the researcher. The researcher's job is to assist the reader in the process by providing a detailed and honest contextual account of the case being studied and of the processes involved in the collection, analysis and reporting of data gathered, in order that the reader may make appropriate comparisons with their own or the contexts. Such contextual, procedural and analytical detail has been a feature of the present study, with an aim to assist the reader to consider the generalisability of the research process and findings to similar phenomenon/cases.

3.10 Ethical considerations

In research in the field of social sciences ethical issues related to the process of data collection, interpretation and dissemination may arise due to a number of factors including the nature, aims and the context of the research project, the procedures and methods adopted for data collection, the nature of the data sources and 'what is to be done with the data' (Cohen et al., 2007: 51). Ethical considerations include guarding dignity and safety of the participants during and after the research process 'while still being able to undertake quality research' (Basit, 2010: 56). This difficult balance between the two important principles of a just and *ethical* action (Pring, 2004: 142-145) sometimes translates into a dilemma for the social researcher: 'respect for dignity and privacy of research participants on the one hand, and the pursuit of truth and the right of the society to know on the other' (Basit, 2010: 56). In this study this dilemma

in terms of the two important principles of an 'ethical' and 'just' research was tackled through the processes of anonymity and confidentiality. The principle followed was the pursuit of truth with the measures taken to keep the individual participants anonymous in the research report.

Secondly, the issue being explored in this inquiry was not particularly of a sensitive nature, and hence the participants did not show any concern about coming up openly with their views. Both these factors had a positive impact on the quality of data collected. Cohen et al. (2007: 382) identify three main areas of ethical issues in interview research: informed consent, confidentiality, and the consequences of the interviews. Informed consent is the process of making an agreement with the participants regarding their involvement in the research process. The participants take part in the research process 'after they have been fully informed of the facts pertaining to the research' Basit (2010: 60). Informed consent of the participants was sought in two ways. In the case of university tutors, an introductory e-mail was sent with a personal introduction and information about the research topic, the kind of information that was needed from them, the way it was needed and the possible duration of time needed for the interview. The participants were requested to choose a time, date and avenue of their convenience for the interview to take place in case they agreed to take part in the research process. All university tutors contacted agreed to take part in the research. This universal agreement on the part of all the fourteen participants seems to indicate two important points: firstly, that the research topic seems to have been found quite interesting. This was particularly the case because

most of these participants did not know the researcher personally and this initial e-mail was the first correspondence with them and, secondly, that these participants did not have any reservation in sharing their perceptions regarding the issue. Although at the time of interview they were asked to read and sign a consent form ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, none of them showed any emphasis or concern on their part about these issues. However, in keeping with recommended ethical research principles care was taken to tackle issues of anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity was established by using code names such as University Tutor1 (UT1), University Tutor 2 (UT2) and so on instead of using the participants' real names. Besides, data once acquired was kept in safe files in a personal computer and in printed form in safe folders under lock and key. Likewise, student teachers' names were replaced with codes such as Student teacher1 (ST1), Student teacher2 (ST2) and so on. The numbering here is arbitrary and doesn't represent any particular characteristics, hierarchy or order.

Student teachers' consents were sought by initially going into their subject sessions and requesting for participation in the research. After attaining their e-mail addresses in this way, questionnaires with an attached consent form were sent to them through e-mails ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Similar processes adopted for obtaining the consent of university tutors were followed for interviews with the student teachers. Thus, every possible effort was made to follow the three principles of informed consent, confidentiality and consequences in line with the ethical requirements of the research process.

3.11 The conceptual framework

Leshem and Trafford (2007: 99), drawing on Miles and Huberman, 1984; Weaver-Hart, 1988; Berger and Patchener, 1988; Rudestam & Newton, 1992; Bryman, 1988; Blaxter et al. 1996; Glatthorn, 1998; and Punch, 2000, argue that a conceptual framework is something that gives 'coherence to the research act through providing traceable connections between theoretical perspectives, research strategy and design, fieldwork and the conceptual significance of the evidence'. According to Miles and Huberman (1984: 33), a conceptual framework is 'the current version of the researcher's map of territory being investigated' (Cited in Leshem and Trafford, 2007: 95). Leshem and Trafford (ibid.) argue that an implication of this is that the conceptual framework of a research study might evolve as the study progresses. Conceptual framework thus interpreted seems to serve as the means for conducting research in an organised but flexible manner and hence was of particular relevance to this study.

A supportive argument for this kind of evolving, flexible conceptual framework comes from (Weaver-Hart, 1988: 11) who argues that conceptual frameworks should be considered as 'tools for researchers to use rather than totems for them to worship' (Cited in Leshem and Trafford, 2007: 96). Keeping in view the above arguments and the evolving, exploratory nature of this present study, the conceptual framework revolved around the *what*, the *how* and the *why-and-so-what* of the issue explored in this study. The *what* represented the main research question, the *how* corresponded to the methodology being employed to explore the issue and the *why-and-so-what* signified the rationale and significance of the study. Due to the evolutionary,

exploratory nature of the study, all the three aspects of this framework evolved variously during the research process. The following, figure 3.2, is a diagrammatic representation of the conceptual framework being followed during this research.

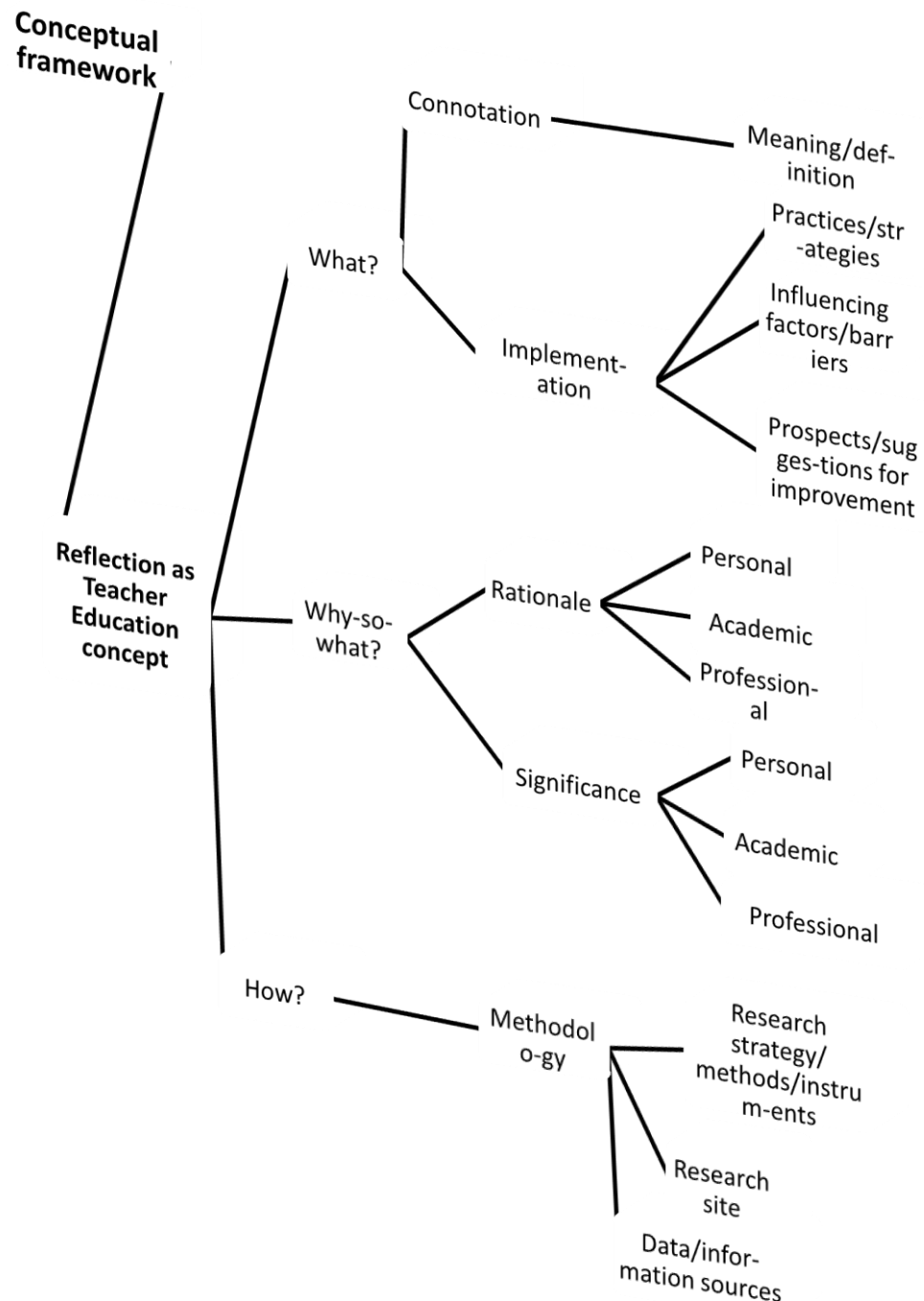


Figure: 3.2 Diagrammatic representation of the conceptual framework

Leshem and Trafford (2007: 99) further argue that conceptual frameworks might emerge from researchers' appreciation of reading, personal experience and reflection upon theoretical positions towards the phenomena to be investigated. This is what happened in this study. The framework originated in the researcher's personal perceptions of a teacher and the nature and structure of teacher education, which were obviously shaped by his experiences as a student at various levels, then as a teacher and lately as a teacher educator. The framework further evolved with the researcher's increasing involvement with related literature during the formative and later stages of this study and with an increasing understanding of the complexities involved in the topic that he wanted to comprehend and explore. For instance during the initial stages of this study, the researcher was interested in exploring the concept of a 'thinking' teacher (Nickerson, 1988; Tishman et al., 1993; Al-Qahtani, 1995) and the prospects of an educational process that helps in the development of such a teacher. Later on with his introduction during literature review to 'reflection' as an educational concept and his discovery of the complexities involved in it, the research framework evolved into something that he did not intend to be exploring in the beginning. The initial conceptual framework shown above was thus supplemented by further reading.

On the whole, this study was guided by the various steps/stages in the cyclical 'doctoral research process' as identified by Leshem and Trafford (2007: 102) according to which the research process begins with 'gap in knowledge' and the end is 'contribution to knowledge'. According to this model research begins with a 'research issue', translates into 'research statements', followed by 'research questions'. This

culminates into a 'conceptual framework' followed by 'research design' and 'field work' and then into 'conclusions' on a hierarchical level: 'factual', 'interpretive' and 'conceptual'. The process is reiterative. These various stages have been very much part of this current research study.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM UNIVERSITY TUTORS

The teaching profession will begin to lose its cutting edge if systematically deprived of opportunities for critical reflection, self-evaluation and the extension of perspectives beyond the confines of one classroom.~ Swanwick and Paynter (1993: 7)

This chapter aims at a presentation and analysis of the main findings from the data collected from university tutors through interviews. The data so obtained have been arranged into three main themes representing the *what*, the *how*, and the *why-and-so-what* of reflection. The *what* theme includes issues such as the meaning, the subject-matter and the process of reflection, and the characteristics of reflective practitioners. The *how* refers to the practices and strategies associated with reflection, factors influencing the process of implementation of reflection including hindrances and barriers and the processes of its assessment; the *why-and-so-what* of reflection represents the relevance and importance of reflection in the programme and the desired changes and possible improvement in the implementation of the concept. These supra-themes have been sub-divided into several sub-themes. Themes have been derived from the research questions and sub-questions of the study and correspond to a combination of issues directly related to the research questions and those that emerged as a result of an inductive search for relevant concepts in the data obtained through the various sources employed in the study (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Basit, 2003; Eisenhardt, 1989; Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Themes identified are elaborated with relevant quotes from the data obtained from interviews. Pseudonyms are used to keep the anonymity of the participants. These pseudonyms are as follows:

University Tutor 1 (UT1), University Tutors 2 (UT2) and so on till University Tutor 14 (UT14).

4.1 The *what* of reflection

4.1.1 The meaning and subject-matter of reflection

Reflection was defined mainly in two ways by the university tutors. Primarily, it was defined in terms of ‘thinking about’ things (referred to in this study as *monologic* reflection). This is what could be termed as a more individual, inward looking and theoretical (abstract) view of reflection. A second and relatively less prevalent view was its definition as a systematic and active *process* of individual and/or collaborative inquiry (Dewey, 1933; Jay and Johnson, 2002) rather than ‘thinking about things’. This represented the view of reflection as a more experiential and practical rather than theoretical process. This is referred to in this study as *dialogic* reflection which resembles (but is not the same) what Hatton and Smith (1995: 45) also call dialogic reflection that aims at looking for ‘competing claims and viewpoints and then exploring alternative solutions’. Monologic reflection varied in its scope, ranging from thinking on the technical and practical levels (Van Manen, 1977; Hatton and Smith, 1995), encompassing issues of immediate relevance to teachers such as classroom management, lesson planning, delivery and assessment; and personalistic reflection

(Valli, 1997) such as thinking about the self and personal experiences, and improvement of the teaching skills. On a broader level monologic reflection included thinking about issues such as the relevance or otherwise of the subject-matter, school policies; factors outside the classroom impacting students' behaviour, the purpose of education and the teaching profession, and the philosophy behind the educational process.

Monologic reflection

Technical/practical, routine, classroom, teaching-learning issues

Reflection on the technical level was associated with thinking about issues of practical and immediate concern to the student teachers. These included matters such as effective teaching in classroom, classroom management, behavioural issues and discipline, preparation and delivery of lesson plans, lesson evaluations and developing effective relationships with students and colleagues.

I think it means being able to look at your own performance and your own classroom style and ask yourself how you can do better, how can you improve and looking back at what you have done and at the work that students have completed in front of you. And what worked and what did not work and how to improve it in future ~UT2

When this tutor was asked about the issues that student teachers are trained to reflect on during the PGCE, she replied:

I think we train them to reflect on [issues such as] preparing the lessons, delivering in the classroom, managing behaviour, working in a whole school context, [and] working with their colleagues. I think the whole process is imbued with reflection really~ UT2

Both quotes reflect the tutor's emphasis on the technical, skill-oriented focus of student teachers' reflection. This above seems to reflect a focus of reflection on the technical and to an extent the practical levels (Van Manen, 1977) where the technical considers the effectiveness of means to get to ends and the practical considers the value of those ends, for instance, technical in the above would be the application of means (curriculum material, teaching methods) to achieve the end (progress) and practical would be seeing the nature and end of that progress. Focus on issues of technical and practical importance to the PGCE students as an aim of reflection was mentioned by all university tutors. This seems to be a pragmatic view as that is perhaps the elementary aim of initial teacher education such as the PGCE. This pragmatism is also visible in the fact that most tutors began with but went beyond defining reflection in terms of its focus on technical and practical issues. This is consonant with literature regarding reflection where technical expertise has been discussed as a consistent theme as a very important aim (Cruickshank, 1981; Killen, 1989; Valli, 1997; Jay and Johnson, 2002). However, some researchers caution against the overemphasis of reflection on the technical level and warn that if it stays at that level then that is not reflective teaching (Zeichner, 1987; Zeichner and Liston, 1996, Valli, 1997). Valli (1997: 70), for instance, considers a focus on the 'outward forms of

teaching methods...' as technical training and contrasts it with reflective teacher education which prepares teachers to reflect on issues ranging from curricular, instructional and managerial to those concerning the social, political and moral dimensions of the process of education.

Bigger issues/ 'critical' aspects of reflection

Although some tutors restricted the scope of reflection to technical issues, most extended it to broader, beyond-the-classroom issues. The issues that were identified as the possible subject-matter of reflection included 'wider professional expectations', the overall social and moral development of the students, and the meaning, aims and the ultimate purpose of education.

Quite a lot of beginning teachers think of themselves as subject teachers rather than as teachers of children, teaching a subject.... We expect them to have an influence on the children's social development, moral development, cultural development and it's that broader understanding of them as part of the community within their school and the wider community where their school is set~ UT1

Similarly:

I think they need to reflect on some of the big questions, what is education for? Um, what should the role of the teacher and the students be within the classroom...one of the things that I do with the students very earlier on, on my course with the ... students that I have

... is to make it very clear, that one of the things that I want them to develop is their own educational philosophy and ... that creating an educational philosophy is not something that only professors can do~

UT8

This coincides with the higher levels of reflection as identified by authors such as Van Manen (1977), Hatton and Smith (1995) and Valli (1997). This theme is explored further in Chapter 6.

General meaning/ reflection as thinking about ‘everything’

This theme represented what Zeichner and Liston (1996) identify as the generic reflection. Also this interpretation of the concept reflects what Valli (1997: 75) calls ‘deliberative reflection’ or reflection that covers, ‘whole range of teaching concerns, including students, the curriculum, instructional strategies’ and classroom management. According to this understanding reflection is considered as some kind of thinking about the teaching learning situation without any specific focus or direction in terms of its subject-matter. Taking reflection in its general meaning as a process of ‘reflecting on everything’ is discernible in the following responses:

Oh! Everything! (Laughs). I like it most when they can reflect on their own assumptions and expectations and to analyse whether they need to change them or to be aware about their preconceptions about people that they have changed~ UT9

And:

*I am trying to find anything that they should or could not reflect
...And...because I cannot think of any such thing, I would say
everything~ UT7*

This could be interpreted on the one hand as a common-sense; all-encompassing view of reflection or reflection as a 'slogan' (Zeichner and Liston, 1996) and on the other it could be due to the absence of a clear reflective framework as far as the particular understanding of some tutors is concerned. Again, this is explored further in Chapter 6.

The evolution and variability of reflection

The above discussion does not mean, however, that there was any rigid hierarchy or classification in the participants' conceptualisations regarding the subject-matter of reflection. A number of them described the evolutionary nature of reflection. According to this view the subject-matter of reflection evolves with time and depends on the level of understanding of different student teachers who might be at different stages of intellectual and professional development. Secondly, the subject-matter of reflection might vary according to the requirement of the particular teaching learning situation.

*I think it's different for different people and different at different
times. So...You know if they have a poor lesson where the children are
behaving badly then they will reflect on that more than whether they
produced a good lesson with good subject knowledge. So I think it's*

different you know in different times the more competent they become they reflect on different things. So it changes~ UT2

This seems to have important implications for effective inculcation of reflection for student teachers who are at various stages of their professional development. For instance it could be deduced from the above that the teaching and classroom experiences and the educational background of individual student teachers need to be taken into consideration while exposing them to the concept. Further it seems to indicate that the type and scope of reflection itself is shaped and influenced by individual abilities and practical classroom requirements on the part of the student teachers. Other issues that were mentioned variously by tutors as the subject-matter of reflection included the nature and socio-cultural development of students, their needs, potentials and individuality, new role as teachers, and also issues related to their personal life, assumptions and expectations as professionals and as individuals. Overall, thus a wide variety of issues, ranging from the immediate practical relevance to the broader issues in terms of educational aims and objectives and the social and moral aspects of life, was identified as possible subject-matter for reflection.

Dialogic reflection

In its dialogic sense reflection was defined in ways such as a methodical examination of processes, assumptions and finding evidence leading to interpretation and re-interpretation of educational phenomenon:

Reflection in the context of teacher education means... the capacity to look backwards, examine evidence and to interpret meaning, to find meanings in relation to situations or ideas or whatever. ~UT4

In this sense it was also defined as a process of metacognition, deconstruction and systematic inquiry along the lines of action research. Also this included scaffolding and structuring learning experiences for students:

I think reflection itself is a cyclic process of doing something, whatever it might be and then actually having the meta-cognitive skills to deconstruct what it is you have done or even deconstruct an issue...So yes they are reflecting if you like academically and theoretically but they are also reflecting experientially. So it might be about a paper, it might be about a particular issue, it might be looking at...um, a recording of an observation... But I think once they are out into school, its partly about that but its more about sort of trying things, doing things and having that metacognitive capability to deconstruct what they have done.~ UT8

The above thus associates reflection in its more systematic sense on the one hand with thinking on a more theoretical level about academic issues and on the other extending that theoretical thinking into practical theorising (McIntyre, 1993) where reflection comes out as a result of experimentation and exploration and testing of educational

concepts during practical teaching. As a systematic process of exploration reflection was also associated with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle and learning through analyses of critical incidents. Besides, quite a few considered it difficult to clearly define reflection because of its multiple conceptualisations, its contested nature and hence the difficulty to say what it means and how it is enacted precisely.

4.1.2 Characteristics of a reflective teacher/practitioner

Themes identified under this category describe characteristics of reflective practitioners identified by participants. The main characteristics identified included critical thinking, questioning, openness to ideas and dialogue, enthusiasm about learning and improvement, and the ability to analyse, assess, evaluate and make decisions. Most of these are qualities identified by a number of researchers (e.g. Boud et al., 1985; Goodman, 1989; Atkins & Murphy, 1993; Moon, 1999; Burns & Bulman 2000; Pollard et al., 2008). Many of the characteristics identified were in the realm of rather intangible dispositions such as open-mindedness, enthusiasm, criticality, interest, bravery, metacognition, and flexibility. However, some tutors also mentioned more practical skills and knowledge as reflective characteristics such as the ability to take notes during teaching, having knowledge about students, having action plans and setting targets.

Criticality

Criticality/thinking critically about issues was one recurrent trait identified by some of the participants as a characteristic of the reflective practitioner. This was explained as the ability for self-questioning, identifying strengths and weaknesses, weighing different accounts of things, the ability to step-back and analyse things, self-critique and openness to critique.

I think they are thinking critically and they are able to sort of slightly distance themselves and look back at themselves and see how they did things and evaluate them and they can apply these sorts of intellectual skills to their own personal performance. So it's their level of critical-awareness and evaluative skills that they apply then to their own performance. UT2

Asked to elaborate 'critical thinking', this participant replied:

Well they should be able to indentify strengths and weaknesses and ... to weigh up different accounts of things you know very much in the style of you wouldn't do in a piece of academic work but you do in a sort of personal way. So you use those skills but you personalise them.

Criticality was also associated by some participants with challenging one's persona and core identity and with the ability to listen to negative comments and setbacks during professional development while keeping an open mind to learn from that and adjust thinking and practices. This was also regarded as 'reflexivity' (Moore and Ash, 1998; Moore, 2004) and the ability to accept challenges and try things with which one might

not be comfortable. One participant argued that being reflective is itself a quality at the core of which lies critical thinking.

Bravery/openness to new idea/willingness to take risks

Bravery was another typical characteristic associated with reflective practitioners. This was explained in terms of the ability to be open to and to try new ideas, to not be afraid of taking chances and of possible failures and instead to consider this as likely sources of learning:

... to want to be the best they can be as teachers, to be open to new ideas, to try things out, to accept sometimes things will go wrong and they will fail, not worry about things failing but to understand that actually that's a good way of learning to have a go at things and while they are engaging with any of these innovative practices, trialling perhaps teaching styles and approaches thinking about different ways of assessing students, and implementing those in their teaching~ UT1

A very similar idea is presented in this quote from UT3 which also associates this bravery with objective self-evaluation and the readiness to acknowledge weaknesses and face criticism and have the courage to impartially analyse them:

The ability to be self-critical, the ability to see the difference between their professional persona and themselves so that if they get negative feedback they don't feel, you know to challenge your core identity, you think about that aspect of your professional identity. To be willing

to take risks and to try things that might not feel comfortable as an experiment to see what other techniques you might use.

This coincides with what Ross (1989) terms as being open to the possibility of error and to possible errors along the way of doing things innovatively. Also it reflects an awareness of, and support of one important reflective characteristic, open-mindedness, as suggested by Dewey (1933).

Interestingly another participant who identified 'bravery' as a reflective characteristic also cautioned about possible 'moral connotations' of the term:

... yeah critical thinking in which he or she becomes the subject of scrutiny and so I guess some sort of bravery although this has some, it has a clear moral connotations and I am not sure whether, I would agree with myself. I hesitate putting moral connotations on that ... because that implies that there is some specific morality that we pursue in teaching and I am not sure about that. I think that I would argue more for kind of Kantian approach in which we just need rationality rather than imposed morality, a morality coming from rationality and critical thinking rather than from a specific moral point of view~ UT7

The participant seems to be wary about the possible moral connotation of bravery in declaring it as a reflective characteristic and instead suggest for the kind of 'bravery'

that comes in the form of rational and objective thinking rather than a subjective, psychological or moral commitment. This seems to chime well with the general connotation of reflection which has been primarily associated with rational analysis rather than emotional engagement with ideas and actions. Another participant associated this bravery with taking a stand against the status-quo arguing that in the absence of this quality student teachers might not be able to experiment and take risks in their initial teaching days for fear of failure:

The second aspect is that they actually have to be brave. What I mean by that is that it's a very, very difficult thing that we ask them to do. After six weeks of training we throw them into the classroom and say there you are, get on with it. And the temptation I think especially in the early days is to play it safe~ UT13

This 'playing safe' was explained as the tendency to use as a model the way their teachers did during their school life. This, it was argued, is likely to culminate in the form of status-quo, something that essentially goes against the essence of reflection which aims at developing a more independent and critical look among the practitioners. Overall the basis and aims of the bravery seems to be rationality and pragmatism for achieving the goals of effective educational process rather than any moral commitment or inspiration.

Interest, enthusiasm and commitment

Enthusiasm for the profession, emotional involvement in the process of teaching and learning and deep interest were also identified as essential characteristics in order to be a reflective practitioner:

I think some of the characteristics that we talk about would be about pre-dispositions of the person who is doing it, it's about their willingness to take, umm to learn, to want to be the best they can be as teachers...And perhaps, you know, not to throw all that work and leave it behind but perhaps [to say] that was the wrong class or I forgot to do this or I really need to improve that and then it might work. So there is all of that, all the time, that enthusiasm~ UT1

Another participant also pointed out the value of enthusiasm and interest in issues that will lead to reflective involvement; however, he cautioned against reacting to situations in an emotional way and instead suggested a calm and rational approach to issues in the teaching learning situation:

I think you need, at a meta-cognitive level, you need to be able to ...umm...be able to approach reflection in a calm kind of way~ UT8

This, nonetheless, according to this participant did not mean one could behave in a completely unemotional way because that would be against human nature. Thus, overall, there seems to be an emphasis on the development of balance between emotional involvement and rational analysis of the process of teaching.

One participant associated the idea of a reflective teacher with that of a 'good teacher', someone with characteristics such as willingness to communicate, to explain things, fairness, knowledge about students, a sense of justice and an insight into students' issues and problems. This participant also suggested that his research downplayed the emphasis on the teacher's knowledge in the methodology of teaching and instead emphasised the role of personal involvement, interest and enthusiasm of the teacher in the teaching process and the students' needs. To support his argument he gave an example of a teacher who:

... was extremely old-fashioned and we asked about this teacher, well does this teacher ever use computers or the internet and they [the students] looked to one another and said well he doesn't need to, he explains everything and we don't have any problem and he is very good and he tells us what we are going to learn and he works until we learn it and when we understand it we move on to something else. And they may sound very simple but the actual method to them mattered less than the kind of ways in which they interacted~ UT14

This seems to be in line with what Moore (2004: 4-5) identifies as 'charismatic and caring subjects' where the 'goodness' of the teacher has 'less to do with education and training and more...with the inherent or intrinsic qualities of character...' such as a 'caring' attitude towards students and having an enthusiasm that is aimed at 'making a difference' to their lives.

Integration of wider reading and practice

Two participants identified the ability to incorporate new knowledge and to have wider reading as characteristics of reflective practitioners:

I think, people who are very good at reflection are also people who are willing to sit down and read a little bit and begin and always try to retain that sort of wider perspective rather than becoming very narrow-visioned in terms of what they are doing in the classroom~

UT8

Similarly:

I want them to be able to incorporate knowledge they have done, readings they have done, reading papers and so on, reading research, and keeping up-to-date with new research and so on, so that they are able to synthesise a lot of different things in order to then decide on what they are teaching and how they are going to teach that~ UT10

The implication in this is that wider reading would enhance the abilities of student teachers to analyse things and to synthesise which will help them in becoming good decision makers. This coincides with requirements for the higher level of reflection identified by researchers such as Van Manen (1977), Zeichner (1994) and Zeichner and Liston (1996) and in that sense reflects the tutors' insight regarding the broader understanding and role of reflection on the one hand and on another their view that to develop such broader vision student teachers need to have wider theoretical knowledge which is likely to come through extensive reading.

Obscurity of the characteristics

A number of participants pointed out that it is difficult to identify reflective characteristics as it is 'an internal thing/ cannot be articulated'. Others considered it a 'tricky' question to answer.

Oh! That's difficult because they are all different. Um some are very detailed in their thinking and some think reflectively but hardly use words. It's that silent thing that goes on in their heads ~ UT9

One participant pointed out the difficulty in identifying the characteristics of reflective practitioners because reflection has different levels and hence practitioners at different levels of reflection would have different characteristics:

I think critical thinking is important.... I think what we are talking about is different layers of reflection so on the very minimum what I would be looking for is a capacity to think about my practice, to think in a technical way about what I am doing and why I am doing it, but a deeper level of reflection that I would expect to see among some student teachers and certainly in the training year would be where they are thinking about the wider issues, where they are contextualising what they are doing and thinking about what does this mean in the broader sense.~ UT4

Some of the other characteristics mentioned by participants included asking questions, involving in dialogue with others, flexibility, self confidence, interest in learning, the ability to listen and the ability to set targets and to plan. Overall, the characteristics identified were predominantly dispositional; however, a minority view also represented technical skills such as note-taking and questioning during teaching:

I think a reflective teacher makes notes of lessons that he's done - or she. So they make notes and they ask themselves certain questions about those lessons. As I said before what went well, what could be changed...? And particularly what is important is that they have an action plan. ~ UT5

This coincides with the more technically-oriented understanding of reflection and reflective practitioners where the aim of reflection is technical efficiency, classroom management and transfer of knowledge and skills (Cruickshank, 1981; Killen, 1989) rather than social transformation or a deconstruction of educational outcomes with broader social, moral or political connotations (Gore, 1987; Valli, 1997; Harrison and Lee, 2011).

4.2 The *how* of reflection

4.2.1 Reflective practices/strategies in the PGCE

Themes discussed under this category came out as a response to two questions regarding the nature and usefulness of various reflective practices in the PGCE

programme. A number of practices and strategies were identified. There were some that were mentioned more than others but overall it was a blend of the strategies that was considered useful for the development of reflection among student teachers. Some of the practices mentioned most frequently included the following:

Individual Action Planning (IAP)

Individual Action Planning (which took place at six points during the course) was mentioned by seven out of the fourteen university tutors. In the relevant Course Handbook of the PGCE programme under study, IAP is referred to as a process of target setting and identification of strategies to review and improve practice under the guidance and supervision of the school co-tutor or co-ordinator. The philosophy behind this practice is to make student teachers take responsibility for their own professional development. This seems to concur with one of the main purposes of reflection as enunciated by a number of writers (Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Hatton and Smith, 1995; Moon, 1999). Besides, this coincides with the experiential cyclic nature of reflection (Kolb, 1984; Harrison, 2008). One participant for instance described the IAP as a reflective strategy as a longer-term review process which all student teachers have to engage in and which is:

... Done at six points during the year where they [the student teachers] have a review and a tutorial and set targets and strategies and then review those and then to help them to make progress against the standards... So that is one reflective tool. ~UT1

Another participant described and illustrated the process by associating it with Kolb's (1984) experiential model of learning:

I think there are processes going on in the course that would illustrate reflective practice. So for a good student I think they would be able to review through the Action Planning process perhaps where they are at in relation to standards and requirements.... It's a bit like the Kolb's sort of experiential cycle. They go and try things out and then in the next review they reflect on how well things went. ~UT4

Discussion

Discussion as a reflective practice was mentioned in terms of the university part of the programme where it is employed as a reflective tool both in the separate subject sessions as well as in the whole cohort sessions. Different modes of discussion were identified by participants: Discussions in university subject sessions, discussions in small groups, discussions as whole subject groups, discussions with university tutors and discussions with school co-tutors/co-ordinators. Various reasons were given suggesting discussion as a useful reflective practice. These included active participation on the part of all student teachers, possible increase in the cognitive level of those who take part in discussion, clarification of ideas and the development of a more collaborative environment in the sessions.

Aah, well obviously within the university itself, discussion is the mainstay. One of the things I am introducing this year is getting them doing sort of five, ten minutes presentation that I'll video and then look back at what they have done...~UT8

The central role of discussion was also pointed out in the school context. This included discussion with school co-tutors in the weekly meetings and in the aftermath of lesson evaluations.

There are discussions that take place on a weekly basis with their co-tutors. So each student is entitled to a weekly meeting with his or her co-tutor. And that might encompass some discussion of these evaluations as well...~UT11

One tutor pointed out discussion as an important reflective practice but downplayed it as the mainstay in the process. This was perhaps due to this tutor's emphasis on a more comprehensive structure around reflection, where discussion remains one of the practices there.

We do, do discussions but it's much more than that. As I have said we want to model what they should be doing and so it's not just lecture-discussion but all strategies that they may apply in the classroom, they will actually be required to engage in, in the university sessions. So, for example they will do role-plays, they will do individual work, pair work, and they will do group work. ~ UT1

Critical incident analysis

Another practice consistently identified as reflective practice was critical incident analyses. Initial reading of the course guidance material revealed that critical incident analysis was one of the 'Directed Tasks' that student teachers needed to complete during the PGCE. Harrison and Lee (2011: 203) with reference to Tripp (1994) suggest that in an educational context critical incidents might refer to an event or situation that ranges from significant turning points to common-place issues occurring in everyday teaching and learning in the school. Tripp, suggest Harrison and Lee (2011), includes common-place issues as possible sources for critical analysis, as significant incidents 'usually occur infrequently' (ibid.). Critical incidents, they further argue, often lead to dilemmatic situations where teachers need to use interpretive decision making and thus reflection on such incidents often raise questions beyond the descriptive level. In finding answers to such questions; student teachers develop their analytical capacities. This understanding of the practice is revealed in the following excerpt from UT2:

We get our students [student teachers] to identify critical incidents on their wiki on our blackboard and to write down, describe and then analyse. And post on Blackboard and other students respond to and discuss...~UT2

This kind of critical incident as reflective practice, it was suggested, was aimed at developing the observation skills of student teachers in the process of identifying events. This included the skills of analysis, evaluation and synthesis. Thirdly, by sharing

and discussing on Blackboard (an online learning environment) with other student teachers the idea was that the process gave student teachers exposure to multiple perspectives and developed a more collaborative environment for learning at the same time. The thinking seems to coincide with Harrison and Lee (2011: 206) that in the process of finding, describing and analysing critical incidents, student teachers could be engaged in a process of 'meta-analysis' or critical reflection.

Lesson evaluation

Lesson evaluation was mentioned by a majority of the university tutors as one of the most useful reflective practices. As one participant pointed out, student teachers had to evaluate their lessons, as a form of reflective practice:

Once they are in schools they are meant to evaluate every lesson that they teach. So we have a list of questions against which they are meant to evaluate their lessons. And part of that will be a discussion with their co-tutors so they also have this weekly meeting and review with their co-tutors in school. And there are similar review opportunities with their co-ordinators. ~ UT1

Another participant commented:

What are the key reflective practices is the evaluation sort of cycle...So our students are expected to evaluate each lesson that they teach and so we give them quite a structured sort of framework for questions to

think about in order to help them to inform their future planning~

UT11

Questioning as a form of reflective practice has been mentioned in most research work on the topic (Moon, 1999; Harrison, 2008). However, in terms of lesson evaluation, the emphasis in the above quotes seems to be on more technical issues such as effective delivery of lessons, achievement of lesson objectives and classroom management. This does not necessarily suggest exclusion of exploring deeper issues such as the broader aims of the process of education, the rationale behind curriculum, the impact of education on the society in terms of justice and equity and the teacher's expected role in this, but the emphasis seems not to be on that level.

Other practices associated with reflection included writing assignments, preparing schemes of work, making comments on each others' work, involvement in tutorials, showing videos and introducing student teachers to books that develop thinking skills. The use of the Jo-Harry Window was also mentioned by one participant as useful for developing reflection. The Jo-Harry Window is a model that helps in developing awareness about one's own personality, the way one processes information and identification of one's personality traits as seen by oneself or by others. This model was created by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingram in 1955 in the United States (See <http://www.managing-change.net/johari-window-model.html> for further information). Further, involvement in investigations, sharing ideas, role-play, group-work, and short and medium term planning and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) were also identified as reflective practices.

Most useful reflective practices

Though some of the participants mentioned one or another practice as ‘the most useful reflective practice’ a predominant theme coming out of responses to the question, ‘What do you think is the most useful reflective practice?’ was that ‘it is a combination’ and no reflective practice could actually be ‘isolated’ as the most effective. Most participants argued these various practices work in conjunction and play a supportive role in developing student teachers as reflective practitioners. However, some participants did not mention any particular ‘most useful reflective practice/strategy’ because they ‘did not know’ as they had never evaluated these practices in this way. The idea of ‘it is the combination’ that works best, however, was predominant. This is illustrated in the following exchange:

R: So what do you personally think is the most effective one of those strategies?

UT10: (Laughs). I think that’s a hard one. I think it’s a combination which is powerful. I think if you took away the Individual Action Planning, if you took away the essay writing you will lose a lot So the combination is the strength if I can say that (Laughs). ~ UT10

Similarly,

I don’t think you can isolate it like that. It’s an attitude, a philosophy; it’s the ethos of the course itself, which I think is actually important. ~

UT13

Related literature reveals that besides definitional issues, it is this conceptualisation of reflection as an attitude and as a disposition that makes it difficult to define (Juanjo et al., 2011; Harrison and Lee, 2011) in terms of concrete strategies or practices when it comes to its implementation and evaluation. The inability to identify any one or a combination of reflective practices as the most useful also seems to show a lack of reflection on the issue as one participant said:

Hmm. I don't know! That's a very good question. If I know, I have not evaluated it. I think we should do evaluate it... I really can't answer your question. It would be a very useful project to engage in, you know what is...another colleague might tell you that the critical incident analysis is the most effective tool... Yeah but I couldn't answer that question. I really don't know. You have changed my thinking you know. I'll talk to colleagues about that. ~UT14

Another participant argued that he did not know because he did not use any specific reflective strategies and instead asked questions such as why are student teachers doing something. This participant suggested that I (the researcher) needed to ask this question of his students (student teachers) instead and that he did not know an answer to the question as a tutor. Reluctance on the part of tutors to identify a particular practice as most effective seems to be due to reasons such as their belief in the combined effect of the practices; their possible uncertainty because of a lack of clear evaluation procedures in terms of the various reflective practices and the possible taken-for-granted acceptance of the usefulness of these practices in

developing reflection. However, in the present case, it seems to be a combination of the three possibilities.

4.2.2 Factors influencing reflection in the PGCE

Reflective development and duration of the PGCE

Themes identified under this category present the impact of the duration of the PGCE on the reflective development of student teachers. The following were significant themes.

Duration of the PGCE and the level of expectation

Most of the participants suggested that PGCE is a rather short training period, that it is the beginning of the process of developing the student teachers as reflective practitioners; that it is like sowing the seeds, laying the grounds, the starting point; that it is the rudimentary level and that it does not produce the 'finished product'. Keeping in view this short duration of the training programme, the expectation for reflection seemed to be that of initiation into the process rather than higher levels of reflective development. As one university tutor for instance said:

I think they can be partly developed. They are never completed in the PGCE, it's too short. And it's setting it up enough for a student to become a reflective thinker and then to let them go out and do more

in the future. I think it takes two to three years to really help them and that's and we have got only nine months with them~ UT9

Overall those who expected a lower level of reflective development cited the short duration of the programme as the main reason. However they also seemed to justify the duration of the programme and the level of reflective development with the stance that reflection is an ongoing, life-long developmental process and one never stops being reflective once initiated into the process and that is the purpose of its introduction in the PGCE. On the whole, however, they did not expect the development of higher level of reflection among student teachers during the PGCE. Some of the participants, nevertheless, thought that it could be developed at the higher level given the right kind of conditions such as good tutorial support in the school and availability and recruitment of high quality student teachers to the training programme.

Individual student teacher's disposition, attitude and academic background

This theme underlines that the level of development in terms of reflection varies, depending on factors such as individual student disposition, attitude and background.

I think for some reflection is really hard and I think the ability to perhaps evaluate what you are doing ,[and] reflect on , doesn't come easily to many students and some of them , haven't, depending on the

stage they are and their understanding, and what it is that they are trying to get to~ UT1

Explaining the dispositional variation and its impact on the development of reflection she suggested that some student teachers just want to follow instructions and to do the job as they are asked. But she also argued that there are others who want to come up with their own ideas and to play a lead role in organising activities and doing things.

Another tutor identified variety in terms of the level of reflection:

Um! Well as I said, some very easily, some find it very difficult ... some never get beyond the very low level of reflection, very sort of nuts and bolts, mundane mechanical reflection if you like and never get to very deep... level. Others operate at a very high level. And I think um, you will always get that spectrum with the students, where some of them will do it very well, some of them can't...~ UT8

This participant revealed another interesting side to this, the concern that some of the student teachers might lose some of their 'reflectiveness' once they get into schools as teachers in the post-training period due to the '*mechanical and routine ways in schools*'. This, he argued, happens due a centralised model of education, where school teachers don't have much professional autonomy, an essential requirement for the concept of reflection:

Of more interest to me in a sense could be an interesting piece of research, is the degree to which they lose it when they get into schools because I think one of the problems in many schools is that because of government policy, teachers are expected to approach things in a fairly mechanical kind of way rather than using a great deal of professional autonomy...~ UT8

In terms of the academic background (the attainment level), of student teachers and its impact on the level of reflective development one participant argued his subject area attracted very high calibre student teachers in his subject who are already very reflective at the time of admission to the programme and don't need much effort in scaling up the levels of reflection:

... [W]e can recruit very, very high calibre students. We get the cream of the cream. They are normally very, very good... because there are not many places nationally [in his relevant subject] so you have got a lot of students chasing very few places. ~UT13

Another argued:

A lot depends on previous experience, what they are like as human beings (laughs). Are they naturally reflective? Are they likely to take a critical look, and to step outside themselves and look at what they like in the classroom and it varies enormously. ~ UT11

This participant also differentiated reflection in terms of the possible influence of relevant subject (e.g. science versus social sciences) and on the mode of reflection such as 'written' versus 'verbal' reflection. The implication seems to be that there might be a differentiation where reflection is expressed or assessed in different ways such as written versus verbal reflection and the assumed better ability of social sciences students in terms of written reflection. One participant associated the level of reflection with the generation that student teachers belonged to:

I think the students who are best at reflection had got their degree when they were 21 or 22. They perhaps had done two or three years working in something else like industry or commerce and then they came back in their mid to late twenties to do this course... The students that found it the hardest were the older students say over the forties. Because their experience of education being taught mathematics was that their teachers were in front and just delivered.

~UT12

The implication seems to be that these 'younger' student teachers did not get their education in educational institutions where top-down model of education such as the 'banking concept' (Freire, 1970) was in place and where they would sit and listen to their teachers as did the older age group of students. Associating herself with the 'older' age group this participant further argued:

I think perhaps my generation weren't taught to reflect but the present generation, twenty-something, their experience of education

has taught them about thinking and reflecting so they tend to do it better. ~ UT12

This in a way seems to contradict the views expressed above by UT8 who suggested a top-down model of education in the schools as a possible hindrance in the way of reflection. However, it seems the two were referring two different things. UT8's focus seems to be on the relatively limited degree of autonomy that teachers have in terms of deciding curriculum material while UT12's focus appears to be her associating reflection with more active involvement of pupils in the teaching-learning process and perhaps more questioning on their part, which she suggests was not the case in her own studentship years. One implication of this could be that a centralised model of education might not have the same implications for pupils (in schools) as it has for their teachers. This participant (UT12), along with another, also alluded to the possible difference between the levels of reflection with the student teachers' background in social sciences in comparison to natural sciences. The suggestion appears to be that social sciences students have better a chance to develop reflective dispositions (Graham-Matheson, 2010) because of their involvement in discussing issues in a critical way in their pre-PGCE educational career:

I do wonder if you are going to find a big difference between for example the scientists and mathematicians and modern languages and social sciences because some of ours have come through a degree process, an undergraduate degree where they have been encouraged to be reflective. I am not quite sure that's the same for science and

mathematics where it's very you know they do experiments and they write about results and so on so it's no quite a mindset is it really for them? So I am not sure.

This seemed to be because of this participant's particular understanding of reflection, for instance reflection as found in the written work of student teachers. This was revealed in this further elaboration:

I do know maths and science students have struggled with writing at Master's level which is you know a reflective thing. They do struggle with that because they never had to write an essay. ~ UT10

This does not necessarily mean a lack of reflection *per se* on the part of the student teachers but a lack of capacity in expressing that reflection in written form such as in the form of an essay. A number of participants argued that they were not in a position to answer the question because reflection is not formally assessed and that it is a process of training that is 'hoped' to make student teachers more reflective. Reflection, they pointed out, is embedded in a 'practical/cyclical' process of doing things during the PGCE training:

Well there is a cycle where they teach, they evaluate, they reflect and then they move to the next planning phase. So it's sort of cyclical process so they should be incorporating things in a very practical way

and their tutors [in the school] will give them targets and they need to implement those targets and apply them to their lessons.~ UT2

One participant argued that most student teachers do not find it easy to reflect on the higher level because of their pre-occupation with practical issues of immediate interest to them such as ‘thinking’ about things that ‘went right or wrong’ in the classroom:

Not at all (Laughs) they don’t find it easy at all. Some students, Oh that’s my experience, some students get it straight away. But I think that’s a minority. A lot of students think that reflection is just looking at what went wrong and what they have to do next in the classroom. They don’t see the higher levels that I described earlier. They don’t see how important it is that reflection is about them as a person having to deal with as a society basically rather than to just being the teacher who transfers knowledge. ~ UT5

Reflection and theory-practice balance in the PGCE

This section discusses the relative use of ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ in the development of more reflective teachers/practitioners? Themes discussed under this category came out in response to questions regarding the relative usefulness of theory and practice in the reflective development student teachers in the PGCE. An over-riding consensus was that the present structure of the PGCE provided a good balance in terms of the theoretical and practical components of the training programme and that theory and

practice go together and cannot be separated. Besides, it was pointed out that the university part is not entirely theory-based and neither is the school part completely practical. The programme revolves around a partnership model and the university and school components and hence theory and practice are integrated. The two main themes are discussed below:

Theory-practice integration

A majority view was that theory and practice were integrated in the programme and were not considered as two separate areas. A number of participants argued that although the course is pre-dominantly school-based that does not necessarily mean it is 'lacking in theory' as student teachers can be engaged in theory while they are involved in the school in practical teaching and in other activities such as observations, discussions with tutors and among themselves and during preparation and presentation of lessons:

Well I think the two go hand in hand and naturally you can't say right now we have done the theory go and put into practice because I think that all part of the reflection is using the theory to inform your practice. So I think it should be a constant practice of theory feeding into the practice. But you got to have the practice; you can't ever become a good teacher by just theorising. So I think it should be integrated. ~ UT2

This view coincides with Schön's (1983) ideas of the reflective practitioner and that of practical-theorising (McIntyre, 1993). When it was pointed out by the researcher that in some of the relevant literature on teacher education theory, the implication is that 'theory' is associated with the university and 'practice' with the school, this participant argued, *'But have you heard the phrase that schools should be universities for teachers?'* Such an idea however, argued another participant, could lead to the de-intellectualisation of the profession of teaching and which he thought could be a major problem. Besides:

... if someone is trained in one school, they actually only get access to one model of teaching and as I have tried to explain that what we want out of it is where they are open to lots and lots of different models because the university firstly gives them two different practices that's what the rules are. But also because of our own experience and the fact that we see loads and loads of different practices in all of the schools we go to that we can offer a student something that one school cannot~ UT13

Demurring the theory-practice divide, another participant proposed the idea of 'cognitive apprenticeship' which he thought was a middle point between 'theory-dominated' and 'apprenticeship/practice-dominated' model of teacher training:

I actually think that to say that you have got theory and practice as two separate things is a difficult one ... there is this notion of cognitive apprenticeship where um if you take apprenticeship traditionally as being something practical, you know learning as something like making furniture, or repairing cars. That apprenticeship was very practical thing; have to be done in a very practical work place. The notion of cognitive apprenticeship as far as I can see is the notion that actually is more about ways of thinking, ways of approaching things but doing it in a practical sense ...~ UT8

Too much emphasis on giving student teachers 'theoretical models' according to this participant could lead them to stop coming up with their own models and trying them out in practice and instead picking up one or another of the 'given' theoretical models of teaching and trying to implement it. This he thought would lead them to stop being creative and reflective about their practice because:

if you spent too much time, talking about models, talking about the theory of it, what potentially you might do for some of the students that you have is they will think, well, umm, yeah ok, I'll pick that model, I will use that and then what they are not doing (smiles) is being reflective, in a funny kind of way. They are using somebody's model about being reflective. What I think is better is to introduce it, but then get them doing it and then having those sorts of feedback loops of discussion...~UT8

This view echoes that of Heath (1998) who in the context of reflective practice 'suggests that using a model of reflection at the outset may produce uniformity and suppress students creativity and thinking' (cited in Nicholl and Higgins, 2004: 581). However, an absence of such a framework could render the concept as a mere 'slogan' (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). This tutor, too, indicated the danger of 'de-intellectualisation' of the teaching profession leading to the phasing out of the role of the university in initial teacher training/education on the grounds that school teachers (who will play the role of tutors and mentors of student teachers exclusively in that situation) do not necessarily have the 'theoretical grounding' needed for the purpose.

I think that's dangerous...umm and I think it's dangerous not only because of issues to do with reflection but issues to do with other theoretical grounding and so for example I will talk to the students about learning-theory, um if you talk to teachers in schools , a lot of them have no idea of learning-theories~ UT8

Explaining this phenomenon he used the metaphor of a surgeon doing a heart surgery without having any theoretical knowledge of the functioning of the heart and so:

... my issue with taking Higher Education out of initial teacher education, is that it actually de-intellectualises it and makes it into an apprenticeship and it gives the impression that teaching is an easy job. ~UT8

This counters the dismissal of the role of theory in initial teacher education by authors such as Lawlor (1990), O'Hear (1988) and more recently Carr (2006). Another participant argued that theory permeates the course and that while it was more school-based, student teachers were engaged with theory in the form of Directed Tasks that they had to complete which required them to engage with theory for written assignments. She, however, found the theory-practice issue perplexing and thought it interesting to explore it in terms of developing more reflective practitioners:

How can they be good reflective teachers...I mean they could have good knowledge of theory but how will just having the knowledge make them more reflective? I think that's a challenging question and it's an interesting one to explore~ UT4

The thinking here seems to be partially representative of the idea that having exposure to theoretical knowledge might not necessarily translate into enhanced reflectivity during practice. That might be one way of looking at it but that brings us to the question of theory-practice interaction and its impact on the development of reflection. The issue was explored with a number of tutors and although some supported either theory or practice, overall the agreement seemed to have been on the complexity of this interaction.

An interesting view came from one participant who differentiated theory itself into 'relevant', theory coming in the form of subjects such as psychology, pedagogy and philosophy which was seen to be more pertinent to the practical needs of teachers in

comparison to the not-so-relevant theory such as 'history of education'. Alluding to her own training years she recounted:

My subject sessions were really good. But what is now called the Teacher Development Course I thought was rubbish. And I was very vocal about it ... I was very cross about it because I thought it was really wishy washy. And it had focus on those kind of too much of like history of education and not enough about pedagogy and philosophy and the psychology of teaching and I feel there is more of that now. I think there could still be more about that...~UT3

Theory-practice balance

Five of the fourteen participants presented the view that the theory and practice balance is about right for the development of reflection. The balance, however, was not considered in terms of the respective time that student teachers spent either in the university or in the school, nor were the university and the school dissociated in terms of their exclusive provision of either theory or practice. Rather, the balance was considered in terms of the relevant usefulness of the university and school part of the programme for the adequate preparation of student teachers for their job. And in that sense the present provision was considered adequate.

I think we have it about right in this course. We have about two-third of their time in the school. When they are in schools they are getting the practical practice but they are also doing some theory. They are

not just on teaching practice because they have Directed Tasks to do, they have reading to do while they are in schools. So we don't let them go completely by just saying off you go take over your class~

UT10

This participant also pointed out that because the student teachers needed to know the practicalities of teaching before going into schools and that is what was the purpose of the PGCE training, the aim, therefore, at the university part of the PGCE was not just giving them grounding in theory and so:

They continue to do some theory in school and they do a bit of practical here [in the university]. So it flows together. I think they need to spend a lot of time in schools certainly. ~ UT10

A few tutors wanted to have more time with student teachers in the university. However, again their emphasis was more on the practical preparation of student teachers in their respective school subjects rather than in terms of educational theory. One participant for instance argued:

I think actually we have got a pretty good balance here in our programme. I think most of us would probably think we here in the university would like a bit more time with our students to do some of the theory and not theory in terms of theories of learning but looking at subject-teaching and teaching and learning styles and approaches

and discussing ways of teaching within subjects and good practice and against research, looking at getting students to think about how they can trial things and evaluate things for themselves in the classroom. I think we would think we would need a bit more here. ~ UT1

One participant (UT12) alluded to her own initial training as a teacher in the late eighties and suggested that this earlier model was a much more leisurely but more theory-oriented university-based course:

It's better now. It's much more difficult now. We had a very nice year, you know we felt very much like university students, and we had a very nice leisurely time then. We had an intensive attachment to a school but only one attachment to one school. And now you have to have experience in two schools which is much better. I had a lovely year, I enjoyed all the reading and I enjoyed all that but I don't think it was a good enough preparation to be in the classroom really. But then again the demands on a teacher and the role of the teacher have changed since those days as well. So there is more input needed here...

Similar views were presented by UT11:

...well I did my training pre-1984 and it was still very heavily university-dominated and you had one big practice in the middle but

lots of time to do things and that luxury(laughs) of lots of free afternoons. Um I think the way we have got it now is more reflective sort of pressured life that students would lead when they are in schools because the nature of schools has changed since that time as well. And I think the nature of the university element of the courses has changed too to reflect those changes and reflect perhaps the more professional emphasis within the year training. So I would say it's very different now from what it was.

Both of these quotes seem to identify the current PGCE structure with more reflection in the sense of 'reflection-in-action' (Schön, 1983, 1987) and hence with more efficiency. This indicates the influence of the Schönian model of reflection and practical-theorising (McIntyre, 1993) on the initial teacher education in England. This might also be due to the increasingly influential centralised model of education and a rejection of the usefulness of theoretical knowledge in initial teacher training (O'Hear, 1988; Lawlor, 1990; McIntyre, 1993; Carr, 2005). Another participant supporting the idea that the present balance is right in terms of an appropriate level of grounding in both 'theory' and 'practice' also mentioned the fact that because of the amount of work that is involved in the process it has become very intense and pressured to keep the balance:

I think how we have got it at the moment is about right in terms of the balance. But it does make for a much pressurised year and a very demanding year in terms of assignment work and practice. But we do

stress the importance of theory, the importance of looking at other people's research...~ UT11

This, she said, is achieved by bringing experienced classroom teachers into sessions to make links. Overall tutors favoured the current balance of the programme in terms of theory and practice and the pre-dominantly school-led structure of the programme. Most tutors supported the 'practical-theorising' model (McIntyre, 1993) of the PGCE and the role of reflection as a link between theory and practice with an emphasis on learning practical skills in terms of reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983) rather than on a more critically oriented, theory-led, emancipatory model of initial teacher education (Smyth, 1989; Zeichner and Liston, 1996). The issue of the interaction between theory and practice in terms of the development of reflection is further discussed in Chapter 6.

TDA Standards and reflection

Themes identified under this category came in response to questions regarding the impact of TDA 'standards' on reflection in the PGCE. Two contrasting themes emerged. One, standards are flexible and reflection is incorporated into them, and two, standards stand in the way of reflection. Those who argued that reflection was incorporated within the standards did not essentially support the standard agenda as a whole as it was still considered an outcome of a centralisation of education. However, standards were supported on the basis of their flexibility, the useful scaffolding and structure that they provided to tutors and student teachers.

... embedded within them one of the standards is that they[the student teachers] must show that they can be responsible for their own professional development and improve what they do and they got to be open to innovation and they got to be open in a way to constructive criticism and new ideas. They are kind of inbuilt within the professional standards. ~ UT1

The implication appears to be that student teachers taking responsibility for their professional development and improvement would be indicative of their being reflective. Responsibility, being open to possibilities and flexibility are characteristics identified by a number of authors including Dewey (1933) as qualities of reflective practitioners (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Pollard et al., 2008). UT3 also viewed that the implication of some of the standards such as those about monitoring and evaluation was that they could not be achieved in the absence of reflection. She, however, argued that that might not be the explicit purpose of those standards. Others argued that although the model seemed to be top-down in structure, the very language in which the standards were described and the kind of freedom that tutors had in interpreting and implementing them rendered them a lot of flexibility:

Nobody tells how you have to get to be that kind of teacher, nobody tells you how you have to meet those standards, there is nobody who says this is lesson one, there is no body that gives us the curriculum. They leave it to us to design the curriculum and the process and within our process we have reflective practice...~ UT1

In a similar vein another participant argued:

...the standards don't tell me how to structure my teaching or how to structure the student teachers' experiences in the schools necessarily. All we have to do is to make sure that the student teachers have opportunities to provide the evidence that might demonstrate that they are meeting the standards. ~ UT4

The flexibility of the standards thus, it was argued, left space for tutors to incorporate reflective practices in the programme. Also, it was argued that standards reflected the final outcomes of the programme but did not have much impact on the process of training which is open enough for incorporating reflection.

Those who said that standards stood in the way of reflection argued so on the basis of the presumably top-down-agenda behind them and the tendency on the part of student teachers to turn them into a 'tick-box' exercise:

I think sometimes they stand in the way because students just concentrate on those standards so much and getting the evidence for that that they are more working towards evidence for those standards than thinking about themselves as a teacher and what that means and how they can progress for themselves (Silence)

R: But then there are some standards as well which actually say that there should be reflection...

UT5: Oh yeah there are some standards on reflection but then they tick those so its, its, I agree that you need to fulfil certain requirements to be able in front of the classroom but what I find more important for a student teacher, is: 'Are they able to learn? Are they prepared to learn more and can they do that?', 'Can they drive that themselves, and if they can drive that themselves, then they can tick all those standards anyway?' So it's really important, probably to focus more on the reflection of teaching than on the standards.

The implication appears to be that the real issue is not the standard but the particular way in which those standards are used by student teachers. So the problem arises when the focus shifts to finding evidence for standards rather than the actual process of learning. One view was that although there might be some level of rigidity in the standards but that that is countered by the teachers' ability to play around them:

'...on another level my view is teachers are pretty good at paying lip service to policies that the government introduces and then not doing their own things but pretty much doing things that they think are more important than just the government policies.~ UT13

In this sense the standards discourse was deemed to fall short of fully scaffolding the student teachers' needs and hence 'lies at some distance from and tends to obscure a more fundamental series of psychic and social processes that student teachers experience when learning to teach' (Atkinson, 2004: 380). The above quote seems to show the recognition that learning to teach is not a process that can be neatly

packaged in standards, rather it goes beyond that and should be seen more as ‘a series of conscious actions, unconscious processes, interactions and conversations, impulses and responses, planned activities, disruptions and unexpected events and situations’ (Atkinson, 2004: 380). It is then this complexity of the teaching process and the involvement in and supposed awareness of student teachers of it that standards are not implemented in a rigid way. Some of the participants argued that there is more flexibility in the new standards developed in 2007. This flexibility, it was argued, was because of fewer standards now as compared to the past and hence that brought more independence to the teacher educators to come up with their own ideas regarding inclusion of subject-matter in the curriculum.

4.2.3 Hindrances/barriers in the way of reflection

This section presents issues that university tutors identified as main factors that stand in the way of a useful reflective development among PGCE students. The three principal hindrances identified were time constraints related to the amount of work that has to be covered, particular attitudes of school co-tutors, school cultures, and the nature and previous knowledge and experience of some student teachers.

Lack of time and the amount of work

This emerged as the most significant factor hindering appropriate development of the ability to reflect. All of the fourteen participants mentioned lack of time and excess of work that was involved in the PGCE year. Lack of time was mentioned in both parts of

the training: the school and the university. Lack of time available with co-tutors and mentors to provide adequate guidance and support to student teachers was mentioned as a significant barrier to their reflective development. An effective reflective practice, it was suggested, is for the student teachers to discuss and review with their co-tutors but:

...there isn't time built into the system' for this and 'So you are relying on the good will of the teachers in school rather than have that built in as a formal, regular opportunity to have a dialogue about one particular incident as opposed to the hour long meeting they have about everything that the student has to do.~ UT1

The implication is that a better way for student teachers to learn during meetings with co-tutors in schools is to discuss particular issues that might be of special interest to them in detail rather than having more general routine discussions around professional matters. This is an interesting observation as it is likely to develop an environment of more focused, issue-focused interaction between the student teacher and the co-tutor.

Similarly,

I think the amount of content that we have to get through. There is so much content in the National Curriculum and we only have them for a relatively short time. It's only really 9 months that they are here for.

And during that time obviously we are not in contact constantly with them...~ UT10

Dealing with the time constraint issue

There were two distinct views on this issue. One argument was that it would be helpful if the duration of the PGCE (ITE) was increased. This proposed increase ranged from a few subject sessions in the university with individual subject tutors, to extending the course from eighteen months to two years. One tutor mentioned a two years Masters Degree programme run by another university as a possible model for the PGCE:

[University X] has a Masters in teaching. They don't call it PGCE... So the students actually ...they do their PGCE training part within their first year. But there is more opportunity to perhaps reflect and write about it within the second year. So they are carrying on as part of the university. They don't have to be enticed back to do the Masters. They are signed up, as it works, for two years...~UT11

Another participant seemed to agree with this proposal when this extended model was mentioned by the researcher:

Hmm... We could do a two years course here and make it into a full Masters rather than they get about a third of their Masters' credit that would be very nice. Yes you tell the government that we want to do that (laughs). ~ UT10

This is in the backdrop of the current PGCE (M-Level) which is structured to give credit towards a Masters after the PGCE if the student teachers so wished. The proposed model would thus be a full two years Masters degree rather than the credit system already in place. This participant metaphorically elaborated the intense structure of the PGCE and the excessive amount of work that has to be covered during the training year:

We are on the run. We are definitely, you know, it's an assault course. We are just climbing every barrier, running through woods and we say to them, when they come in the first week, this is a marathon; you are running a marathon now so make sure you are healthy and fit because these are very difficult few months...~ UT10

Another participant referring to a TES (Times Education Supplement) article argued that:

[Q]uite a few people believe that it should be eighteen months or even two years in order for students to become completely conversant with the skills and attitudes and behaviours and also the mental and intellectual view of teaching which I think is really interesting and certainly the longer I had been a teacher, the more important that level of reflection has become to me...~ UT3

Thus beside endorsing the possible benefits of a longer initial training for student teachers in terms of proper development of their knowledge and skills, the support for this also seems to be in its role for developing reflection on stronger footing. However, practical issues were mentioned that stood in the way of contemplating such an increased duration for the PGCE:

One of the practicalities you know for some people it's quite difficult for them to not earn any money for a year anyway... '~ UT3.

Some participants dissociated the ability of getting more reflective from being in the university and also argued that the actual teaching life as a professional teacher is even more pressured than the work load student teachers have to face during the PGCE:

If they can't cope with this amount of work here, they won't cope with when they go into schools because teachers work twice as much as the student teachers. So they need to hit the ground really hard. So it's a really pressured job. There is a very high drop out among teachers... ~UT2

Extending the course beyond the one year, it was argued, could also pose problems such as the loss of talented people who are otherwise qualified to teach but would not want to spend more than a year in initial teacher training for becoming eligible to teach:

If you make it too academic I am worried that you lose teachers who are fantastic teachers but not very academic or not academic in the way that we see academic. They might be actually academically very good but because of the way we look at it and its all written work and then they might not just be good at written work and then they lose out ...if you make it too long a course, because they would not be interested and also ... they don't earn any money because they have already been studying for a long time, they want to start earning money. ~ UT5

The idea appears to support the more practical nature of teaching and the learning during teaching as against the more academic pre-service study and more theory-oriented preparation for teaching. But more than that this view seems to be a response to the current tendency in England towards a more practice-oriented and skill-based initial teacher training as a result of government policies. This issue is taken up further in Chapter 6.

Another angle to this argument against an increase in the duration of the PGCE was explained by one participant in terms of the very aims of reflection. According to this participant the main aim in an initial teacher training could only be an initiation into reflection and not an expectation to develop it at a higher level as that is beyond the scope of the PGCE:

I think to try and to contextualise their thinking in broader things they have got to have substantive experience, so you won't get people reaching at the deeper levels of reflection within a one year course.

That's an expectation from a much more experienced teacher. I don't think we could ever have a training programme that got somebody; I mean there would be rare exceptions of students who would be at that deep level. ~ UT4

This participant also mentioned the 'induction year' (a year of initiation in a school in the post-PGCE period, in which the newly qualified teacher goes through further scrutiny before the Qualified Teacher Status is confirmed) as an alternative to a possible increase in the duration of the initial teacher training.

Attitude of school co-tutors and the environment in school departments

Some of the participants mentioned particular attitudes of co-tutors such as treating the standards agendas as a kind of 'tick-box', as a possible hindrance in the way of reflective development of student teachers. This, it was argued, leads to non-conducive environment for the development of reflection in schools:

...the attitude of departments and co-tutors at schools if it is not a department that is given to a really constructive reflection, then that's a bit of kind of arid atmosphere for students to be working in who are trying to think deeply about things that they are doing...~ UT6

Elaborating the phenomenon this participant argued:

I mean we do have one school which has a very, very detailed scheme of work for each year and it's broken down into lessons and on a number of occasions we said the students must have a little bit

opportunity to plan their own lessons and in cases like this one it's definitely a restriction on becoming reflective...

The above quote indicates schools with more centralised systems of governance and curriculum formulation and implementation are not conducive to the reflective development of student teachers. Unreflective and inflexible attitude on the part of some co-tutors was also identified as a possible hindrance. Such co-tutors, one participant argued, needed to be provided opportunities for continuous professional development and training but that was not possible due to financial constraints:

I mean you have got to have the money to provide training haven't you? Because you have to get people out of the school, they have to have supply cover, they got to come and attend the meeting here and so there are travel costs. So it's a function of resources really and that's not great! ~ UT4

Student teachers' attitude, expectations and background

Three of the participants mentioned particular student teachers' attitudes such as their pre-occupation with 'getting tips' to survive; their nature and personality, their previous educational background and their subject of study as possible factors impeding the process of proper reflective development. Students keen on getting tips, it was argued, did not see the point of reflecting on issues and because of their pre-

occupation with 'getting the standards right' they want to be told what to do and how to do it.

[W]e get the occasional student who is resistant. They just want to know what am I teaching, how am I teaching it, just tell me the answer, tell me what to do. I shall go and do it. And so we have to encourage them to think differently than that.

Besides, certain personality traits in some student teachers such as shyness, nervousness, and lack of initiative and confidence were also mentioned as possible impediments to their reflective development. Such student teachers, it was argued, were difficult to initiate into the process of reflection as that is something that needs the urge to show independence of thought and action and the will to take responsibility (Dewey, 1933).

Interestingly all hindrances identified seem to be concerned with the 'how' of reflection i.e. factors outside reflection that influence its implementation, however, no participant identified any conceptual, definitional issues that might stand in the way of its useful understanding and implementation. This issue is explored further in Chapter 6.

4.2.4 Assessment of reflection

This section discusses the way(s) reflection is assessed and the adequacy of such assessment. Most participants argued that reflection is not/cannot be assessed in a formal sense and that it is the student teachers' progress throughout the programme in terms of various tasks they do, the assignments they complete, the activities they are involved in, the discussions, observations and dialogues they become part of and the portfolios they develop over their training period, all together give a 'sense' of the level of reflection that they have achieved:

It isn't. Not formally assessed because we see it as a process really as something that helps them to make judgements....We would require them to do it and we will talk to them about how good they are but yeah and judgements will be made against the standards about how well they could respond to comments from other teachers...~ UT1

The focus seems to be on assessment in terms of the TDA Standards rather than that of reflection as a concept. This is understandable, keeping in view the essentially standard-driven nature of the PGCE. The standards, however, incorporate the concept as a number of standards refer to the reflective development of beginning teachers as professional requirement (TDA, 2007). This tutor, nevertheless, later said that there was some assessment at a 'minimum level' in terms of seeking evidence to see if the student teachers look for and listen to advice and make improvement in the light of that advice.

Another participant identifying a few reflective practices such as the student teachers' ability to 'evaluate lessons', and 'action planning process', associated this assessment with the 'progress' that student teachers make through the programme:

It's judged somehow indirectly actually by, well, "Are they able to make progress?" So if the student is unable to progress, we sort of tend to conclude that they haven't been able to reflect and to do anything about it...~ UT4

Similarly,

I think probably one of the most effective one's is the sense that we get through working with them throughout the year. Talking with them and watching them develop as practitioners. ~ UT6

When asked about the tangibility of this kind of 'sensing' in terms of assessment, this participant replied:

There is a lot that's not tangible about becoming aware that somebody is now a reflective practitioner. But certainly in assignments, I have written on a number of them, it's clear that you are at this early stage becoming a highly reflective practitioner. And you can see that in their writing and their thinking. But it's generally just watching them in the classroom and so on.

Besides, one participant argued that formalising it would be against its very purpose that is emancipation from technicism and measurement. He argued that doing so:

...will be like bringing 'into reflective practice a discourse, that is exactly opposite of the one promoted by reflective practice ...~ UT7

Besides this predominant belief in the informal assessment or assessment in the process, some participants argued that to an extent it is also formally assessed through written assignments which are about:

... reflecting on lesson planning or assessment for learning in their first teaching practice. So in that sense there is some formal assessment of reflective practice. But apart from that it's very informal and formative. ~ UT8

Similar views regarding the assessment of reflective practice as an informal, formative process, embedded in the whole process of the training programme, were expressed by all other participants. A few practices that were explicitly associated with assessment for reflection included written assignments, critical incident analysis and lesson evaluations.

Adequacy of the assessment process

Is this mainly 'informal process' of assessing reflection adequate? Two kinds of views came out in response to this question: Firstly, that formal assessment of reflection was difficult and hence the adequacy of the process could not be established. And secondly, that it was a new emphasis in the programme wanting in a much

sophisticated understanding of the concept and hence not much was known about the adequacy of its assessment process:

Well I think I am not sure how you would assess it. I am not sure, how; yeah I am not sure if we are going to say, 'How good a reflective practitioner you are?' I think we would have to actually sit about developing some models to do that. I don't think we have got to that level of sophistication with it. And I think it is again something which you wouldn't be..umm.. I wouldn't see much of a purpose in saying, 'How good a reflective practitioner you are?' There are some teachers who are intuitive teachers who do things really well. And some of them may not be, and if you talk to them why are they doing what they are doing and what's happening? They wouldn't be able to tell you. And then your judgement would be, 'They are not reflective practitioners'. So we would mark them, we wouldn't give good assessment. But when you go in and watch them teach you can find what they are doing, their students are learning and bright and their lessons are interesting. Now there must be something happening, something must have happened with them but we talk about them as being intuitive. ~UT1

The participant seems to have taken the assessment of reflection in its restricted form such as through written assignments and not in its more inclusive understanding which might include things such as observing student teachers while they teach in the

classroom or their involvement in discussions and other activities. Another participant also pointed out the new emphasis on reflection as a possible factor in this lack of adequate assessment of the concept saying that she would be in a position to comment on the adequacy of the assessment process over time:

And because it's new it's still in development so may be in two years

time we will say, no it's not adequate but at the time I think it is.~

UT12

Overall, there seemed to be a 'belief' that reflection could be assessed without a formal assessment structure (with the exception of assignments). The question that arises is 'how do we know it is happening?'. The answer seems to be that this can be judged through a range of assessment procedures (including, written assignments, observations, post-teaching debriefings and discussions etc). In that sense it seems to fit within the broader approach to assessing a student teacher's progress more generally. Also, as some tutors pointed out, reflection was a relatively new concept in the programme and to some other senior tutors not something which was part of their own training_ perhaps not specifically emphasised in their own school teaching experience_ the process of assessment seemed somewhat nebulous. Further the risk in 'believing' that the process will develop reflection could be its turning into a slogan (Zeichner and Liston, 1996) rather than a specifically goal-oriented concept. Although as pointed out by participants reflection was a new focus in the programme, the concept otherwise has been extensively explored and a number of researchers have devised models for evaluating it (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Kember et al., 1999; Jay and

Johnson, 2002; Ward and McCotter, 2004) which could be incorporated into the programme for the purpose.

4.3 The *why-and-so-what* of reflection

4.3.1 The importance and relevance of reflection in the PGCE

Findings under this category came out in response to the questions regarding the importance of reflection being incorporated into the PGCE. An overriding consensus was that the incorporation of reflection in the PGCE was extremely important. 'Crucial', 'vital', 'very important', 'central', 'extremely important', 'essential' and 'absolutely essential' were the common adjectives used for reflection as a concept being incorporated in the PGCE. Different reasons were put forward to support the argument that reflection should be a vital part of the initial teacher training programmes such as the PGCE.

Reflection and its role in progress and improvement

A major reason given for reflection to be a central part of the initial teacher education programme was that it was crucial for progress and improvement in the educational process and the teaching abilities of student teachers:

UT2: Oh it's crucial. It has to be central.

R: Why do you think it is crucial?

UT2: Because that's what teaching is, really. You can't be a good teacher if you don't reflect on how to improve your practice. And even if you have been teaching for twenty years you still can think on a lesson there is something I could have done better. So it's just part of you know doing the best that you can for your students and making sure that learning is taking place and its good learning . If you are not reflecting you have lost that connection really with learners. ~ UT2.

The above identifies the usefulness of reflection in continuous professional development and in helping the teacher to analyse the quality of the learning that takes place. In a similar way but in a slightly restricted sense another participant suggested that classroom teaching cannot be improved in the absence of reflection:

*If I don't reflect on how the session went, it won't be better next time.
I won't pick up on anybody who is struggling, I can't move on to a next session without going through that reflection process...~UT3*

Although some confined this progress and improvement to the classroom issues where the focus was on technical efficiency and improvement in the practice of teaching, others brought in its fold broader issues such as the overall progress in the society and the danger of stagnation in case reflection was ignored in the process of teaching and learning:

Oh I think it's vital. One word answer! (Laughs) I mean if you are not encouraging beginning teachers to think about what they are doing then I think you are doing them a huge disservice and the whole education system a disservice, pupils and their future. It's vital that they become reflective practitioners otherwise there's going to be no progress.... So in that sense we are reflecting and responding to developments and changes in society. So if they don't reflect they are letting themselves down, and they are letting their pupils down and ultimately if you can be really grand about it they are letting the society down. ~ UT6

The above not only shows the importance of reflection in terms of its impact on the broader societal level but also highlights the influence of beginning teachers on the future prospects of the society. Emphasising this role of reflection in preparing new teachers for the opportunities and challenges of the future and to develop their ability for understanding, adapting to and shaping the future course of things, another participant argued:

Well you know this openness of mind that you continue trying new things and you are open to new ways of working. I mean you know, in the education system where ICT has increased and varied effects. If you only want to do things in one way and not reflect upon what you are doing then how would you incorporate these wonderful new opportunities for use? UT13

The above also highlights the anticipatory or imaginative role of reflection (Fendler, 2003; Akbari, 2007) with an eye on the futuristic developments in society and hence adjustment to and preparation for such incoming changes.

Opportunities for asking questions, exploring ideas and solving problems

A number of participants linked the importance of reflection to its role in providing opportunities to students to question, to explore, to experiment and to solve problems in the classroom situation. Reflection, they argued, is needed because the process of education is the process of asking questions, giving reasons and seeking explanations.

They have to take the pedagogy. They have to say, 'Right now, why am I doing this? If you come and ask me why what you want to say?' I come and say, 'Why have you chosen group work when you are teaching that activity? And they can say, 'I have chosen this because a, b, c, d and e' And there would be sense in that, it would meet the pedagogy, it would meet the research, best practice tells us that this is more effective way. ~UT1

Rationalising decisions and actions during the process of teaching was, thus, associated with reflection which was considered important for effective education. Further, reflection was deemed important for its use in helping teachers become independent decision makers and problem solvers, in responding to situations and in developing an 'immediacy of thinking':

... necessary in the classroom dealing with twenty five or thirty students and to be able to work that through till later time to try and understand more about, 'why did I behave like that? And what was the impact of that and so on?' I mean without that process I really don't think people progress. ~UT4

The reference to the 'immediacy of thinking' and to later on self-questioning reflects what Schön (1983, 1987) refers to as reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. This participant further alluded to the emancipatory role of reflection and its possible impact on the emotional wellbeing of the teacher arguing that it helps in coping with possible setbacks that can come their way in an experiential learning situation by letting them stand back and assess the situation through reflection and taking stock:

You know what they are coming to terms with is actually what they can't do most of the time. I say to them at the beginning of the year, 'You are going to actually learn the hard way by making a huge number of mistakes and it's not easy to spend your year doing that'. (Laughs) I say, 'It [learning from mistakes] would be resilient and they have got to have some mechanism where they can stand back from that and review what has worked and what hasn't and not get sort of defeated by it all'. ~ UT4

Thus, almost all participants emphasised the role of reflection in the professional and personal development of student teachers and considered it extremely important for it to be a central part of the process. Interestingly one participant, while recognising its importance, nevertheless cautioned against overstressing it in the PGCE because doing so could create a lot of tension that might unnerve student teachers at this stage of their professional life. Secondly, she argued this reflection would be in the absence of enough experience and so would be less authentic. This latter view was shared by a number of other participants. This seems to reflect the emphasis on the practical understanding of reflection or its role in practical-theorising (Killen, 1989; Lawlor, 1990; McIntyre, 1993) perhaps overlooking its anticipatory function (Fendler, 2003; Akbari, 2007)

Relevance of reflection beyond the teaching profession

A number of participants highlighted the importance of reflection beyond the teaching profession or the even narrower implications of the concept in the PGCE:

I think it's not only important for teaching but extremely important for any profession, for absolutely any profession. But it so happens that I am a PGCE tutor, I am not training any other professionals. So I think it's extremely important for teachers. And I wish there were such training for the engineer that fixes my car, the builder that builds my house, and the doctor that takes care of me.~ UT7

When asked why he thought it is so important, he responded, *‘There is a difference between occupying a professional role and constructing a professional role. That’s what is...’*. The ‘occupying’ of role and the ‘constructing’ of it are important terms. The former seems to relate to the delivery model of education in which the professional delivers while in the later case the professional is expected to question, to create and recreate the role and the objectives of that role. Elaborating the importance of reflection in terms of the complexities that are associated with the concept of teaching one participant elaborated:

Teaching is, and I find it the older I get; I find it more difficult to describe. It is such a tapestry of linked material, linked activities, linked processes, linked interactions; that you have got to be constantly on the move to even begin to understand what’s going on and try to fit things together. So that all work together to construct knowledge, and skill and attitude. ~ UT14

This participant, too, highlighted the importance of reflection beyond the teaching profession such as its usefulness for law professionals and doctors.

In terms of this broader educational value of reflection some tutors associated it with the process of ‘education’ rather than ‘training’. The former, one participant suggested, prepares people to think for themselves, to make independent decisions and to be creative thinkers. It is here that the role and importance of reflection come to the fore in the PGCE:

We don't train people. There are things that people can be trained in and to improve. But actually it's an education process which and if you have an education process it means there is an involvement of the individual in that process for themselves which is the reflective practice. It says, 'We aren't training you; you aren't an electrician who is connecting wires...~ UT1

The idea echoes an understanding of reflection in its broader sense or the higher levels of reflection (Smyth, 1989; Zeichner and Liston, 1996) as in contrast to the more technically oriented definitions of reflection where the focus is technical efficiency (Cruickshank, 1981; Killen, 1989). However, some of the participants did not seem to associate 'training' with technicism as they referred to the programme as 'training' but not essentially with a connotation of technicism or apprenticeship.

4.3.2 Desired changes to reflection in the PGCE

This section presents the changes and/or additions that tutors suggested making to the programme in order to render it more conducive to the development of student teachers as reflective practitioners. Two themes were identifiable: Changes in terms of technical issues and changes on more structural/theoretical level.

Technical issues

Responses were quite diverse, but technical issues included things such as the introduction of reflective journals, keeping portfolios, and the provision of more time and opportunities for informal discussions with colleagues and seniors. Regarding the nature of reflective journals some participants gave contrasting views. For instance, one participant suggested that the journal should be used as a tool for free writing and should not be evaluated. On the other hand, another one proposed keeping a journal for the sake of it would be pointless and so there should be specific issues identified that the student teachers should focus on during the course of the year:

...what you might be sort of say, right, there are six or seven things, either concepts and processes or six or seven events that are there in the course over the year that I want you to write a reflective piece on or you could say to them you know in your first teaching placement. I want you to do some reflection on how you found the first week, how you found the third week, and how is that different than the first week and how you found the last week and how did it differ than the other two. So that they are reflecting on how things have gone but also how things have improved. ~UT8

The choice was thus between a more structured and directed way of journal keeping and one that was more unstructured, giving student teachers the freedom to explore and reflect. The idea of the more unstructured journal, however, seems to be aimed at reducing the amount of formal written work which student teachers were required to

do in the form of a number of Directed Tasks and written assignments on the one hand and, on the other, at giving them more autonomy in picking and reflecting on ideas and issues (something associated with the very concept of reflection itself). The suggestion for the structured form of journaling appears to be aimed at scaffolding the process of reflection keeping in view the aims of the learning process. Both ideas, thus, were partially in response to practical issues and partially to particular philosophical orientations regarding teaching and learning. Other suggestions on the technical side included the need for more tutorial and collaborative group work time for student teachers and collecting evidence for reflection in the form of not just written portfolios but also video and audio files. This later one seems an interesting idea mainly on two counts. Firstly, most literature associates reflection as an activity that is recorded in and evaluated through various written formats such as reflective journals, logs and evaluation forms, and secondly, the idea seems to be one response to deal with amount of written work that student teachers had to do during the PGCE.

As is indicated in Chapter 5 of this thesis, a number of student teachers argued that the amount of written work often hindered their reflection for want of time. Replacing a part of written work with video evidence might, therefore, be useful as an alternative. One suggestion was that in the school student teachers should be able to freely discuss issues with someone who was not actually their co-tutor (and assessor of their progress). It was argued that student teachers would thus feel freer to discuss their issues with someone who is not there to evaluate their work but to help in a

tension-free, approachable environment. This 'someone', it was suggested, could be any other senior/experienced teacher.

Another participant argued that reflection should be made more central. The implication seems to be that reflection is not overtly and expressly incorporated into the programme with clear goals and a framework and instead comes across as any other useful skill that the PGCE was expected to develop. Another likely reason for this emphasis on making reflection more central was perhaps a recognition of its apparently common sense understanding in the programme, which, the implication seems to be, needed a more comprehensive application in the PGCE. Both of these interpretations, however, are interlinked as particular conceptualisation(s) of a concept and its application often are.

Focus on bigger/structural issues

Suggestions on this level included issues such as extension of reflection to the elementary/school-level education:

I would say the most effective, the one single way of promoting this view is promoting reflective practice as part of the schooling discourse, as the discourse of the school as they operate because teachers are ex-school students and they come here with an idea about schooling that's promoted two, three, five, not two but five, ten years, or twenty years ago when they were in schools. So in a way the

PGCE tutors' role is to challenge these misconceptions about teaching, promote the view of teaching as a profession not as an occupation...~UT7

More training for the school co-tutors was another suggestion on the broader level. It was pointed out that school co-tutors needed to have regular exposure to research-based knowledge and new scholarship which they were less likely to have in schools primarily because of their pre-occupation with the practical teaching-learning and management issues that they faced in the busy school life. That kind of preoccupation and the school environment, it was suggested, prevented school co-tutors to have a broader reflective outlook on issues. It was argued that although the university tried to have more interaction with school co-tutors and to encourage them to read about latest research work, it was difficult to make sure they did. An important limitation hampering the desired enhanced level of collaboration with and training for school co-tutors was pointed out as the unavailability of adequate funds.

Another suggestion for the development of *'highly trained, highly reflective, highly able teachers'* was for a model of professional development spread over five years comprising:

... one year training, two years in schools, getting a masters (MTL) sort of three or six months where you come back in and you reflect and begin to specialise in a particular strand and then you go back out and

take that a little bit further within the school ... work related to leadership, management or higher level teaching and learning depending on what kind of career rout, might be more to do with the inclusion and pastoral work. ~UT8

The model, it was argued, would seem to be more expensive but would be better than spending all the money on education management bodies such as the TDA, the OFSTED, academies and consultants if the priority was the development of high quality teachers rather than the management of education through these bodies. Overall, suggestions were aimed at changes at the more practical, managerial and to some extent structural level, however, interestingly no suggestions were offered regarding any definitional/conceptual re-evaluation or re-adjustment vis-à-vis reflection as a concept in the programme.

CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM STUDENT TEACHERS

'Recall the ancient Indian fable of the blind men and the elephant. One man, feeling the elephant's trunk, said it was a snake. Another, feeling its tusk, claimed it was a spear. Still another, feeling the elephant's leg, declared it was a tree. Although various parts of the elephant had important similarities with a snake, a spear, and a tree, the animal as a whole was something essentially different. Likewise, even though many different elements of reflection can be identified, reflection itself is essentially different from any one of them.'~ Birmingham (2004: 313)

This chapter aims at a presentation and analysis of data obtained from student teachers included as participants in the study. As with findings from university tutors in Chapter 4, findings in this chapter are categorised under three broad themes: the *what*, the *how*, and the *why-and-so-what* of reflection. The *what* represents the meaning and subject-matter of reflection, the *how* represents the reflective practices identified and elaborated by student teachers and the factors influencing reflection; and the *why-and-so-what* represents the usefulness of reflection in the programme and suggestions for possible improvement. Relevant quotes are used from data to elaborate emerging themes. Pseudonyms are used to keep the participants anonymous. Participants are, therefore, represented as Student teacher1 (ST1), Student teacher2 (ST2) and so on.

5.1 The *what* of reflection

The meaning and subject-matter of reflection

Themes identified under this category came out in response to questions about the meaning and subject-matter of reflection. Questions regarding these were asked on two occasions: in the beginning of the PGCE, when the student teachers had been in the programme for about two months and so had some introduction to the concept and again towards the end of the programme.

Reflection defined on both occasions could be categorised in terms of it being considered as a *process*, and as an *attribute*. As a *process* it was primarily defined as thinking that aims at the assessment and evaluation of teaching practices for development and improvement (Harrison, 2008). Reflection, on this count, was largely defined on the technical and practical level (Van Manen, 1977; Zeichner and Liston, 1996) and/or as the technical, deliberative and personalistic types of reflection (Valli, 1997). With a technical/practical focus the concept was associated with issues of immediate, practical concern such as classroom management, lesson delivery, behavioural issues, individual learning needs and effective use of resources. One participant for instance, echoing this technical interpretation, described reflection as a process of:

Evaluating the good and the bad points of the lesson. What did not work and why? What did work and why? What type of classes i.e. teaching ability, the time of day of lesson and also the day of the

lesson where I would or would not carry on with a particular activity?

How I can improve the lesson and asking other staff of how I could

improve the teaching next time. ~ ST7

The focus of reflection here seems to be on the 'how' rather than the 'what' and 'why' of the teaching process. In a similar vein another student teacher described the subject-matter of reflection as thinking about:

All aspects of a lesson- the way pupils are entering, seated, work presented, assessed, taught, words used during explanations, comments in marking, the way pupils are allowed to behave during lessons, the discipline used to manage behaviour, etc.~ ST6

Other issues identified as the focus of reflection at this level included the way children work, the environment in the classroom during lessons, and the choice and use of teaching strategies and the ways and means to develop student interest and motivation in the teaching process. A minority of the participants mentioned slightly broader, beyond-the-classroom issues as subject-matter for reflection, for instance parental role in the process of education and the teacher's ability to collaborate with them (Valli, 1992, 1997; Zeichner and Liston, 1996):

As a teacher you should reflect on whether you can realistically do things better, and how. This means reflection about all aspects of your teaching career. Actual teaching, pastoral, works with parents. You

should reflect 'how I just did that – what went well? What went wrong? – Where can I improve so that I am a better educator, and ultimately a better benefit to my pupils? ~ST15

The above quote, while mainly referring to issues of practical import to the student teacher, also touches upon somewhat wider issues such as pastoral work with parents and the ways to become a 'better educator' which perhaps reflects a role more encompassing than a focus on the technicalities of classroom-teaching. However, this still does not seem to represent the higher levels of reflection as identified by Van Manen (1977), Zeichner and Liston (1996), Hatton and Smith (1995), Valli (1997) and Birmingham (2004) where the focus goes into the realm of social justice, equity, and developing awareness about the social and political aims of the process of education.

Towards the end of the PGCE, student teachers were presented with responses they gave at the beginning of the course and asked if they still adhered to their earlier definition of reflection. Three kinds of responses were found: responses reporting no change, responses showing some development into slightly higher levels of reflection and responses showing a reversal to the more technical and practical focus of reflection. Significantly, a majority, that is about two-thirds of the participants, did not report any change in their definition of reflection. While a minority of the student teachers defined reflection in terms which went beyond 'survival', i.e. reflection that concerns the 'social, moral or political dimensions of schooling' (Valli, 1997: 75), for the majority the focus of reflection throughout the course remained on the more

technical, general level revolving around issues of practical import to them rather than on issues associated with the higher levels of reflection. In some cases this could be categorised as 'personalistic reflection' (Valli, 1997), with a focus on themselves and their relationship with students or tutors. Even in terms of personalistic reflection, the focus seems to have been on behaviour management and the 'how' of teaching and learning rather than the 'why' of it. This issue is further explored in Chapters 6 and 7.

Changes which were identified by the remaining participants included moving the focus of reflection up from the more general thinking about practices and how to improve to reflection as a more systematic evaluation of the lessons, from more hypothetical reflection to reflection as a process of learning during experience, from just looking back on their teaching practices to constructive criticism of their work and from reflection about the self, teaching methods and classroom management to reflection on the needs of students to improve their learning. This latter kind of change has been interpreted differently by researchers. For instance a focus on the self as compared to that on the students' needs has been associated with either a lower or higher level of reflection (Jay and Johnson, 2002; Moore and Ash, 2002; Moore, 2004). This seems to be mainly due to the different interpretations of the concept by these writers. However, to this researcher this seems to have more to do with the student teachers' *focus* of reflection in response to the demand of their situation - their practical involvement in classroom teaching, behaviour management issues, and teaching strategies during practice - rather than it being an indication of a possible increase or decrease in the level of reflection. Further, the more technical focus of reflection at this

stage seems also to be due to a lack of behaviour management skills and subject-teaching expertise, factors which according to (Moore, 2004), could contribute to the practical focus of reflection among beginning teachers.

Another development reported was more frequent reflection and a realisation of the usefulness of reflection in practice. The frequency in reflection seems to be because of the student teachers' involvement in practical teaching at this stage as compared to the initial stages in the PGCE. This seems plausible as most student teachers had a more practical rather than theoretical concept of reflection, associating it primarily with thinking and learning during practice or reflection-in/on-action rather than reflection-for-action (Schön, 1983).

The third kind of response, that is, reverting back to the technical/practical emphasis of reflection by those participants (less than one-third) who in the beginning had defined the concept in slightly broader critical terms, seems to be an indication of a pre-occupation with immediate survival needs at this initial stage of their practical involvement in teaching, which is likely to have them leave the idealism of reflecting on broader issues and to instead focus on the technical skills required for classroom teaching.

Some student teachers reflected on issues pertaining to the availability or otherwise of moral and psychological support to them and its impact on their personal and

professional development. This is similar to what Valli (1997: 75) identifies as 'personalistic reflection' or reflection on 'one's personal growth or relationship' with others. One student teacher, for instance, identified what she perceived to be the indifferent behaviour of a school co-tutor as the subject-matter for reflection:

The indifference of the ITT co-ordinator towards me on my first placement and how isolated I felt at that placement. I got more insight from my second placement school Tutor in one day than I got from the entire time of my first placement from both the school tutor and the ITT co-ordinator...~ST19

Although not a prevalent theme in the data, this, nevertheless, seems an interesting issue as it relates reflection to psychological factors such as the effect of the co-tutors' attitude and the feelings of isolation which is likely to have significant impact on student teachers' motivation during their initiation into practical teaching. Another issue mentioned in terms of this personal-psychological focus of reflection was the student teachers' preference for 'positive' criticism from tutors as against 'criticism for the sake of it'. This indicates the important role that tutorial support (or the absence of it) can play in impacting reflective development of the student teachers during their training year. An implication of this, could be that in the absence of adequate psychological and moral support and guidance, the student teachers' focus of reflection might divert to issues of personal vulnerability, isolation and survival rather than their students' needs and issues related to the teaching-learning process.

One participant associated reflection with a merger between theory and practice which according to her develops through the course:

It has been a progress, each stage providing scope for further improvement, new understanding and general merging of theory and practice are reached through reflection (if it makes sense), both individually and through discussion.~ ST1

This echoes one of the aims associated with reflection where it is considered as a process of practical-theorising or the development of theory during practice (Pearson, 1989; McIntyre, 1993).

Some of the participants defined reflection in terms of it being an attribute/aggregate of attributes such as open-mindedness and the capacity to learn from mistakes for instance, *'The ability to understand, analyse and learn from events that have happened'. ST2*

and,

Reflection is about being open minded and accepting that improvement is always possible. I reflect because I want to do better. I think reflection is not just a skill which should be applied to your academic life. ~ ST15

This description - aside from identifying attributes such as open-mindedness (Dewey, 1933; Hatton and Smith, 1995) - also mentions the eagerness and optimism about the prospects of improvement as a result. Further, it reflects a slightly broader understanding of reflection which goes beyond its technical, skill-oriented meaning. However, it can be noted that the open-mindedness mentioned here seems to have been appreciated in terms of its role in the improvement of practice rather than in enhancing one's ability on the more critical level of reflection.

5.2 The *how* of reflection

5.2.1 Reflective practices/strategies

A variety of both school and university-based practices aimed at developing reflection was identified. These included practices such as group discussions, lesson evaluations, meetings with and feedback from co-tutors, 'lots of reading', 'reading and annotating lesson plans after the class', presentations/demonstrations and lesson observations. Most of these practices are interactive in nature and involve either student teachers or student teachers and tutors or senior colleagues. An important value placed on such practices was in terms of confidence building and getting insight into one's strengths and weaknesses. Others associated the process with seeking advice and psychological support through sharing ideas and issues during group reflection. As one student teacher argued,

Talking to other student teachers and friends helps in bringing out my true feelings about dealing with difficult things. ~ST6

The focus seems to be more on the process and method of reflection, which was presented in a variety of ways with some emphasis on interactive activities such as discussion and exchange of ideas with peers and tutors, rather than the subject-matter of it. For the majority of student teachers, discussion appeared to comprise the main reflective practice. One participant emphasised its value thus:

Discussion and talking with others is useful as this enables you to realise that your situation is not unique. You are able to discuss ideas and strategies. Make notes during lessons as situations occur to remind you in the future. ~ST9.

The point here is the value of knowing that one is not alone in facing problems at an early stage of development and learning. This knowledge likely has some psychological boost in terms of confidence building for the student teacher with a realisation that other student teachers are facing similar problems.

Presentation of ideas and follow up discussions and involvement in activities were also identified as reflective practices:

The practical demonstrations, poster presentations, presentations: all in front of peers. As reflection takes place by comparing the style of

presentations and also discussion of what worked well in the presentation and what did not.~ ST7

Again this process seems to have value for the student teacher in its role in providing opportunities for making comparisons and for discussions. The reflection in these activities seems to have been in three ways: during the process of conceptualising and developing presentations and receiving critique of others; participating as an observer/critic of someone else's presentation and reflecting on others' comments/critiques on others' presentations.

Another practice identified was concept mapping which was considered useful for developing reflection and for enhancing knowledge and understanding about teaching and learning. The value of concept mapping according to one participant is both in its role as a process of initiation into the profession and as a tool for further development and insight into its complexities:

Concept maps about what teaching and learning meant to us at the start of the course. Since then I have completed 3 more concept maps throughout the course and it is clear that my knowledge and understanding of what teaching and learning is all about has greatly expanded.

Some of the other strategies identified included questions being asked by the tutors that, it was argued, helped in developing thinking, besides, involving in activities such as breaking down curriculum, preparing schemes of work and reading and writing

assignments were also mentioned as useful reflective practices. Interestingly, one participant reported that none of the university-based sessions were useful for reflection. The reason given was a belief in a more practical approach to reflection which, it was argued, was best achieved during practice in the school. This coincides with the particular understanding of reflection in its more practical sense such as reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983) or practical-theorising (McIntyre, 1993). The complete rejection of the university's role in reflective development, however, seems an extreme view. Although most participants gave more weight to the school than the university, they, nevertheless, did not entirely rule out the usefulness of the latter. Another participant argued that there should not be much formal emphasis on reflection as it makes the course too reflective and takes away the 'fun'. This seems to be due to the potentially overwhelming effect of a requirement for deeper reflection at a time when the student teachers are already pre-occupied with a much pressured work schedule and with issues of practical and immediate importance to them as beginning teachers. This is also likely to do with individual traits of character such as wanting things done without putting much reflection into the process. This latter assumption seems to carry more weight because this was not a predominant view.

Other practices associated with reflection included observing various teaching styles and making notes, teaching independently without being supported or observed. Teaching independently was considered as a reflective practice because it made a teacher responsible for thinking through issues autonomously and for taking responsibility for his/her decisions in the classroom. Taking responsibility has been

consistently identified as an important reflective characteristic (Dewey, 1933; Pollard et al., 2008). Getting criticism after being observed was also identified as a useful process for reflective development if the criticism was positive and constructive.

Overall, student teachers identified a range of practices and processes that they associated with the development of reflection. There was, however, no coherent theme or emphasis discernible on any one or a collection of practices. A number of explanations could be put forward for this. One is the common-sense understanding of reflection as some kind of thinking about teaching and learning. This seems plausible as most student teachers interviewed towards the end of the training programme did not seem to have an in-depth knowledge of reflection as an educational concept in terms of its theoretical or historical background and the complexities involved in its connotation and implementation. A second interpretation seems to be that their understanding of reflection was as an all-encompassing concept with no specific focus on its processes or subject-matter or as Zeichner (1994) refers to as the 'generic' reflection. Further, this could also be because of the novice status of most student teachers a majority of whom were at their early stages of professional development with limited exposure to the theory and intricacies of the educational process. Another explanation could be the student teachers' focus on issues of practical import to them which might have left them with not much time to reflect on the nature of reflection or the practices involved in it. Overall, the outcome seems to be a focus of reflection in its more generic (Zeichner and Liston, 1996) and practical (Valli, 1997) sense which concerns with the technicalities of classroom teaching and improving practice. This

seems, partly, to be due to a lack of an overt and comprehensive framework for reflection in the programme and, partly due to the student teachers' pre-occupation with issues of practical import to them at this stage. The demands of curriculum delivery and classroom management in a pressurised programme mean that the pragmatic response is to use reflection as a tool for focusing on immediate improvement/revision issues, rather than on deeper/longer term considerations of pedagogy and the aims of education. This does not; however, seem to mean that student teachers do not have the ability to reflect on issues of broader import, given time, opportunity and an overt framework towards such an end. There is, therefore, value in including the broader aspects of reflection in the programme – which is something that will bear fruit at a later stage of their career when they have overcome the immediate challenges of simply teaching their subject.

Thus, although reflection at the technical/practical level (which is more likely to be the case at these initial stages of the student teachers' professional development in a one-year, predominantly practice-oriented training course) is a *necessary* but not *sufficient* outcome of its inclusion in the programme. The concept carries more promise, beyond its help in the inculcation of practical classroom teaching skills, and in terms of developing beginning teachers as life-long learners on a higher critical level, *if* it is put to its full potential in initial teacher education programmes such as the PGCE. The question is how could that be done? This is explored, further, in Chapter 6 and 7.

5.2.2 Factors affecting reflection

Sites for reflection: university/school experience

This section presents and analyses participants' views regarding the relative impact of the school and the university on the development of reflection. Just over half of the participants (11 of 21) viewed the school experience more useful than that in the university for developing reflection; only 4 had the opposite view while 6 thought that both were useful in different ways. Most participants who viewed school experience more useful argued so because of its practical relevance. This is understandable keeping in view the pre-occupation of student teachers with practical teaching at this stage and their perception of reflection in terms of its practical relevance to classroom teaching rather than its theoretical understanding or the higher level of reflection. Secondly, it seems most of the student teachers associated the university with theory and the school with practice and hence the assumed greater usefulness of the latter in their reflective development.

... [T]here is no better way to reflect upon something than to apply...~ ST1

Those who favoured the school experience did so mainly because of its practical relevance and for making their reflection substantial:

The school-based part was probably most important as the practice is much harder than the theory. In theory I am able to control a classroom; in practice the dynamics of a class can change so rapidly that you always have to think on your feet which is a skill that can only come with practice.~ ST2

And:

School based part. I found it incredibly tiring and overwhelming, but it is where you are in the situation that it [theory] all makes sense, it's all in context and you can see the results of changes that we make directly there in front of us, not in theory, not in writing. It is a rollercoaster, but it's far more meaningful than being at Uni. Although Uni does give many ideas to try, but it somehow doesn't mean as much until after the first placement. ~ST6

Interestingly although most university tutors (ref. Chap. 4) did not associate the university with theory, student teachers did so. This could be because of a lack of appreciation of theory on the part of student teachers in its pure epistemological sense in the absence of its practical implementation in the school. This, however, does not translate into their denial of the relevance of theory in terms of its usefulness for reflection at this stage, only that the relevance and importance of the theoretical conception of reflection (coming mainly from the university) was more evident to student teachers during practice. This also supports the idea of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) presented by Shulman (1987) according to which knowledge of pedagogy (in this case reflective practice) and content-knowledge (subject-matter) should go together for an effective teaching-learning process and that the two cannot be well-understood in isolation from each other.

One student teacher preferred the school-part of the PGCE because of the better support and co-ordination with the co-tutors available there:

I had more one-to-one meetings with individual staff [in the school] to look at different aspects of the lesson and how to make these parts of the lesson outstanding whether this was the starter, the plenary, the pace, differentiation or managing behaviour within the classroom. In a school-based environment, there was more support available, especially the school I was at, to become an outstanding teacher. ~ST7

This participant appreciated tutorial support on a more practical level that is likely to come more in a practice oriented school environment rather than the university which is expected to provide support on a more theoretical level.

Those who presented the university a better place for the development of reflection offered the more time available there as the most important factor for the development of reflection:

The university part as there was time to think and to read. Time to talk and develop ideas. ~ ST5,

University – more time and would often do as a group. ~ST8

The University part, since there was at least time to evaluate it. ~ ST19

Rather than seeing either the school or the university as the primary site for developing reflection, the third perspective suggested the inter-dependence of both sites. The emphasis seems to be on the usefulness of the university for introducing and conceptualising reflection which then needed to be put into practice in the school for further understanding and practical use (McIntyre, 1993). The most important reason given was a theory-into-practice association which translated into a good balance:

I would say that it is roughly equal. Without the University guidance I may have struggled with being a reflective practitioner, but it is something I improved at through actually doing it whilst on placement. ~ ST3

Both were very useful but in different ways. The university based part was good in helping me understand what reflection was all about, yet without firsthand experience on my placement, I could not understand the value of it without putting it into practice. ~ ST16

Opportunities for reflection

Responses to questions regarding opportunities for reflection in the programme varied. 8 of the participants argued that there were enough opportunities for reflection, 5 argued otherwise and 5 were of the view that there were opportunities for reflection in theoretical terms but not in practice as they had not had practical teaching experience at that stage (the initial phase) of the programme.

Yes: In respect to my own study, yes. We have forms that we fill out which summarise what we have learnt from each session. It is a good opportunity to get your thoughts down onto paper. ~ ST3,

Definitely. Found more intricate ways to reflect in PGCE. Made me think about lessons taught 5 years ago. ~ ST6.

Yes lots of opportunities for reflection. Observation, peer assessment, collaboration, discussion. ~ ST9

Those who said at the beginning of the course that there were limited opportunities for reflection mentioned the amount of work, the structure of the programme and the time available for reflection as factors hindering the process. Some suggested lack of practical experience as a barrier to reflection. Another reason given for lack of opportunities for reflection was the amount of work involved in the PGCE which made it very difficult for student teachers to have time for reflection on their practice while in the school placement:

The amount of work I have to do for university in terms of assignments, directed tasks, phase B projects, my time for planning and reflecting on classroom practice is diminished and this can be demoralising at times since there is enough work to do.~ ST16

‘Not really as there is always so much to do! Especially, if the lesson was not repeated. Could be easy to forget about it. ~ST8.

Interestingly the very purpose –according to university tutors - of the assignments and directed tasks that these student teachers considered a hindrance to reflection - was their development as reflective practitioners. This on the one hand seems to reflect their frustration with negotiating the time-work balance and on the other their understanding of reflection as a somewhat common-sense, informal thinking about teaching rather than as something that one can be engaged in through formal, written assignments. A number of participants indicated their preference for this informal reflection. One student teacher for instance argued that formal reflection was not essential and ‘informal’ reflection was always possible and so, *I reflect on day’s session while walking back home’ ST15*. Further, associating reflection with lesson repetition is an interesting observation. It seems to support the cyclic structure of reflection (Kolb, 1984; Harrison, 2008) on the one hand and on the other the value of practical experience in the development and improvement of reflection.

A third kind of response represented the complexity involved in understanding the interaction of theory and practice and their impact on the development of reflection:

Have had time to reflect (!) on the meaning but have not put it into practice yet (PGCE placement has not started yet) ~ST7;

Lack of practical teaching experience. In uni methods are taught but they remain theoretical till getting an opportunity to put into practice.~ ST16

And:

Hard to say, but overall I would think so. It’s just that there is so much to absorb right now. ~ ST19

Responses regarding opportunities for reflection in the school were similarly diverse: a mix of 'yes' (3), 'no' (3) and 'yes-with caveats' (15):

Yes I have. And even though I commented on the timings earlier in this questionnaire being sometimes a bit short, this ability to juggle time and use time effectively is also a skill teachers must have.~ ST2

The 'yes with caveats' responses reflected time constraints and the amount and mode of work that needed to be done as strains on the process of reflection. Time also included time required from co-tutors/co-ordinators that was sometimes not available:

Yes. However, I would have maybe liked more time with my ITT co-ordinator to discuss my reflections with somebody who hadn't seen me deliver a lesson.~ ST3;

Although most of the student teachers argued that the amount of work and the inadequate time available to accomplish that made it difficult to find time for reflection some, however, found it useful to try to deal with this kind of difficult task during their training. In this they seemed to agree with a number of tutors (ref. Chapter 4) who too argued that working under-pressure during their training year might be useful for student teachers since they are expected to face a more pressured time-table once in schools as regular teachers. Understandably, while at the university, a lack of practical teaching experience was mainly cited by student teachers as a factor

affecting reflection, and while in the school, lack of time and the amount of work they had to do was considered as the main factor affecting reflection.

School co-tutors'/ mentors' help in reflection

This section represents student teachers' perceptions about the role/help of co-tutors/mentors in the process of developing their reflection. A variety of ways was identified in which co-tutors had been of help in this regard. These included practices such as weekly review meetings, discussions, constructive criticism, identifying strengths and weaknesses, formal and informal observations, supplying ideas to reflect, lesson deconstruction, advice, asking questions, IAP (Individual Action Planning) and target setting and feedback. Other issues that a number of participants identified which the co-tutors helped them in reflecting on included planning and personalised learning, content selection, delivery and behaviour management strategies, the QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) requirements, critically looking at classroom practices, lesson improvement, and putting things into perspective:

They would ask me to think about what I felt went well, what I thought did not and then come up with 3 targets or solutions to try out next time. They wanted me to reflect on strategies used and techniques such as questioning. They did not really help in the process but gave me instructions when I should reflect, i.e. after a lesson observation. ~ST8.

Yes, as they tell you what they saw when you taught, making it slightly less subjective than just reflecting on your own lesson. The main things that they wanted me to reflect on were the content of the lesson, its delivery and behaviour management. ~ ST3

As can be seen in the above quotes the focus of the guidance student teachers received has been issues of practical nature such as classroom management, teaching techniques such as questioning and delivery of lessons. The quotes also indicate the student teachers' satisfaction with getting advice on issues of immediate practical import to them as that is perhaps what they needed the most at this stage. Also important is the point raised by ST3 concerning the objectivity that a tutor can bring with respect to a student teacher's self-evaluation.

Two participants reported they did not get much help from co-tutors:

The only reflection I have from my first placement is how indifferent these people seemed. ~ ST19

This perceived lack of support on the part of the co-tutors although not mentioned by other participants is an important issue at this stage of the student teachers' development. The 'indifference' seems to be individual and not institutional but factors need to be analysed that lead to this kind of an attitude, for instance, it could be because of the co-tutor's pre-occupation with his/her own work or lack of responsibility towards the student teacher's training needs. This is important because

in an increasingly school-based ITE, student teachers could face such lack of support which is likely to cause feelings of vulnerability. This feeling of vulnerability has the potential to aggravate further in the possible absence of support from the HEI's. Possible alternative support from the university tutors was mentioned by two student teachers:

I had more help from my university tutor than the school tutor (mentor) the uni tutor wanted me to become more assertive with the staff and reflect on my inability to do that.' ST5 And, 'My tutor at university helped when reflecting on my practice. ~ ST20

This is an indication of the importance of the university to continue to have its role in the partnership in the ITE as it seems to provide an alternative avenue for student teacher support in case such support does not come from the school co-tutors/mentors for one or another reason.

Duration of PGCE for developing as a reflective practitioner

Responses regarding the duration of the PGCE vis-à-vis its usefulness for the reflective development of student teachers varied with a majority (11) of the participants terming it a good beginning, urging the process of reflection is evolutionary, on-going, and ever-improving with experience. Six participants said the duration was enough, while three thought otherwise. One participant suggested that practical teaching after

the PGCE might be more useful for developing reflection. Intensity of the course was put forward as a counterbalance against the short duration of the programme:

I think it is because the course is so intense. You are forever thinking and reflecting on your practice and wondering how to do better because, in some cases, these reflections can help you in the next minute let alone the next day. (However, I do wish the course was longer, it's awesome!)~ ST2,

Yes I think it is enough, it's a very intense course, having this longer would probably increase the dropout rate. ~ ST21

One participant argued that it is enough because the course is properly structured and well-paced:

Definitely, for me, the best way to learn is through doing/trying something. There is the right amount of time to do and there is no sense of rushing/being forced to teach straight the way. The preparation/induction days allow you time to get to know the school, the students and the staff. I was given the opportunity to observe and ask questions and think about how I may start my teaching, what ideas I think might work with particular classes etc.~ ST9

Others, however, argued that there was not enough time, for two main reasons: the amount of work to be covered and the nature of reflection which is evolutionary and cannot be confined to a year's work:

No! I maintain that the course should be done over 18 months.

Because of the amount you have to do in all areas of the course, I

think that sometimes my reflections became a bit too generic. ~ ST3

This reflection becoming 'generic' is an important point which seems to mean that in the absence of adequate time and due to the large amount of work, student teachers might find it difficult to focus on particular issues and with particular frame of work or model in terms of reflection.

And so as another student teacher argued:

I would have welcomed a 2 year course - I feel that the vocational and

academic aspects of the course are both lessened by the inability to

focus on either one. ~ ST5

The most prevalent view, however, was that the course provided an appropriate initiation into the process of reflection which would continue to evolve through post-course experience and further professional development:

Nine months is a nice start though, and I can't wait to have my own

groups of students. Teachers are evidently 'life-long' learners; each

group requiring new approaches and 'one' must move with the times.

~ ST1,

Yes and no. It is a good basis, but reflection will carry on after this

and will develop more as I become more experienced. ~ ST4

Supporting the importance of introducing reflection in the PGCE one participant emphasised proper understanding of the process for its useful application later on in professional life:

PGCE is the beginning in the development as a reflective practitioner.

It is not the end of being a reflective practitioner. I think I will always be developing to become as reflective as I can but I think it is important that I learn to reflect well within the PGCE course to enable me to reflect well on my teaching throughout my teaching career.~

ST7

The emphasis thus seems to be on learning the 'process' of reflection rather than the subject-matter of it or how to reflect rather than what to reflect on and in that sense student teachers seemed to be satisfied with the introductory level of the concept in the programme. One participant presented the view that although the duration is appropriate, it is difficult to get enough time for reflection due to the excessive amount of work to be done:

I think nine months is enough time, but it is made extremely difficult with the sheer amount of work that we are expected to do. Students have enough planning and marking to do while at school and this is made far more intense by having projects and assignments to do for university at the same time. So in short, it is enough time but it is made very hard by the amount of hoops you have to jump through. ~

ST16

A number of participants pointed out the usefulness of practice for the development of reflection. By this practice they meant post-PGCE practical teaching experience.

I would like another year to cement my subject knowledge but, as I have mentioned before, practice maybe more useful than theory. ~ ST17,

I think one year at postgraduate is enough; however more school based work would be better. ~ ST18

Hindrances to reflection

A variety of hindrances was identified including, mainly, limited time and the amount of work. Lack of practical experience in the beginning, lack of understanding the concept of reflection, formal evaluation, ideas/opinions/styles of staff members, and dissatisfaction with particular subject (s) taught/departments placed in were also identified as possible hindrances. Though most of these constraints were mentioned universally in the whole programme, lack of experience was pointed out in the beginning/university part and ideas/opinions/styles of school staff during placements. Three participants reported that there were no hindrances to reflection.

The amount of work in the form of Directed Tasks was mentioned by most of the participants as a considerable hindrance to reflection. As one participant elaborated this issue in some detail and argued that they are a considerable drain on their time and energy and without having much value in terms of their usefulness:

Directed tasks are more mundane and cost more time than they are actually useful. Directed Tasks could be like an absolute nightmare. Loads of really mundane tasks: Plan lessons, give lessons, evaluate lessons, plan resources and you got a whole time table, give you Directed Tasks [DT's] and university assignments. You have to come to meetings in schools... We are given another project to do a Phase B3 project which is contributing something to Phase B schools or scheme of work or some resources or something like that. So not only we have done all the DT's, done the assignments, they still want us to do Phase B 3 project as well as they want us to organise a day journey for the students and to take them out and so it's just too much. We have got to do the skills test and the QTS test. Which are uncalled for when we have already done GCSE and degrees ~ ST16

Time constraint was mentioned in connection with the amount of work involved in the PGCE. This was highlighted by 13 out of the 21 participants as a hindrance.

Because it is both important to learn how to teach, and how to reflect, it is difficult to balance times. Sometimes I have no time to reflect on a lesson, and, therefore, have to wait until I am next free to reflect; this can cause problems as I may not remember some aspects of the lesson which are important.~ ST18,

The amount of work, intensity, and time, I ended up doing nothing but teaching/PGCE related stuff that meant I was too fatigued to properly reflect. ~ ST19

Interestingly both these quotes reveal, on the one hand the difficulty that student teachers apparently face in negotiating the time and teaching/work balance and on the other, the desire to have freer time for reflection which, it was argued, was not available. This seems irreconcilable with most student teachers' consideration of reflection as a process most usefully learnt during practice. The implication then seems to be that reflection is best learnt with practical teaching experience but that the amount of that practical work should not exceed the limit where it leaves little space for student teachers to reflect in and on their practice. Lack of appreciation to provide this space in the course, it seems, would overburden student teachers to an extent of making them turning their experience into a rigid routine with little reflective urge.

An attitude of aloofness and lack of empathy on the part of some staff members in some departments/schools was also mentioned by a number of participants as a hindrance to reflection:

I had a tutor whose method of teaching was very robotic and not much interaction with the classroom; I felt this would be a hindrance to my learning development as I observed at times in class.~ ST21,

Some ideas not supported by other staff members, opinion about students of other teachers...~ST9

To deal with this, the participant tried to:

Start fresh and try not to listen to opinions of other teachers and make my own mind up about students after I have taught them for a couple of lessons.

One participant mentioned infrequent meetings with people as a possible barrier to reflection as in such a case:

... assumptions can set in about how to do something that if not corrected, will subsequently make it harder to change.~ ST16

Two participants mentioned the frequency and one the format of lesson evaluations as impediments to reflection. It was suggested that with structured forms of evaluation, student teachers would have a better idea of exactly what is required of them and that this would also be useful in saving student teachers' time.

On the whole, although once more there was a variety in terms of hindrances pointed out by participants, the most significant ones seemed to be the amount of work and tasks that had to be accomplished in the presumably insufficient time, that is, finding the balance between preparation for and actual teaching, reflecting on practices and meeting university and school-based requirements such as directed tasks.

5.3 The *why- and-so-what* of reflection

5.3.1 Usefulness of reflection

Reflection, in terms of its usefulness was associated with analysis, assessment and improvement of technical issues such as skills and practices as well as with slightly broader attitudinal characteristics such as the development of insight, criticality and openness to ideas. On the technical level it was deemed useful for its help in improving practical teaching learning issues such as classroom practices, identification of strengths and weaknesses, analysis of good and bad aspects of teaching, and the planning and implementation of lessons.

Yes in terms of better classroom management, engaging activities, confidence building, and insight into job. ~ ST1

While associating it with ‘insight into the job’ apparently appears to be an indication of a slightly broader scope of reflection, the primary focus in the quote still remains on the technical level. Some of the student teachers, while considering reflection as a good thing, were not sure about its usefulness as new teachers and argued that they would be in a position to understand its value better once they had more teaching experience. In that sense the student teachers’ understanding of reflection revolved around its use during practice.

Those who associated it with relatively broader issues pointed out its worth in terms of developing the ability to teach to higher standards, to be open to ideas and to think

about the 'aims and objectives' of the teaching-learning process. In this sense the impact of reflection on the practical level was also extended to broader professional levels:

By being reflective on your own practice you are able to get a clear understanding of ways your teaching could improve and strategies to use to gain professional development.~ST9

Another usefulness mentioned was its role in developing reflexivity (Moore, 2004) and hence independence in terms of analysing one's situation and practice without requiring external feedback. Reflexivity has been identified as a higher level of reflection by researchers such as Moore (2004) and Sandelowski and Barroso (2002). Sandelowski and Barroso (2002: 216) for instance, define it as 'the ability to reflect inward toward oneself as an inquirer; outward to the cultural, historical, linguistic, political, and other forces that shape everything about inquiry...'. As can be seen the scope of reflection here goes beyond the immediate, self-reflection and enfolds issues of broader import. Similarly, Moore (2004: 149) argues for reflexivity that goes beyond self-evaluation and includes reflection on 'wider social, historical and cultural contexts in which schooling itself is situated'. The student teachers' understanding of reflexivity, however, could be identified more with individual thoughtfulness about actions rather than a complex, wide-ranging, purposeful collaborative process. At this level reflection was also considered useful for its role in dealing with anxieties about teaching in the school. Honest assessment of strengths and weaknesses through reflection, it was argued, helped in focusing on teaching to a 'higher standard rather than just how to teach'.

5.3.2 Suggestions for improving reflection in the PGCE

A number of suggestions were put forward for possible improvement regarding inclusion of reflection in the programme. One suggestion was about the need for developing reflection in a natural/informal way. It was argued that formalising it through prescribed evaluation procedures and directed tasks made it unnatural, a source of tension and waste of time:

I think sometimes doing a lesson evaluation and reflection for every lesson can be a waste of time and an added pressure when you have got so many other things to do. The reflections need to be encouraged but will naturally come to you when you talk about it to someone or just think about it. ~ ST2

Another participant, affirming reflection as a valuable skill and acknowledging the need of the university to formalise it for 'hoop jumping', argued that this leads to frustration and tension when 'so much is required of training teachers'. More informal reflection through personal journals was preferred over a requirement to do so through the more structured and formalised directed tasks:

On the PGCE course emphasis needs to be made on reflection, but not so much through directed tasks, but more through reflective journals, which could be used as evidence instead, and this would be more natural and meaningful, far less stressful and useful for the teacher.~

ST6

This is perhaps due to the highly structured and formalised nature of the directed tasks in comparison to the idea of a more informal kind of journals where student teachers might record their reflections in possibly more independent way. Moreover, this coincides with one consistent view of most student teachers arguing for a more informal kind of reflection, reflection associated less written assignments and directed tasks and more with independent or collaborative activities using non-verbal techniques such as personal journals, discussions and presentations.

Two participants viewed that reflection takes time and is better learnt in practice:

Oh, Reflection was initially difficult to do; I found that I truly understood the meaning of the word when I started my phase A practice. ~ ST7,

I think it is a skill that takes time to learn. It seems to me that the PGCE as it is now has not been set up to be truly supportive of reflection. ~ ST5

This seems to show a preference for reflection-in and through action over its theoretical provision in the university setting. Two participants argued that it is a very important concept; however, it needs to figure more centrally in the programme than it now is:

In terms of our TDC [Teacher Development Course] sessions, the reflective practitioner element was looked at right at the start of our PGCE. Maybe it should have cropped up in more sessions to keep it fresh in our minds. ~ST3

Reflection is a very useful concept and does need to figure centrally in the PGCE programme.~ ST19

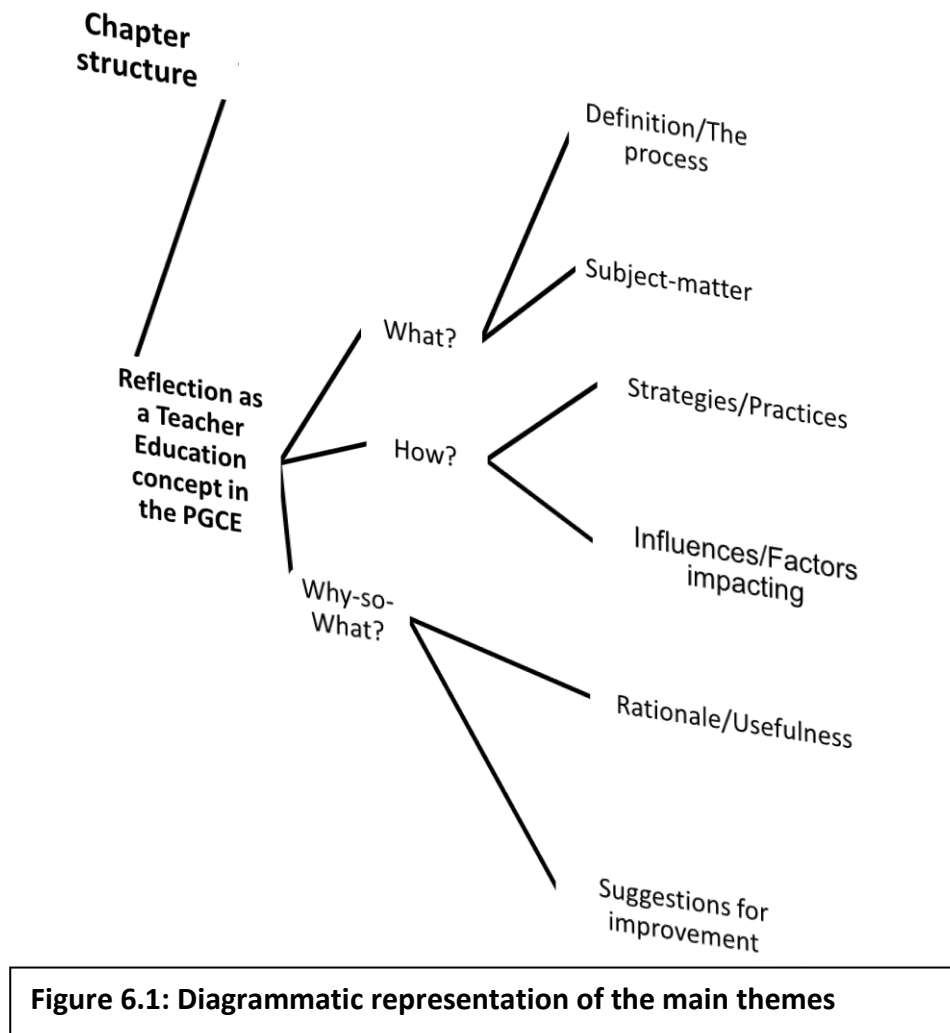
Interestingly when asked if they had read a chapter in a book on the concept of reflection specifically included in the course as an introduction to reflection and if they could identify some key theorists/writers on the concept, two out of the five student teachers interviewed replied they did not exactly remember if they had read the chapter and so were unable to identify any key theorist/writer in the area of reflection as an academic concept. The remaining three said they had read the chapter in the beginning of the course but did not remember any author/theorist mentioned in it or from any other source. This seems to have important implications on two counts: on the one hand this seems to indicate the absence of an emphasis on a solid theoretical framework/model about reflection and its meaning and on the other the relatively less stress on any precise conceptual understanding of the concept in the programme. This issue is taken up further in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION: THE *WHAT, HOW AND WHY* OF REFLECTION.

‘In the case of teacher education, the laborious attempts to facilitate reflective practices for teachers fly in the face of the truism... that there is no such thing as an unreflective teacher. If educational researchers believe that all teachers think about what they do, then why is there so much talk about making teachers into reflective practitioners?’. Fendler (2003: 23)

This chapter is aimed at further analysis, discussion in the light of related literature and interpretation of the main findings from the data presented and analysed in chapters 4 and 5. This keeps in view the conceptual framework identified in Chapter 1 and *the what, the how, and the why-and-so-what* of the topic that is, reflection as it is understood and implemented as a teaching-learning/teacher education concept in the programme under study. Under the *what* of reflection, the discussion will revolve around its definition in terms of the processes involved in it and the content or subject-matter of reflection; the *how* will focus on issues around the strategies and practices associated with reflection, their pros and cons and the hindrances related to the implementation of the concept; the *why-and-so-what* is aimed at exploring the rationale of reflection as a teacher education concept in the programme and also at an analysis of suggestions for possible improvement of the concept vis-à-vis its meaning and implementation.

The following (figure 6.1) is a diagrammatic representation of the structure of this chapter.



This chapter will thus focus on answering three main questions:

1. What does reflection mean as a teaching-learning/teacher education concept in the PGCE context and what is its subject-matter as is it interpreted in the programme?

2. What are the practices/strategies that are in vogue in the programme for the implementation of the concept and what are the possible factors influencing its connotation and implementation?

3. Why is it important that reflection is included as a teacher education concept in the programme and how can it possibly be improved if there is room for improvement?

Most sections of this chapter will discuss issues explored in Chapters 4 and 5 as synthesis of findings from university tutors and student teachers. Section 6.1 discusses issues involved in the *what* of reflection, that is, its definition and subject-matter; section 6.2 discusses the *how* and section 6.3 the *why-and-so-what* of reflection.

6.1 The *what* of reflection

6.1.1 Definition of reflection as a process

True to literature beginning with foundational works such as Dewey (1933), Van Manen (1977), Schön (1983, 1987), Zeichner (1981, 1983), Cruickshank (1981, 1985a, 1985b); relatively recent works such as Calderhead (1989, 1993), Zeichner (1991), Day (1993), Zeichner and Liston (1996), Hatton and Smith (1995), Valli (1997), Markham (1999), McLaughlin (1999); and more recent studies such as Jay and Johnson (2002), Fendler (2003), Atkinson (2004), Birmingham (2004), Moore (2004), Akbari (2007), El-Dib (2007), Dymoke and Harrison (2008), Mann et.al (2009), and Harrison and Lee (2011), reflection in the light of the views of both groups of participants (university tutors and student teachers) was defined variously. University tutors defined reflection primarily in two ways: as a more common-sense ‘thinking about things’ or *monologic*

reflection and a more cyclical, active process of individual or collaborative inquiry or *dialogic reflection* as noted in Chapter 4. Student teachers also defined it in two ways: as a *process* and as an *attribute* (Chapter 5). As a process it resembled the university tutors' monologic reflection (as thinking about things) but not entirely so in terms of its scope or subject-matter. As an *attribute* it was associated with qualities such as open-mindedness and criticality (things that university tutors identified as characteristics of reflective practitioners).

As a monologic reflection the university tutors *mainly* (but not exclusively) associated reflection with a common-sense process of thinking about issues beginning with and ranging from the technical and practical (Van Manen, 1977; Valli, 1997) to slightly more critical issues. Though the definition varied within the university tutors' group, meanings attached to the concept predominantly encompassed practical, immediate classroom-based, and school-centred issues. Some of the issues that were mentioned included the technicalities of classroom teaching, students' learning, and student-behaviour management (Cruickshank, 1981, 1985a, 1985b; Killen, 1989; Valli, 1997). On a broader level, this kind of reflection also encompassed issues such as the social and moral development of students and the aims and objectives of education (Zeichner, 1981, Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Calderhead, 1989; Hatton and Smith, 1995; Fendler, 2003; Akbari, 2007; Mann et.al, 2009). The concept was also defined in terms of reflexivity (Moore, 2004) and metacognition or thinking about one's own thinking. Locke (1974, cited in Denton, 2011: 840) defines metacognition as 'that notice which the mind takes of its own operations'. The process, according to Denton (2011: 840,

with reference to Flavell, 1979), includes searching for and analyzing the strengths and weaknesses involved in practice and thus developing an awareness 'of one's own progress towards meeting a learning goal, or completing the requirements of a learning activity'. Grossman (2009) terms it as a kind of reflection that helps students to think about their own thinking and emotions. Further, most university tutors defined reflection as a 'thinking-back' process, however, some interestingly mentioned its role as a 'feed forward' process or prospective and anticipatory reflection or imagination (Akbari, 2007; Freese, 2006).

As dialogic reflection the concept was defined as a more active and systematic process of exploring ideas and practices. In this sense it was associated with experiential (Kolb, 1984) and collaborative learning and practical theorising (McIntyre, 1993) or 'phronesis' (Korthagen, 2001) through practices such as critical incident analyses and action research. Some tutors associated it with examining things, looking in the mirror, a process of independent thinking and of the development of thinking/reasoning skills. Others considered it a notion that is difficult to define (Moon, 1999, 2004; Hatton and Smith, 1995; Harrison, 2008; Harrison and Lee, 2011).

Two main reasons could be put forward for the considerable variation in university tutors' definitions of reflection. Firstly, it reflects the very nature of the concept and its historically confounding character (Calderhead, 1989; Hatton and Smith, 1995). In this sense reflection comes across as too big and too broad a concept to attach to it a specific definition. Secondly, this variability is a likely outcome of the non-existence of

any deliberately structured uniform theoretical and/or practical understanding in the programme across different subjects. This might have resulted in individual subject-tutors having different conceptualisations regarding its meaning and implementation. Although most university tutors seemed to have an understanding of reflection at the higher level (Calderhead, 1989; Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Akbari, 2007), still many of them restricted its definition to what is considered as the technical and practical levels of it (Van Manen, 1977) or defined it as 'thinking about' anything and/or everything or 'reflection as a slogan' (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). Further, tutors did not make reference to any particular author(s) or model(s) of reflection as a guiding theoretical framework for developing reflection in the programme, although they were not directly asked about it. Some of them, however, mentioned Schön (1983, 1987) as a possible influence on the concept in the programme. Although a particular book chapter on reflection that mentions Van Manen's (1977) model as a framework for developing reflection was used as a guide for tutors/co-tutors and student teachers, few tutors referred to that.

In comparison to university tutors, most student teachers had a predominantly technical view of reflection. Student teachers mainly defined it as thinking about the immediate classroom practices, teaching learning techniques, classroom management and student behavioural issues. Further, reflection was defined as a process of learning from experience and mistakes, constructive criticism of practice and self-assessment for improving classroom efficiency. In each of these interpretations the focus is more on the immediate technical and practical aspects of teaching for the purpose of improving practice rather than on critical issues, that is issues encompassing the

‘social, moral and political dimensions of schooling’ (Valli, 1997: 75). Towards the end of the PGCE, however, slight changes were reported in this definition of some student teachers such as ‘from thinking about action’ to systematic and ‘critical evaluation of lessons’; from ‘reflection about self, classroom management, and teaching methods’ to ‘reflection about the needs of the students’; from ‘looking back on teaching-learning processes’ to ‘constructive criticism of one’s work’. This development in reflection has been discussed in Chapter 5 in some detail.

As with university tutors, most student teachers too defined reflection in its monologic sense in terms of looking back on their teaching practice and as a process of learning from mistakes. This translates into what Akbari (2007) identifies as ‘retrospective reflection’ or reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983). Akbari (2007) cautions against the possibility of emphasising retrospective reflection at the cost of ‘prospective reflection’ or looking ahead of action which he thinks could be a more creative form of reflection. This, he argues, would be akin to disregarding the importance of imagination in professional development which is likely to hinder the autonomy and creativity of teachers by denying them an opportunity to develop their foresight that comes through imagination. This is an interesting observation and calls for conscious attention to both these types of reflection. Another development some student teachers reported towards the end of the PGCE was the occurrence of more frequent reflection and seeing the benefits of reflection in practice. On the one hand it indicates the possible link of reflective development to involvement in practical teaching which was the case at that point in their training as against in the beginning of the PGCE. On

the other it confirms the university tutors' views regarding the evolutionary and developmental nature of reflection and with their contention that reflection develops with practical experience.

Further, student teachers too could not identify any particular definitional framework. None of the five student teachers interviewed towards the end of the PGCE programme could recall any author who had written on the concept of reflection, even when reminded about a chapter on the topic included in their course reading material. Another interesting theme in terms of the student teachers' connotation of reflection was the largely 'individualistic' rather than the 'professional' approach to it (Bengtsson, 1995). According to Bengtsson (1995: 27) the former kind of reflection is limited to 'one's own individual practice whereas reflection upon professional field includes super individual components such as the historical development of the profession' and its present status, structure and future possibilities. This later, broader, conception seemed not to have been adequately emphasised in the PGCE as revealed by the limited classroom-centred, practical focus that most student teachers associated with reflection. Once again as pointed out by Galea (2010) this seems to be related to the fundamentally practical, predominantly school-based nature of the PGCE driven by a centralised model of standard-based, performative, and tick-box guided evaluation. This is further complicated by the amount of work that the course providers and the student teachers had to complete in the relatively limited time available in the PGCE. Echoing this Harrison and Lee (2011: 200) argue that the discourse of the 'reflective practitioner' although a dominant discourse in many

professional educational programmes such as the PGCE, 'sits uncomfortably alongside a national discourse in England of training standards and competences in teachers' professional development' (See also Galea, 2010). Standardisation of reflection could lead to it being constructed and implemented in a routinised manner in educational programmes (Parker, 1997) because of its getting 'assimilated into the language of performativity' which paradoxically; limits the fundamental aim of reflection that is, 'challenging positivistic trends in education' (Galea, 2010: 2).

6.1.2 The content or subject-matter of reflection

Section 6.1.1 explained reflection more on a conceptual, definitional basis and in terms of it being a process representing, primarily, the *what is* of it. This section deals particularly with the scope of reflection in terms of the *what on* and *what about* of the concept although the *what is*, *what on/about* of reflection couldn't be taken as entirely exclusive as such (Jay and Johnson, 2002). The university tutors mentioned issues ranging from practical concerns such as classroom management skills, pedagogy, strengths and weaknesses of the teaching-learning process, and course elements to somewhat broader philosophical and policy issues such as educational philosophy, theory behind actions, and curriculum. Also included in the subject-matter by this group, were issues such as child development, school policies, and challenges the student teachers faced and the way they were taught themselves as pupils in schools.

Some of them considered it a 'big question' and others suggested that student teachers should reflect on 'everything' in the school. In this sense it was suggested that there was nothing that the student teachers should not reflect upon. Reflection, interpreted thus, it seems, was taken in its common-sense terms, equating it to just the process of thinking about something. Obviously this (thinking about something) is the norm with teachers involved in a teaching-learning situation as is it the norm with any routine human activity. This, as is pointed out in 6.1.1, seems to reflect the generic interpretation of the term (Zeichner and Liston, 1996) and the possibility that the concept has been turned into a kind of slogan (Zeichner, 1994). According to Noffke and Brennan (2005: 59) '...all too often, writers and promulgators of reflective practice [...] have taken for granted the crucial issue in either theoretical or practical terms of what reflection is'. Zeichner and Liston (1996: 7) ask, 'Is any thinking about teaching that teachers do, reflective teaching?' The answer they provide to this question is 'no' arguing that 'not all thinking about teaching constitutes reflective teaching' (Zeichner and Liston, 1996: 1). Elaborating their definition of reflection, Zeichner and Liston (1996) distinguish between 'technically focused' and 'reflective teaching' and define the latter as teaching during which the teacher questions the 'goals and values', the context of teaching and his/her assumptions. It comes out as not just thinking about anything during the process of teaching, less so when the focus of thinking is dealing with classroom issues such as student behaviour, on technical how-to-fix-it grounds. This latter kind of thinking about teaching according to them is 'technically focused' and the teacher in this plays the role of a technician rather than that of a reflective practitioner. 'Technically focused' thinking, however, has been considered as a type

(mainly as a lower type) of reflection by other researchers (Valli, 1997; Hatton and Smith, 1995).

The student teachers, again, mainly identified practical issues such as their preoccupation with matters of 'classroom management', 'classroom teaching', 'behavioural issues', 'teaching techniques' and so on. Interestingly, in the beginning of the PGCE some of the student teachers identified slightly broader issues as possible subject-matter for reflection such as issues in and outside the classroom, family issues impacting the learning and behaviour of students, pastoral work, teaching career, system of teaching, and developments in educational research and its impact on the process of education. However, in their second response, around five months into the PGCE they identified issues such as students' behaviour and level of engagement, classroom teaching and management, students learning and progress, feelings of isolation and attitude of the co-tutors or co-ordinators in the school as subject-matter of their reflection. Most of these are mainly issues of technical/practical and immediate concern to the student teachers, not encompassing the broader scope of reflection (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). Possible reasons for this development have been discussed in Chapter 5. The overall focus of student teachers' definitions of reflection in terms of its subject-matter remained on technical and practical (Van Manen, 1977; Valli, 1997), or on the 'generic' reflection (Zeichner, 1993; Zeichner and Liston, 1996). Zeichner (1994) and Zeichner and Liston (1996), beside others, caution against an overemphasis on such interpretation of reflection as mere thinking on an individual cognitive level about something, which does not take into account issues of

critical import such as the social and political dimensions of the educational process and which does not have a well-thought-out direction.

[W]e do not think it makes much sense to attempt to promote or assess reflective practice in general [...] without establishing some clear priorities for the reflection that emerge out of a reasoned educational and social philosophy. We do not accept the implication that exists throughout much of the literature that teachers' actions are necessarily "better" just because they are more deliberate and intentional (Eryaman, 2007: 94).

The implication for the PGCE in terms of the connotation of reflection could be that reflection as a teacher development concept needs to be more clearly defined across the different subjects and strands of the course. Besides, to go beyond the common-sense, technically and practically focussed understanding of reflection and to broaden its focus encompassing issues ranging from its 'technical' to the 'critical' levels (Valli, 1997) a more comprehensive understanding of the concept needs to be included in the programme. This would enfold reflection both at the technical/survival issues as well as broader critical/theoretical underpinnings of the concept. In the absence of such an ample framework student teachers might not be able to develop the ability to question '...the goals and the values that guide [their] work [and] the context in which he or she teaches...' (Zeichner and Liston, 1996 in Akbari, 2007: 197). Those who do not develop this ability, according to Zeichner and Liston (1996) are not engaged in reflective teaching. This also echoes an observation by Cornford (2002: 226) who argues that reflection has almost been an 'infinitesimal number of possible variations

of reflective ideals'. This, he suggests, is when one takes into consideration things such as, 'differences in individuals' ability to acquire and process information, specialisation or occupation, and cultural, religious, political, social class and gender variables' (ibid.).

On the whole, although both university tutors and student teachers largely associated reflection with some kind of *thinking and deliberation* about teaching-learning issues, university tutors' definitions of reflection suggested - perhaps understandably - a more multifaceted appreciation of the concept. Further, the university tutors' definitions of reflection encompassed its more technical meaning as well as its meaning and implication on the higher critical level. Student teachers' focus of reflection, primarily, remained at the practical level with minimal appreciation of the concept at the critical level (Valli, 1997). However, overall, across the two groups (university tutors and student teachers) there was more convergence than divergence in terms of identifying reflection as a common-sense (Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Akbari, 2007) educational concept focused on assessing and improving teaching practices at the technical and practical levels with not much reference to the definitional and conceptual complexities involved in it. This seems understandable in view of the predominantly practice-based and school-centred structure of the PGCE. Student teachers' performance is assessed, largely, in terms of their ability as effective, skilled classroom teachers in the school during their training year. Similarly, university tutors are perhaps expected to 'train' student teachers as skilled classroom practitioners to deliver a centralised curriculum. Further, this pragmatism on the part of university tutors and student teachers to have the focus of reflection at the practical level seems

a fit-for-purpose response to the challenging demands of early teaching experiences which is entirely legitimate and essential at this stage of early professional development. That granted, understanding the value of deeper/critical notions of reflection during the early stages of professional development is important for later development of expert pedagogy, once teachers get the practical confidence to get through a lesson. The value of reflection, thus, would more likely be at the higher levels later on in the professional careers of teachers, if they are exposed to a fuller promise of the concept during initial teacher education programmes such as the PGCE. In that sense reflection would help developing teachers move through various stages beginning with a focus on information and management and moving on to broader curricular and pedagogic issues.

In the present study one further reason for the prevalence of the common-sense meaning of reflection seems to be what was reported as the relatively new emphasis of the concept in the programme. The concept was particularly associated with the new introduction of Masters Level PGCE. In Masters level assignments, although student teachers were required to take a more critical and analytical, rather than descriptive, approach to issues, the rather new emphasis could be one reason for the more general approach to the concept and might develop and evolve with time once it is well-established in the course. Some of the relatively new tutors also pointed out their own restricted understanding of the concept mentioning their limited experience as teacher educators and exposure to the intricacies of the concept. On both counts it can be argued that despite the popularity and long history of the concept in teacher

education, its incorporation in educational programmes in terms of its aims, subject-matter and usefulness is better not taken for granted. There is, thus, a case for a more overt and elaborate incorporation of reflection in such programmes.

6.2 The *how* of reflection

6.2.1 Reflective practices/ strategies

A number of reflective practices were identified by university tutors. These included short term practices such as ‘lesson evaluations’, ‘tutorial and group discussions’, ‘lesson planning’, ‘questioning’ and even ‘lectures’, ‘workshop-based teaching’; and long term practices such as ‘individual action planning (IAP)’, ‘critical incident analyses’, ‘assignments’ ‘directed tasks’, ‘schemes of work’, and ‘experiential learning’, the use of Jo-Harry Window (see 4.2.1) and ‘reflective exercises’ in a chapter in a course book prepared for developing reflection among student teachers. Most of these reflective practices have been reported and discussed in literature on reflection and vary and evolve in different teacher education programmes depending on the nature and purpose of each programme and on the time and resources available. Hatton and Smith (1995) refer to a range of practices, strategies and approaches that are employed in teacher education programmes. They identify four main reflective strategies: Action research projects, Case studies and Ethnographic studies, Microteaching and other supervised practicum experiences and structured curriculum tasks. Few of these strategies were identified by either group of participants in this study, although some specific practices within these strategies that were identified included journal writing, narratives and biographies, reflective essays, and use of

metaphors of teaching. Other reflective practices identified during literature review included: development of portfolios and e-portfolios (Klenowski, 1998), blogs (Williams and Jacobs, 2004; Comber, 2010), group discussion/reflection (Clark, 2004), mentoring (Moran and Dallat, 1995).

In this study the range of reflective practices that student teachers identified was limited and included lesson evaluations, group discussions, making notes, self-assessment and reviews, wide reading, presentations and demonstrations, sharing of ideas, concept-making, and breaking down curriculum into schemes of work. Interestingly strategies and practices identified by university tutors were rarely mentioned by student teachers. For instance, writing assignments and essays, mentioned by most university tutors, were not in the main associated with reflection by student teachers. Rather these practices were considered by some as hurdles in the way of natural, free-flowing reflection and an extra demand on the time available to student teachers. This seems to be because of two possible reasons: Firstly, being relatively less-experienced in the profession and having restricted exposure to the research and theoretical background of teaching and learning, student teachers appear to have found it difficult to associate the concepts discussed in theory (in the academic sense) with the practical teaching-learning situations that they were in at the moment. Reflection, therefore, was understood more in the sense of reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983, 1987) and practical theorising (McIntyre, 1993). Considered so, theoretical essays and assignments seemed to student teachers removed from their primary concern as new entrants to the profession during their training phase.

Secondly, the emphasis of the PGCE programme seemed to be predominantly practical with student teachers spending more than two-thirds of their training time in the school where naturally their concern had more been the practical teaching-learning issues of the classroom than the theoretical underpinnings of their profession. Even the university part of the programme seemed to be mainly focused on the development of practical classroom-based and subject related expertise rather than the broader aims and socio-philosophical foundations of education (Smyth, 1989; Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Birmingham, 2004) and the general role of theoretical underpinnings of the training process. This can potentially restrict the development of beginning teachers to that of skilful practitioners and implementers at the cost of their professional development at the critical level.

Some tutors argued that student teachers could be introduced to theory indirectly through various strategies without formally bringing in theoretical models. The danger in that, however, is that it could lead to superficial understanding of the concept on the one hand and on the other an unconscious and casual implementation of ideas. In other words student teachers' reflection might remain at the more 'technical' and 'practical' levels falling below the higher critical level (Van Manen, 1977; Zeichner, 1996) that could enable them to understand, question and explore the aims and objectives of the process of education in a more comprehensive and conscious manner with a deeper contextual insight.

By and large reflecting the literature review and the findings in this study indicating the diversity of reflection (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Gimenez, 1999; Dymoke and Harrison, 2008; Harrison and Lee, 2011) in terms of its interpretation; practices and strategies associated with reflection, too varied a great deal. These ranged from the more technically focused short-term practices and skills to the comparatively longer term, strategies that aimed at cyclic and reiterative experiential learning, analysis and theorisation of educational phenomenon. The more prevalent ones, however, were the technically focused, and skill oriented practices aimed at the immediate improvement of classroom teaching performance of the student teachers.

One particular issue that was raised during interviews with university tutors was the relative usefulness of the various practices and strategies that they identified as 'reflective'. A common response was the belief that the strength of the reflective practices lie in using them in combination and that it was difficult to identify one or another one as the most useful practice. One reason for this could be the fact that most of these practices were not formally assessed in the programme and hence the inability of the tutors to identify specific practices in terms of their usefulness. It might also be the case that the inclusion of one or another or a combination of these strategies in the programme will promote reflection was taken for granted by university tutors. Hatton and Smith (1995: 36) argue that although strategies such as those mentioned above in this section, '...have the potential to encourage reflection, there is little research evidence to show that this is actually being achieved'. This belief in the potential of certain practices to develop reflection seems to have been the case

in this study as it was 'hoped' that involving student teachers in such activities will develop their ability to reflect usefully.

A number of tutors, for instance, argued that they were not sure if reflection could be assessed and that although assessment regarding reflection was entwined in the nature and the process of the PGCE, it was really difficult to assess and grade it. It was suggested that the difficulty in assessing reflection was because of its essentially innate nature. Most of the tutors argued that assessment was, therefore, inherent in the whole process of the PGCE and that student teachers would not be able to make progress through the various stages of the programme unless they were sufficiently reflective about what they went through.

The progress during the programme was associated with the various written and verbal tasks such as assignments, identification and exposition of critical incidents during teaching practice, lesson evaluations and discussions. Hatton and Smith (1995: 36), however, argue that 'it is not sufficient to assert that reflection is encouraged by a procedure or technique, rather means must be specified to demonstrate that particular kinds of reflecting are taking place'. This did not seem to be the case in the programme under study as the value of different reflective practices was based mainly in the 'belief' or 'hope' that these would develop student teachers' reflective skills. However, a number of tutors acknowledged this as a possible weakness of the programme and argued that it might be interesting to deliberate on and try to find

ways and means to evaluate practices in terms of their usefulness in the development of reflection among student teachers.

6.2.2 Hindrances/barriers in the way of reflection

Shortage of time and the amount of work to be covered within that time were regarded as the most significant hindrances in the way of reflection by university tutors. Lack of time was mentioned by all university tutors as a big barrier in the way of useful involvement in reflection. Some mentioned lack of time not as a whole in the course but time available to them in the university part of the programme. A number of them argued for more sessions overall in the programme to make it more useful. This lack of time and the amount of work to be covered in the limited time available for teacher education programmes have been identified by many researchers as possible barriers in the way of developing reflection (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Moore, 2004; Akbari, 2007). Citing McNamara (1990) and Noffke and Brennan (1988), Hatton and Smith (1995: 37) argue that for effective reflection to occur, ‘...what is needed is time and opportunity for development, so that the required essential meta-teaching and meta-cognitive skills can be acquired’ (See also Markham, 1999). This (availability of enough time and opportunities), nevertheless, does not seem to have been the case in the programme under study as both university tutors and student teachers identified lack of time and the consequent strain due to the amount of work they had to complete in the limited time at their disposal as a big hindrance.

Student teachers, expressly, pointed out their difficulty in trying to balance the amount of work that had to be done in the time available and the time they needed for reflection. Although most university tutors and student teachers associated the development of reflection more with practical teaching in the schools, the latter also found it difficult to find time for reflection in the school due to the amount of work they had to do there. Thus, though reflection was more likely to take place during action (Schön, 1983, 1987), yet it seems, the student teachers wanted to have the breathing space needed for subsequent reflection. Further, there is the possibility that if the amount of work to be done exceeds beyond a reasonable level, the outcome might be anxiety around it which is unlikely to result in productive, organized and positive reflection about practices. More than that, in such a case those very practices that are deemed to be developing reflection might very well be done as a routine obligation (as was indicated by a number of student teachers ref. Chapter 5) , something that is the very opposite of the very purpose of reflection (Dewey, 1933).

Interestingly, although university tutors were cognisant of this time-work tension and the consequent stressed nature of the course, and while some also expressed their wish for an increase in the duration of the PGCE, there was little optimism about the feasibility of this with regard to the availability of limited resources and the increasing emphasis on a more school-centred initial teacher training. As a justification and counter-argument to the student teachers' views regarding work-load in the PGCE, some university tutors argued that learning to manage the demands of the current model would prepare trainees for the far more challenging timetable of a practicing

teacher. This pragmatism of the possible longer term professional benefit of a packed training programme, however, needs to be counter-balanced against the viewpoint of the student teachers as important stake-holders in the issue.

Other hindrances identified included lack of resources to train co-tutors in schools, particular ways, rigidity and inflexibility of some school departments, and fixed ideas of some school co-tutors regarding teaching and learning. This is likely to be the case particularly when there is a gap of communication between the university and the school, a lack of consensus on the nature of the training requirements of the student teachers or a pre-occupation and consequently a possible lack of concern on the part of the school co-tutors with what the university tutors considered useful for developing student teachers as reflective practitioners. In any case the issue seems to revolve around the possibly low level of interaction between the two sides of the partnership. Ways and means, therefore, need to be found to enhance this interaction and collaboration. The 'statutory work' that had to be done was also mentioned as a hindrance in the way of reflection. This seems to have to do with the increasingly centralised management of the initial teacher education programmes and hence the receding independence of the university tutors in devising and implementing university courses. One further reason pointed out was some student teachers' exposure to a previous educational process of 'spoon-feeding' in schools and colleges, which, it was argued would have them need direction in making decisions. The argument, therefore, was that student teachers with such background had the inclination to learn the tricks and techniques of teaching rather than putting their own

thinking into doing things independently and reflectively. This might have restrictive influences on their thinking regarding the teaching-learning process and in terms of their role as teachers (Hatton and Smith, 1996; Akbari, 2007).

To counter this, the suggestion was for an extension of the reflective discourse to elementary and secondary education. This is an important suggestion which indicates an understanding of the philosophy of reflection at the critical level. Further, an intervention at that level would mean fundamental changes in the education system at the elementary level. Maths/science students' possible deficiency in the form of written reflection was another hindrance pointed out by one university tutor with the argument that such student teachers did not have exposure to reflective academic writing in the way student teachers with a social science background would have in their previous educational career. This, again, is an interesting point which implies that student teachers with social science backgrounds are likely to be more reflective than those with pure science backgrounds. The idea, though being put forward by one participant, carries promise for further exploration.

Intriguingly, no theoretical and/or definitional issues were pointed out as possible hindrances with regard to reflection either by university tutors or student teachers. Both university tutors and student teachers predominantly mentioned more practical issues such as shortage of time and the great amount of work that has to be covered during the course, lack of university-school co-ordination, particular pre-conceptions and attitudes of student teachers or if we consider student teachers' views in

particular, attitude of certain tutors, co-tutors and course co-ordinators; and particular cultures of school departments. A number of researchers have noted theoretical and definitional issues (issues to deal with the nature, types and levels of reflection and its aims and goals). A case in point is Dewey's (1933) 'rational' conception of reflection versus Schön's (1983) 'intuitive model', the former refers to reflection as a rational and systematic process of experimentation while the latter considers it as '... intuitive, personal [and] non rational activity'(Akbari, 2007: 196). This kind of theoretical diversity in terms of reflection has been noted as a barrier in the way of implementing and promoting it in educational settings (Calderhead, 1989; Hatton and Smith, 1995; Brookfield, 1995; Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Akbari, 2007). This diversity of its interpretation, however, could be turned into strength if the concept is incorporated with reference to the multiplicity of its connotation which will enhance awareness about the concept as something more than common sense thinking about practices. The case, therefore, is for an appreciation of the theoretically diverse understanding and inclusion of reflection in educational programmes. In the absence of overt and elaborate inclusion of reflection, the concept is likely to be taken in its common-sense meaning as some kind of thinking about teaching. This is what Zeichner and Liston (1996) caution against, a phenomenon where reflection and what it stands for is taken as any sort of thinking about teaching. Markham (1999: 60) calls this the seductive simplicity of the *metaphor of reflection*. This phenomenon was revealed during a number of interviews where the tutors admitted that they had not thought about the concept in this way before and that the interview was itself a 'self-reflective' process. Another interesting feature that came to the fore was the understanding of reflection in terms of its 'retrospective' in contrast to prospective/ anticipatory reflection (Akbari,

2007). Most tutors and student teachers associated reflection with 'looking back' at action or 'reflection-on-action' (Schön, 1983). This phenomenon according to Akbari (2007) reduces the value of reflection to an emphasis on 'memory' while at the same time ignoring its role in developing 'imagination'. This is an interesting observation and has important implications regarding the role and value of reflection and the way(s) it is interpreted in particular educational programmes.

Overall, a majority of both university tutors and student teachers associated reflection and reflective practices with an examination and improvement of teaching-learning skills, classroom management skills, student behavioural issues and other such coping strategies. Generally, as is pointed out by Akbari (2007), the emphasis seemed to have been more on 'perceptual' and less on the 'conceptual' and 'propositional' knowledge (Fendler, 2003). Further, the stress also seemed to have been on the technicist and behaviourist elements of the teaching process and an overemphasis on the 'how' rather than the 'what' of reflection (Stanley, 1999; Akbari, 2007). That according to a number of researchers is likely to hinder reflection at the higher, critical levels (Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Akbari, 2007).

6.2.3 Reflection and the theory-practice issue

One central issue explored in this study was the relationship between theory and practice (practical teaching) in the school and the relative impact on the development of reflection in the PGCE. Two factors contributed to this inquiry, first the complexity

involved in the theory-practice interaction in the process of education as was revealed in related literature (See Chapter 2). This is discussed below. And, second this researcher's professional experiences as a teacher and teacher educator in Pakistan (taken up in chapter 7). The theory-practice relationship in terms of the development of reflection does not seem to be a straightforward one. Korthagen and Kessels (1999: 21) discuss the issue with reference to Plato's and Aristotle's contrasting views of knowledge as 'episteme' and 'phronesis' or conceptual/theoretical and perceptual/practical knowledge. They argue that in a phronesis conception of knowledge, no set of abstract rules and theories are applied to particular situations. Korthagen and Kessels support the development of reflection more as phronesis. They, however, recognise the role of episteme which they argue can play the important function of 'the exploration of student teachers' perceptions' and generate 'questions, points of view, arguments, and such'. Literature (McIntyre, 1993; Korthagen and Kessels, 1999; Birmingham, 2004) reveals that the consensus seems to be on the integration of theory and practice with reflection as a means for teachers and student teachers to 'construct their own philosophy of education, integrating their experiences and personal practical knowledge with general theory' (Shin, 2006 cited in Laursen, 2007: 3). Schön's (1983, 1987) concept of reflective practice could also be included in this category but his emphasis seems to slant more towards 'phronesis' (practice preceding theory) rather than a collaborative position between theory and practice. In a broader teaching-learning context, Adler (1993) sums the interaction well when she argues that teaching is both thought and action and the interface between them through a process of reflection.

This understanding of the teacher as practical theoretician and hence of the PGCE as a combination of theory and practice with more emphasis on the practice in initial teacher education seems to be what both the university tutors and the student teachers mainly associated with. Most of the university tutors and student teachers appeared satisfied with the current structure of the programme and described it in terms of a good balance. A number of tutors contrasted the present model of the PGCE with the older models in place in the 1980's and argued that the latter, mostly university-based and theoretical in nature, were more leisurely but rather remote regarding the practical needs of the student teachers. It was, therefore, suggested that though the present structure of the PGCE was 'pressured' it at the same time was better suited to preparing teachers for the job at hand that is, practical teaching in the schools. Most student teachers also expressed their satisfaction with the 'balance' in terms of theory and practice terming practical teaching in the school as the 'real thing' and arguing that it was during the practice that they could make sense of the theory they were introduced to during the university sessions. The view specifically on reflection as an educational concept was that it was understood best during practice and teaching someone what reflection was or how to be reflective without having that practical experience was difficult.

Others supported the present balance arguing that theory and practice could not be separated. The suggestion was that while in the university student teachers were not just learning theory and while in schools their only pre-occupation was not doing practice, the two processes went hand-in-hand. The concurrence on the part of the

university tutors seemed to be on a rejection of the 'technical rational' or 'theory-into-practice' (Schön, 1983; Gore, 1987; Killen, 1989) model of teacher education. However, this did not seem to mean a denial of theoretical underpinnings of practice, a position closer to that of the influential reflective models presented by Schön (1983, 1987) or by authors such as Lawlor (1990) and O'Hear (1988) who tend to go in the almost opposite direction, that of a complete censure of propositional knowledge (Carr, 2006) and the consequent non-relevance of the university in initial teacher education. Carr (2006) for instance represents this extreme position on the non-relevance of theory when he argues:

'...educational theory is nothing other than the name we give to the various futile attempts that have been made over the last hundred years to stand outside our educational practices in order to explain and justify them. And what I am going to propose on the basis of this argument is that the time has now come to admit that we cannot occupy a position outside practice and that we should now bring the whole educational theory enterprise to a dignified end' (Thomas, 2007: 4).

This view seems to assume that educational theorists develop their theories completely outside practice. This is difficult to accept, however, keeping in view the fact that most theorists would have been associated with practical education in one way or another. It can, for instance, be argued that because it is hard to contemplate the conduct of educational research and the development of theories without getting into the practice of education. So in that sense as it is difficult to imagine a completely practical practitioner, it is difficult to imagine a thoroughly theoretical theoretician as

an educational researcher. Kemmis in Carr (1995: 14) argues on similar lines when he says, ‘...people do not stay neatly in role: at times, setting aside the role of practitioner of theorizing, the educational theorist is a practitioner of education (a teacher); at times the teacher (as educational practitioner) is a theorist’. The findings in this present study too tend to agree with the view that lies between the two competing positions of ‘technical rationality’ or education as propositional science and a total rejection of the relevance of theory in the process or complete ‘technicism’ (Gore, 1987; Killen, 1989).

Although both the university tutors and the student teachers emphasised more the relevance of practice than theory to the needs of the student teachers, none of the participants from either group entirely rejected theory and its importance in the professional development of beginning teachers. Korthagen and Kessels (1999: 9-13) point out the importance of Gestalts, a psychological state of mind that provides a holistic understanding in context and are ‘linked to concrete situations... [that] are coloured by the subjective and value-laden experiences of such situations’. They suggest that student teachers who are more likely to be at the Gestalt stage of their teaching career, should have more practical teaching experience in the beginning of teacher education and that ‘theoretical elements offered by the educator should have the characteristics of *phronesis* [Specific/practical, contextual, and mainly perceptual knowledge] more than those of *episteme* [General/theoretical and mainly conceptual knowledge]’ Korthagen and Kessels (1999: 9-13) (see also Kessels and Korthagen, 1996). This coincides with the consensus in this study on the position that the course

should be guided by theory instead of being theory-led. This is captured in this argument by UT13, *'I am not a great fan of theory in many senses. And although I do recognise that theory is often a good way of conceptualising and help you, you know to grasp concepts... Our view is we try to model it, show it in our own practice but we are very explicit that this is where we want them to end up'*. The emphasis is on 'modelling' theory instead of presenting it in an 'academic sense' (Korthagen and Kessels, 1999). This resonates with the conception of theory in terms of initial teacher education that Korthagen and Kessels (1999: 13) present when they argue that, *'...theory in a traditional academic sense can only have a limited place in pre-service programmes. Still it is an important place, as phronesis is to be considered of a higher quality if it is fed by episteme'*. This also echoes the 'practical approach' regarding theory and practice by Carr (1995: 48-49) who identifies four approaches to the interaction of theory and practice: the common sense approach, the applied science approach, the practical approach and the critical approach. According to the 'practical approach' education is an open, practical and reflective activity, *'which cannot be [entirely] governed by theoretical principles'*, and *'Theory relates to practice by enlightening practitioners... [to enable them] to see more deeply under the surface of their ideas and practices'*.

Further, both related literature (McIntyre, 1993; Korthagen and Kessels, 1999) and findings from this study reveal theory and practice do not exclusively belong in the domain of either university or school as one tutor pointed out, *'...they can be engaged with theory while they are in schools can't they be?...I mean we would hope their*

discussions with their mentors and teachers in schools and the Directed Tasks that we give them to do in the schools will be allowing them to continue to think about why they are doing something in a particular way and what the rationale is for something and so on' UT4. Conversely a number of tutors pointed out that the university part of the programme is not all theory in terms of philosophy, history and psychology but is rather more focused on the practical needs of the beginning teachers in the school and on preparing them as competent teachers in their relevant subjects, that is subjects that they have to teach in schools and on the technicalities of teaching and learning, classroom instruction and behaviour management. Overall, theory and practice were not seen as entirely separate concepts, the argument was for an essential role of the university the absence of which would lead to the danger of de-intellectualisation of the profession if the ITE became totally school-based. This, it was argued, would expose student teachers to just one model of teaching and limit their outlook on education. Shifting training entirely to schools was also associated with taking away the independence of the teachers which would reduce the role of the teacher to that of an apprentice and result in the restructuring of education into a top-down model. It was suggested that this was more or less the case before the introduction of the Master Level for PGCE.

Thus entirely school-based teacher training was not only associated with technicism and de-intellectualisation but also with a top-down re-structuring of schooling where teachers are reduced to the status of knowledge-consumers instead of knowledge critics and creators, ideas associated with reflection (Zeichner, 1996; Beyer, 1989). In

that type of training the teaching of 'public theory' would be even more difficult keeping in view of the essentially practice-oriented nature of schools and the calling of a school-based mentor/tutor which is basically teaching rather than the exploration of theoretical educational issues and research. That could result in theory-free teacher training and 'if public theory is not taught, teachers' ability to theorize is handicapped by their limited repertoire of available concepts, ideas, and principles' (Eraut 1994: 74). The concern shown by tutors of the possible de-intellectualisation of initial teacher training in the absence of university involvement echoes McIntyre's (1993: 39) position regarding what he sees as the 'remarkably primitive view of teacher education' promoted by 'right-wing populists' such as O'Hear (1988), the Hillgate Group (1989) and Lawlor (1990) who presented that all teachers needed was 'practical competence' which 'can best be acquired through practice in school-based training'.

On the whole most tutors and student teachers expressed their satisfaction with the balance between theory-practice and university-school proportion of the PGCE. As could be expected, the university tutors' justification for this satisfaction came out of a more informed understanding of the phenomenon. For instance, most student teachers although not wanting entirely doing away with the university part of the PGCE, emphasised the significance of practical teaching in the school because that to them was the 'real thing'. It was during practice, they argued, that they could see the relevance of what they were introduced to in the university sessions. Many of them argued that they could not reflect on something of which they had no practical experience. In that sense a majority of the student teachers considered the school

more conducive to the development of reflection essentially because of its practical relevance, something which is perhaps expected of student teachers at this stage of their professional life. This was a view equally shared by the university tutors who presented this as a reason for their satisfaction with the *balance* of the PGCE in terms of its university-school component. The consensus thus was on the strength and usefulness of the partnership and the belief in the theory-practice-going-together arrangement in the PGCE.

6.2.4 Duration of PGCE in terms of the development of reflection

Keeping in view the developmental nature of reflection (Moon, 1999, 2004; Calderhead, 1989; Hatton and Smith, 1995), an issue of interest in this study was the adequacy of the PGCE duration for the reflective development of student teachers. Most of the participants, both university tutors and student teachers, thought that the duration of the PGCE was adequate for the development of student teachers as reflective practitioners and as beginners in the process. Both groups believed in an ongoing and life-long developmental nature of reflection which, it was argued, did not necessarily have to reach its higher levels during the PGCE year. Most university tutors suggested that the main aim of including reflection in the PGCE was sowing the seeds of it and initiating student teachers into the process of it which they thought was not going to cease once begun. The expectation seemed realistic keeping in view the 'short duration' of the PGCE.

Similar views were expressed by most student teachers and there seemed a concurrence on the issue that reflection is a helpful skill for continuous professional development. This echoes McIntyre (1993) who contends that reflection is a more powerful tool for improving teaching and learning for experienced teachers than it is for novice teachers (Williams and Grudnoff, 2011). An implication of this could be that an initiation into the process of reflection might be adequate in initial teacher education with the hope that this will develop with time and experience. However, the risk in such consideration is that this could lead to a possible neglect of the broader goals of reflection and the important questions of the 'what' and 'why' of it, with a focus on the process or the 'how' question in the PGCE. This according to Valli (1997: 85-86) could 'detract from more central questions of the purpose, content and quality of reflective teacher preparation'. Further, it takes us back to the prevalent common-sense meaning that was generally attached to reflection. In that sense the process and the various strategies for reflection are likely to occupy the centre stage rather than the outcome or purpose of reflection or its focus. Besides, an emphasis on the process rather than the outcome and subject-matter could also be once more due to a lack of well-defined theoretical and operational framework regarding the concept in the programme or a consensus or awareness about it.

Some of the tutors associated the development of reflection with individual capabilities and orientations of the student teachers and thus linked the possible variation in reflective development with that. Factors that were mentioned affecting the level of reflection included individual capacities, previous background, and

inclinations of the student teachers. Others pointed out the multiplicity of factors affecting reflection such as different conditions prevalent in different schools and the role of the school co-tutors instead of it being significantly associated with the duration of the programme. More than the limited duration of the programme its highly intense nature was mentioned by a number of student teachers as an obstruction in the way of their reflective development. A heavy workload in the form of teaching, written assignments, planning, delivering and evaluating every lesson and marking was considered as a hindrance in the way of devoting time to reflection. Although a minority view, interestingly this very intensity of the course was associated by some student teachers with the development of reflection in different senses. One student teacher, for instance, argued that this helped in developing reflection as one was forced to think about so many things. This according to another student teacher made this one year adequate and 'having this longer would probably increase the dropout rate' ST21. The implication seems to be different understandings of reflection by different people on the one hand and on the other that different people respond to the time pressure differently in terms of reflective practice.

Those who regarded the intense nature of the course as a bar on reflection seemed to associate more with the concept of reflection as a free after-the-action process or reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983) and those who linked the development of reflection with the intensity of the course seemed to feel more comfortable with reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983). Also the variation seems to have to do with the learning styles of individual student teachers with the former feeling comfortable in a fuller, more

dynamic and action-oriented environment while the latter one in a more relaxed atmosphere. Besides, the view that with the present intensity of the course if the duration were to increase, there would be increased drop-out of student teachers reflects a rather pragmatic approach to the issue instead of linking the duration of the programme to the greater or lesser level of reflective development among student teachers.

Although some participants from both groups desired a longer duration of the PGCE, most did not consider that can be the case with the increasingly school-based nature of the PGCE. A number of university tutors also showed satisfaction with the duration of the course because they thought the quality of recruits to the PGCE in their subjects was very high, with many of them coming with pre-course work experience. Such student teachers, they argued, did not need more time than was available in the course, and keeping them for longer than that on training would be an undue drain on resources on the one hand and on the other an unnecessary waste of the precious early years of their career. Another view among some university tutors was that it was practical teaching in the school that was the 'real thing' and that it was difficult to associate their longer stay in the training programme, especially in the university part of it with the development of higher levels of reflection among them.

Overall, both university tutors and student teachers seemed to be satisfied with the duration of the PGCE in terms of its fitness-for-the-purpose, which to most of them was focused on an initiation into the process of reflection. This satisfaction also seems

to reflect their pragmatism in terms of the time and resources available both with student teachers, and the course providers (the university and the schools). The implication is that although desirable in some ways, a longer course would also be difficult to run for reasons such as the nature of the ITE, the requirements, aims and structure of the PGCE, the quality and entry-qualification level of student teachers and their need to get into the job with minimum possible training and the present broader governmental policies regarding the initial teacher education.

6.3 The *why-and-so-what* of reflection.

This section is aimed at describing the rationale and importance of reflection in the PGCE as was perceived by university tutors and student teachers. Secondly, this part of the chapter will discuss the various suggestions put forward by both categories of the participants for possible improvement of reflection in the PGCE.

6.3.1 Usefulness of reflection

There was an almost universal consensus regarding the usefulness of reflection as an educational concept in the PGCE on the part of the university tutors and the student teachers. Both groups regarded it very useful and important for reasons such as its help in providing insight into and improving the process of teaching and learning, in supporting the process of professional development, in developing the traits of criticality and the ability to question attitudes and practices, in the identification of strengths and weaknesses, in providing help for planning and preparation for constant

changes in the school, and as a requisite for the developmental nature of the teaching profession. Further, student teachers identified other outcomes of reflection, not identified by university tutors such as 'confidence building', 'overcoming anxieties' and 'encouragement to be open to new ideas'.

The student teachers' views regarding the role of reflection seem to associate more with issues that seem psychological in nature such as reflecting on how to gain and show confidence and overcome anxieties, how to take criticism with a positive frame of mind and how to appear in control in dealing with classroom behaviour. The reason for this specific focus could be the student teachers' pre-occupation with the immediate entry level problems of getting control of the situation as beginning professionals and hence their psychological response to those. University tutors on the whole used strong words such as 'vital' and 'absolutely essential' regarding the usefulness of reflection in the preparation of new teachers. This seems to be because of their deeper understanding of reflection and a conviction in its value for the development of new teachers as professionals and/or the influence of reflection as a 'slogan' in teacher education (Zeichner and Liston, 1996), 'where reflection itself is seen as a good thing, without reference either to what is reflected upon or the quality of reflection' (McLaughlin, 1999: 18). Both interpretations carry weight to differing degrees in the sense that while defining reflection most university tutors began with a general, common-sense interpretation of the concept, however, many of them went beyond that to appreciate it at the higher level and with a broader scope. The reflection in its generic meaning, however, seemed to carry more weight. Three main

themes that came out in terms of the importance and usefulness of reflection as pointed out by university tutors were: the use of reflection in 'progress and development'; its importance in terms of 'solving problems and exploring ideas', and the 'education versus training discourse'. The first two themes seem to show the more immediate 'technical' and 'practical concerns' (Van Manen, 1977) while the third theme, that is 'the education versus training' focus indicated the wider and 'critical' concerns of reflection (Van Manen, 1977; Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Birmingham, 2004). Reflection as an 'educational' concept was associated with independence of thought and action and with autonomy in behaviour.

On the whole the prevalence of the 'technical' and 'practical' focus of reflection in the PGCE again, it seems is one outcome of a rather generic (Zeichner, 1994) emphasis of reflection which enfolds the general process of reflection rather than its subject-matter or substance. This is plausible since a focus on that level is what is the most evident expectation from student teachers at this stage of their early development and hence instinctively that is what would come to the minds of the university tutors in terms of its usefulness and rationale. McLaughlin (1999:12) calls this the 'implicit and the intuitive' reflection and contrasts it with 'explicit and the systematic' reflection. The former implies a more general emphasis on reflection which seems to be the case here. In other words it is the *how* of reflection that gets the attention while the *what* or the subject-matter of it seems to be taken for granted. Besides, the generic understanding of reflection, a further reason for this seems to be the structure of the PGCE with an emphasis on competencies, skills and standards that are primarily set outside the primary sites of the programme that is the school and the university. The

university tutors' role, therefore, seemed to focus more on helping the student teachers in how to achieve those objectives given in the standards rather than to enable them to think about the aims of the standards or their relevance to broader professional development of the student teachers or on an even broader level to relate those to issues such as social justice and equity. Taken so, an expectation for reflection at the higher levels would be a less likely aim of the PGCE. On a similar plane, one view was that despite reflection being of central importance in the ITE, overstressing it in the initial stages of the development of new teachers could be too much for the student teachers and might prove a distraction from acquiring other *essential skills*.

Reflection at higher levels, therefore, it was argued should come implicitly and unconsciously. This echoes an observation by Hollis (1977, in McLaughlin, 1999: 12) regarding difficulties associated with an overemphasis on 'conscious' reflection before every action. One difficulty with that, Hollis argues, would be lack of timely action, a consequence of which on a broader level would be a collapse of '...civilization [...] into paralysis, like some giant centipede told to put its best foot forward first' (ibid.). This possibility is also noted earlier by Calderhead (1989: 45) who argues that frequent reflection on the more critical level is likely to have debilitating effects on teachers' ability for 'appropriate action'. It, therefore, comes out as a legitimate practical need for beginning teachers to reflect on immediate practical issues which are likely to ease their initiation into the profession by helping in classroom proficiency. That said, it does not seem to be a prudent course if that comes at the cost of the very purpose of

reflection which, as literature reveals, is broader than this technical focus and only in its broader context does it bring the emancipation and independence of thought and action that is the very basis of the reflective movement in teacher education (Tom, 1985; Gore, 1987). A neglect of such broader perspectives could lead to an assimilation of reflective practice into a 'language of performativity' and curtailment of its capacity 'to challenge positivistic trends in education' (Galea, 2010: 2). See also Parker (1997), Fendler (2003) and Carr & Skinner (2009) who present similar view of the issue.

6.3.2 Suggestions for improving reflection in the PGCE

This section discusses suggestions sought from university tutors and student teachers about the kind of changes (if any) they wanted to make to the PGCE programme under study to make it more suitable for the development of reflection. Suggestions were quite diverse ostensibly not revealing any coherent theme(s). The range of suggestions included both the technical and practical issues and slightly broader issues. Technical issues included suggestions for the provision of particular ways of assessment, opportunities for micro-teaching and addition of practices such as different forms of reflective journals to the structure of the programme. Increased interaction among tutors, co-tutors and student teachers and among student teachers through online interactive devices such as blogs or interactive boards was another suggestion at this level which, it was hoped, would develop a more communicative environment. This suggestion seems plausible keeping in view the disproportionate time and level of interaction that student teachers had with university tutors and school co-tutors and the comparative amount of time that they spent in the university and schools. The

implication seems to be to make for the disproportionate level of physical involvement in the two sites of training through a more interactive virtual learning. VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) such as online Blackboards and blogs have been suggested by many researchers as possible means for developing student teachers' reflection, for developing more collaborative reflection and for ongoing interactive dialogues among student teachers and tutors in teacher education programmes (Comber, 2010; Hramiak, 2007; Hramiak et al., 2009).

Benefits of such online reflective interaction include provision of greater flexibility in discussing and responding to issues, space and time for deeper reflection and enhanced control and ease of communication. According to Comber (2010: 35) virtual interactional tools such as blogs help in continuing professional development (CPD) as these are useful for the '...exchange [of] ideas, experiences and expertise, leading to the social construction of knowledge through reflective peer-discussion'. Associating these tools with CPD is an important observation as this is likely to result in long-term professional contact among incoming professionals such as student teachers. VLE's and blogs as possible reflective tools were, however, mentioned by tutors as a relatively new idea which needed further exploration for useful implementation. This echoes Comber's (2010: 36) observation that although these ideas seem promising in terms of their use for the professional development of teachers, 'much less evidence that their potential to facilitate reflection - what might seem to be their key affordance - has been demonstrated'. Possible causes of concern regarding the use of such interactive virtual tools include issues related to anonymity and privacy (Yang, 2009) besides potential lack of access to online resources such as internet or computer

facilities in some cases. Referring to Yang (2009), Comber (2010: 37) also mentions likely socio-psychological hindrances in the way of online interaction such as concerns regarding giving 'critical' feedback which might 'hurt feelings' among peers. This, however, shall not be exclusively associated with online interaction as this can as well happen in face-to-face communication and discussion as was reported by some of the student teachers in this present study who welcomed feedback from colleagues and tutors but which, they argued, should not be too critical.

Finding ways of managing time and dealing with resource constraints and the amount of work to be covered were also mentioned in suggestions. For instance, it was argued that to develop a more interactive relationship with co-tutors in schools ways must be found to manage time and resource constraints. More time in the university and more tutorial time than is presently available for group discussions among student teachers were also mentioned by a number of tutors as desirable. One suggestion was regarding the need for more training and refresher courses for the school co-tutors for familiarising them with the complexities of reflection to enable them to usefully help student teachers in its effective implementation. The fact that the university loses contact with most student teachers once they get into schools during the induction year after qualifying the PGCE was also regarded as an issue of concern. It was, therefore, suggested that ways must be found for keeping in touch with student teachers once they had completed the course such as during their NQT (Newly Qualified Teacher) year and perhaps beyond. This, it was argued, would help the university assess the level of achievement of the student teachers and hence the usefulness of the course. Further, this would develop long-term interaction between

the university and the schools for the continuous professional development of the new teachers. Other than that, keeping in touch with student teachers during induction (the first year of teaching in the school after the successful completion of the PGCE course) would have long-term developmental impact on the nature of the training itself. In the absence of such a link it was feared that student teachers might lose their reflective skills if they didn't get an environment in the school suitable for reflection. This seems a very helpful suggestion as a link with the student teachers will likely result in longer term relationship not only between the student teachers and the university but also between the university and the schools which is likely to have a very helpful impact on the whole educational process. The question, raised, however, was how to find ways, means and resources to establish such collaboration, and that was one big obstacle that participants argued was standing in the way.

More summative and formal reflective evaluations by the student teachers towards the end of the programme also came up as a suggestion for improvement. This was in the backdrop of the present informal, in-the-process nature of evaluation of reflection in the PGCE which according to a number of tutors was mainly due to a belief that reflection as a concept was not easily measureable. Again, this takes us to the conceptual and definitional intricacy of concept as is revealed in this study and in the related literature, both indicating reflection as a complex concept in terms of its connotation, implementation and hence evaluation. Although some believed in a more 'in-the-spirit' nature and assessment of reflection than its formal assessment, others argued that this might not be a very useful idea as such subtlety might lead to it being

forgotten in the thick of things and hence suggested making evaluation of reflection a more central feature of different components of the programme. Further, it was suggested that the concept should be developed as a more tangible one instead of just presenting it as a good thing (McLaughlin, 1999: 17) to do. This latter view is in consonance with the argument in literature that reflection needs to be clearly defined in order for it to be properly implemented and assessed and to avoid it being reduced to the status of a slogan (Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Fendler, 2003; Akbari, 2007)

On a slightly broader level one suggestion was for working towards fundamental changes in the basic schooling discourse and for embedding reflection at the school level which would have a wider impact on its useful incorporation in the teacher education programmes. One way of bringing such a change in the schooling discourse, it was suggested, would be through changes in the in-service teacher training. The implication seems to be that in order to take the reflective discourse to schools on more urgent basis teachers, who are already serving in schools for a number of years and who might not have had an exposure to the reflective model of teacher education, needed to be introduced to the concept. Another proposal was for a model of teacher education spreading over five years with components of initial pre-service training, followed by a school-based two years Masters degree and then specialised courses for management level senior positions in a collaborative environment of training between the university and the school. This, it was suggested, would provide a more comprehensive programme of teacher education for developing more effective and reflective teachers. The model so conceived, it was argued, might be expensive but

that the money that was spent on managing education through agencies such as the TDA and OFSTED would be better spent on a more useful development of incoming teachers in this way.

Suggestions from student teachers encompassed two main issues. One, the emphasis on more informal reflection instead of the requirement to do so in terms of paper work such as through formal lesson evaluations and written assignments which were associated by a number of student teachers with a waste of time and a cause of tension. Reflection through informal journal writing rather than through more formal requirements such as in the form of directed tasks and written assignments was, therefore, preferred. Reflection in the informal forms, it was argued was a more natural and meaningful way of reflecting on one's practice and experience. Another reason for favouring this informal reflection was the belief in it being a guard against the tension that comes with formal and required evidence for reflection such as through written assignments which were rather heavily included in the course. These suggestions are in line with the very idea of reflection in education in general and teacher education in particular that is empowering teachers as leaders and decision makers (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Akbari, 2007; Galea, 2010) by giving them greater autonomy in the decision making processes. The issue also reflects the tension between the requirement for reflection (and hence greater teacher independence) and a policy of standardisation at the same time (Harrison and Lee, 2011). Secondly, the issue seems to be being cognisant of and keeping an intricate balance between teachers' autonomy and the need for scaffolding and structuring

experience. This means balancing the enactment of reflection as a more structured and professional concept and turning that structure and professionalism into formula and hence a bar on teachers' independence. In other words there seems a case for finding an intricate balance between reflection as a set of strictly and clearly defined techniques (Cruickshank, 1985; Killen, 1989) with distinct aims, *and* reflection as a slogan (Zeichner, 1994; Gore, 1987).

More explicit and significant inclusion of reflection in the PGCE also came up as an important suggestion. The concept was introduced once to the whole cohort of the PGCE as part of the central Teacher Developing Course (TDC) and it was, therefore, interesting that student teachers mentioned this. It was suggested that for better comprehension and implementation of the concept, it would have been more useful had it been incorporated in a more formative form. This emphasis also seems significant keeping in view the multifaceted nature of the concept which is likely to be difficult for student teachers to have a useful grasp of just through one introductory lecture in the course. The concept is likely included in the subject-focused sessions with individual tutors but the stress there is to be expected more on its general meaning and application rather than essentially on its nature, structure and on an exploration of its complexities. Further, it was pointed out that reflection is difficult to understand without practical teaching experience. The implication seems to be that the concept, although introduced in the beginning, would be more usefully understood by student teachers if it cropped up more than once in the follow up sessions in the TDC once they had some practical teaching experience in schools.

Overall, like some university tutors, student teachers, too, argued that reflection should come more strongly and visibly in the programme than is the case now. Moreover, presenting reflection as a specialised, focused concept with a clear conceptual framework could lead to student teachers taking more interest in trying to grasp the diversity of its interpretation and functions. This may perhaps also reduce the chances of it being reduced to the status of a slogan (Zeichner, 1994; Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Akbari, 2007; Harrison and Lee, 2011) which is likely to have a helpful impact on its conceptualisation and enactment in the programme.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

‘The discrepancy between how the concept of reflective practice is understood and practiced in the academic community and how it is understood and practiced in the professional community represents perhaps the most poignantly illuminating example of what we have come to know in education as the theory-practice rift’.

Cole (1997: 21)

This chapter aims at presenting a summary of the main findings and their key implications. The chapter ends with the researcher’s personal reflections on the study. The summary and implications revolve around the meaning and the subject matter of reflection, its implementation in the programme, the factors influencing it, the rationale for and an indication of possible areas for improvement in terms of its connotation and implementation. This section will also highlight the main contribution of the study and present suggestions for further research. The *reflections and conclusion* section is aimed at briefly recounting the research journey encompassing the origin, the aims and rationale of the study, directions for possible future studies around the issue, the lessons learnt during the course of the research and the personal and professional development that has possibly taken place.

7.1 Summary of the main findings and implications

7.1.1 The *what* of reflection

Reflection in terms of its meaning and subject-matter was very diversely interpreted by participants from both groups. The interpretations, however, could be categorised into two distinct ways: reflection as a process and reflection as an attribute. As a process it was defined in two ways. As a *private* process of individual ‘thinking’ about things or what is termed as *monologic* reflection in this study and as a slightly more *overt* and collaborative process of information processing and communication of ideas, referred to as *dialogic* reflection. Monologic reflection denotes some kind of implicit, individual thoughtfulness about actions and practices. In its dialogic sense reflection is a somewhat explicit and systematic process of interaction with practices, ideas and with other people for exploring issues, improving practices and solving problems. Overall, the monologic sense of reflection seemed more prevalent as the concept was defined by both groups as an implicit thoughtfulness about classroom practices for improvement and progress.

As a dialogic process reflection was associated with overt educational practices such as writing assignments, group discussions, supervisory meetings, lesson planning, preparation, delivery and evaluations, and to some extent with critical incident analysis and action research. Further, in dialogic sense too there was some diversity in the meaning that university tutors and student teachers attached to reflection. For instance the more longer term practices such as writing assignments and critical incident analysis were identified by most university tutors as reflective devices but

student teachers identified the more oral and immediate practices such as discussions with peers and with school and university tutors and lesson evaluations. This echoes findings from Hatton and Smith (1995) regarding student-teachers' aversion to practices such as 'academic' essays and reports for developing reflection. Such practices were, on the contrary, considered as inhibiting reflection because of their formal structures.

In terms of the subject-matter of reflection the main focus of both groups seemed to be on issues of technical and practical import (Van Manen, 1977; Valli, 1997) and what Zeichner (1994) terms as 'generic' reflection where it is taken as a more general kind of contemplation about teaching-learning, classroom issues without any specific focus. Although most of the university tutors identified slightly broader issues or issues in the 'critical' realm (Van Manen, 1977; Valli, 1997), the overall focus seemed to be on the immediate and the practical elements of classroom teaching. The student-teachers' focus of reflection in terms of its subject-matter predominantly remained on the technical and the practical level (Van Manen, 1977).

The prevailing understanding of reflection as a monologic *or psychological* (Lawes, 2003) and inward looking phenomenon rather than a more systematic, explicit and clearly defined concept in the PGCE will have important implications in terms of its implementation and usefulness. For instance, with an overtly technical and practical emphasis, reflection is likely to help student teachers in dealing with their immediate classroom needs and in responding to issues of practical import as less-experienced

practitioners but at the same time reflection at this level does not seem to prepare them to think about the broader aims and objectives of the educational process. New teachers trained in this way are likely to take their role primarily as that of the deliverers of curriculum in a top-down model of education and that of reflection as thinking about the *how* of the teaching process rather than the *what* and the *why* of it (Birmingham, 2004). Initial training in this way has the potential to thus restrict the role of reflection as an emancipatory educational concept (Tom, 1985; Zeichner, 1994). This study, therefore, supports that reflection be included in the programme under study in a more explicit, systematic and clearly defined manner. This will make the concept more useful for student teachers both in terms of its application on the practical classroom level and on the broader critical level. Besides, such overt and comprehensive inclusion of reflection in the PGCE and similar educational programmes will have long-term developmental impact on the future professional development of teachers as professionals and as educational thinkers and leaders not just in curriculum implementation but in the development and innovation of the educational process.

7.1.2 The *how* of reflection

This section recapitulates the process of enacting reflection, that is, the practices and strategies identified by the participants as included in the programme for developing reflection and the possible hindrances and barriers in the way of such enactment. Secondly, factors influencing reflection and its enactment such as the theory-practice

and university-school interaction and the duration and structure of the PGCE are reviewed.

A number of practices and strategies were identified by participants as promoting reflection. These ranged from immediate *practical* practices such as dialogues, discussions, lesson planning, presentations and lesson evaluations to longer term strategies such as critical incident analysis and written assignments. Although in terms of more practical, immediate practices both groups identified similar practices, the university tutors' range of reflective devices encompassed more longer term practices such as critical incident analysis at different stages over the training period, written assignments where student teachers were expected to show critical understanding of concepts and practices, and to some extent action research.

The student-teachers' range of reflective practices was limited to more practical practices such as lesson planning and evaluations, concept mapping, and discussions with colleagues and tutors. Interestingly, longer-term and *theoretical* strategies (strategies aimed at a more critical/theoretical development of student teachers such as written assignments and essays) that were identified by university tutors were not identified by student teachers among their reflective practices. Such practices were rather considered by student teachers as hurdles in the way of their reflection. Similar observations have been made by Hatton and Smith (1995: 42) whose research suggested that student teachers 'saw the academic context and expectations of essay writing established within the wider institution as inhibiting their ability and

willingness to reflect...'. Another significant finding regarding these practices and strategies was that most of these were not evaluated and instead it was 'hoped' that the inclusion of these practices would promote student-teachers' reflection. It was also argued by university tutors that reflection being an intangible concept could not be evaluated in any distinct manner and that it was through the overall progress of student teachers during the course that their level of reflection could be judged.

Once again these findings have important implications in terms of the enactment of reflection in the programme. First in line with a definition of reflection at the more monologic or *psychological* level, the inclusion of various practices and strategies for the reflective development of the student teachers came out primarily as a general belief in their usefulness for the purpose rather than on any concrete basis. Although many university tutors argued that reflection could not be adequately and explicitly evaluated, some suggested a lack of an evaluative framework as a possible weakness. In this sense it would be a useful proposal for the course providers to think of ways and means to make the enactment of reflection more explicit in the programme for it to be of enhanced educational value. One way to do this could be to see the feasibility of including certain models of reflection which have explicitly attempted to quantify and categorise it on the basis of its scope and focus (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Kember et al., 1999; Kember et al., 2000). While these models might prove useful for making reflection more explicit and measureable in the programme, care needs to be taken at the same time to keep intact the essentially emancipatory role of reflection. This indicates a dilemma between reflection as a slogan and reflection as another

standardised technique to measure learning outcomes. This issue needs further exploration and seems an interesting subject for further research.

In terms of obstacles in the way of effective enactment of reflection in the programme, the main barriers were the amount of work and the inadequate time available for this. Both groups of participants identified time-work imbalance as a major obstacle in the way of student-teachers' reflective development. However, to deal with the issue, each group suggested slightly different courses of action. Most university tutors wanted to have a longer duration for the PGCE. The suggested increase ranged from a few weeks to one whole year, making it a full masters programme. Secondly, the university tutors wanted to have more time in the university as the school part was considered adequate. However, keeping in view the government policies in place (at the time of writing this report) that are aimed at an increasingly practice-based and school-centred initial teacher education, university tutors were not optimistic about any such development. Some of the tutors, nevertheless, were happy with the structure of the programme. This justification was on two bases: one, their acceptance of a more practical initial teacher education as more productive and two, their view that most student teachers were of high academic calibre and needed not any longer course than the present one. Another reason put forward was practical and pragmatic considerations such as the potential unpopularity of a longer course, the consequent possible drop out of student teachers and the economic non-viability of such a course both for the government and the student-teachers.

The student teachers too considered lack of time as a major impediment in the way of their reflection. They, however, mainly did not suggest any increase in the duration of the programme and instead focused on the amount of work that had to be covered. The suggestion, therefore, was a reduction in the amount of work in the form of various tasks and assignments that they had to do to progress through the course. Thus, there is this interesting divergence although on lack of time both groups seemed to have convergent views.

The implication is that despite lack of time the university tutors considered the amount of work, and the subject-matter included, important for the professional development of student-teachers, therefore, their focus remained on a possible increase in the duration of the programme rather than a reduction or exclusion of content from the PGCE. The student-teachers, however, seemed to think of the subject-matter they had to cover in the time available, overwhelming and hence considered things which were apparently included in the programme for developing student teachers as reflective practitioners, as barriers in the way of such development.

In either case, this has important implications for the overall structure and purpose of the PGCE both on an immediate and internal (on the course providers' level) and broader and external (government level). On the internal level for instance, the course providers, that is the university and the schools, might want to adapt the work-time (im)balance to relax the programme, that is either to reduce the amount of work the student teachers have to do during the PGCE or to provide more time for them to

usefully reflect on their experiences. This would essentially involve an overall evaluation of the content and aims of the programme.

On the broader, government level, policy makers may need to look into the possibility of funding initial teacher education programmes of longer duration. At that level the issue seems to be one of political, economic and philosophical orientations and priorities. Although findings from this study indicate the participants' overall satisfaction with the duration of the PGCE, there was also an indication that longer duration ITE would be helpful in developing reflection at a higher levels. This, however, was not regarded feasible due to politico-economic factors which were beyond the control of the practitioners. Other hindrances pointed out by university tutors were mostly issues regarding schools such as the rigid and centralised structures of some schools that left little flexibility for student teachers to be more independent and hence reflective. Lack of opportunities for school co-tutors to get refresher courses and training due to the unavailability of funding and hence lack of co-ordination with university tutors were also suggested as possible hindrances.

An interesting issue investigated in this study was the theory-practice interaction in terms of the professional development of student teachers and its impact on their reflectivity. As is noted in the previous sections of this thesis, reflection has been associated by many writers with the desire on the part of policy makers and educationists to replace theory in its technical-rational form (Schön, 1983, 1987) with practical theorising (McIntyre, 1993; Carr, 2006) or reflective practice.

The findings of this current study indicate a clear support for the contemporary understanding of reflection, that is, its development as a more practical activity rather than a more theoretical concept. This focus was generally emphasised on the basis that at this stage it is through practice that student teachers learn more than they do through exposure to theoretical models. Secondly, that the time available in the PGCE was not adequate enough for a deeper theoretical grounding of the student-teachers. Besides, that reflection and professional development is an ongoing process and hence the deeper theoretical understanding of the concept would come as a result of continuous professional development. The danger in this, however, is a possible de-theorisation and hence de-intellectualisation of the teaching profession, reducing teaching to the level of craft which is best learnt during and through practice. Secondly, going too far on this road, which seems to be imminent, as the present government has indicated (Ref. Chapter 6), will inevitably further limit the role of theory and hence of the university in initial teacher education. This was pointed out as a danger and as a possible de-intellectualisation of the profession by some of the university tutors.

Overall, the participants seemed to echo McIntyre (1993: 51) who supports the role of theory in terms of it being 'suggestions for practice in learning how to teach' (See also Alexander, 1984). The findings of this research also supported the view presented by McIntyre (1993, 1995) that a complete elimination of propositional knowledge and hence of the role of the university, that McIntyre (1993: 39) terms as a 'remarkably primitive view of teacher education', would be harmful for the short-term and long-

term professional development of student-teachers. However, the findings also seem to be slightly different from McIntyre's (1993, 1995) contention that reflection is a more useful learning tool for experienced teachers rather than beginning teachers. In that sense McIntyre seems to imply that student teachers need more explicit theory and ideas for practice to inform their practices. In contrast, experienced teachers' use of theoretical models according to him is more implicit and hence the process of reflection for them is more intuitive and autonomous rather than in need of being fed by any explicit theory. In this study both university tutors and student teachers supported the idea of more useful reflection during practice.

On the whole findings from this study and what McIntyre (1993, 1995) presented seems to be an outcome of a pragmatic, practical, and to an extent, a compromise position, that is, the provision of theory at the minimum possible level in a political and educational environment which is increasingly apathetic to the role or significance of theory in teacher education in general and initial teacher education in particular (O'Hear, 1988; Lawlor, 1990; Carr, 2006). On a more fundamental level, however, there is the view that this minimal provision of theory or theory as 'suggestions for practice' (McIntyre, 1993) is inadequate for developing student-teachers' reflection at the broader, critical level. Such minimal inclusion of theory which is what is possible in the amount of time available in the PGCE will result in a superficial understanding for student teachers regarding their role as teachers and of the educational process in terms of its broader aims. One important consequence of such limited role for theory in initial teacher education would be an understanding of reflection more as a

psychological, subjective and implicit process rather than as a rational, systematic process of inquiry. Hence, 'Far from encouraging a critical perspective, reflective practice is more likely to encourage conformity and compliance, particularly within a competence-based training setting, and under a view of continuing development that is guided entirely by the notion of spreading good practice in a functional sense'(Lawes,2003: 25).

Further, it seems those who take teaching as a primarily *practical* activity and as a *craft* seem to have a superficial understanding of the educational process. Interestingly this school of thought is apparently winning the debate as the direction of initial teacher training in England is moving further down the practical road. Those who present the more pragmatic course, that is, the practical theorising model or the theory-practice-going-together model mainly represent teacher-educators in universities and colleges. They are increasingly finding it hard to keep the role of theory to some minimum level in the present predominantly school-centred ITE. And the advocates of a more critical role for theory and hence for reflection to encompass issues of broader *critical* import seem to have lost the cause if not the argument (Lawes, 2003).

Interestingly, the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government, that came into to power in May, 2010 seem to take this agenda of emphasising 'practical competence' and the 'craft' of teaching a step further by supporting a more school-based teacher 'training' and by promoting the idea of 'teaching schools' where new entrants into the teaching profession are provided training on-the-job and where

according to Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education ‘trainee teachers can observe and learn from great teachers’ (Gove, 2011). A recent OFSTED (2009/10: 59) study found that ‘There was more outstanding initial teacher education delivered by higher education-led partnerships than by school-centred initial teacher training partnerships and employment-based routes’. When this was pointed out by an MP during a parliamentary debate over the 2010 White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*, the Secretary of State for Education argued that there was other research that supports the school-based ITE. Countering an argument regarding the possible threat to an efficiently working university-based ITE, Gove suggested the idea of lab-schools for university ITE providers which he argued was popular in countries such as the USA. The new School White Paper (DfE, 2010), entitled ‘The Importance of Teaching’, also promotes the idea of more school-based ITE and the increasingly popular *Teach First* concept which encourages new graduates from top-universities to join the teaching profession and get training on-the-job. Both of these initiatives seem to be rooted in the belief in a more practical ‘craft’ nature of teaching and on-job teacher ‘training’.

Although the structure of the PGCE under this study was two-third school-based, the White Paper seems to propose taking the ITE (or rather ITT) further down the school road in a bid to ‘Reform initial teacher training, to increase the proportion of time trainees spend in the classroom, focusing on core teaching skills, especially in teaching reading and mathematics and in managing behaviour’ (DfE, 2010: 9). Thus suggestions regarding ITE in the White Paper and the policy of the incumbent government seem to

be based more on some ideological position (or rather a superficial form of it) and less on any credible research regarding the role of theory and practice and hence of the school and the university in the preparation of beginning teachers.

This reflects an emphasis on the 'what' and 'how' of education (Partington, 1999; Galea, 2010) while the 'what' of teaching centres on the issues of 'subject-teaching' and the 'how' on the teaching-methods. The government policy appears to be focused on the 'how' of teaching regarding the preparation of new teachers while the 'what' or subject-matter in terms of the school curriculum is deemed to be the prerogative of the government policy makers. This, however, is likely to lead to neglecting a third and vital question regarding the process of education and the role of the teacher in it, the 'why' question, which focuses on the rationale of the educational process itself, acknowledgment of which might mean more emphasis on the theoretical grounding of the initial teacher education. According to Pearson (1989: 147), a teacher is not just a subject expert such as a biologist or a chemist or a mathematician. In addition 'The teacher needs to understand the subject in its relation to other subjects and a part of the overall education of students'. This approach stresses preparing teachers to think about the relevance of their subjects to other subjects and to the general aims of the total educational experience and not just the acquisition of knowledge and skills to teach a particular subject. It is this kind of requirement on the part of the teacher that makes his/her job more than proficiency in subject knowledge and classroom teaching and consequently teacher education more than 'training' for competence in subject-matter teaching and classroom management. It is probably here that the vital role of

the university, for a balanced preparation of new teachers as educators in a broader sense and not just as subject teachers, comes out significantly. Further, it is for this kind of broader critical role as teachers, that the incorporation of a more theoretical/higher level of reflection is needed in initial teacher education programmes.

7.1.3 The *why-and-so-what* of reflection

Reflection was generally described as a very useful concept by both groups of participants. The usefulness of reflection was predominantly associated with its help in dealing with the technical and practical issues that student teachers encountered during their practices such as classroom management, behavioural issues, lesson planning, delivery and evaluations. Some of the university tutors argued for its role in slightly broader issues such as continuous professional development and longer-term development of a critical attitude towards issues. On the whole, however, the emphasis was on the more routine issues of immediate and practical importance to student teachers as beginning professionals. This, again, highlights the prevalence of the common-sense understanding of reflection on the one hand and on the other the practical focus of the PGCE and hence of the participants' pragmatism to respond to those on an immediate basis. The student-teachers' association of the importance of reflection as a tool for dealing with the psychological issues such as anxiety and confidence building also reflected their pre-occupation with issues of immediate import to them at this stage.

An implication of this practical focus is that reflection is influenced by the kind of situation prevailing in practice. Thus with a requirement in the course for developing skills and competencies in classroom teaching and management for obtaining the QTS, the focus naturally will be on that level. However, as literature reveals a neglect at this stage of the broader scope of reflection might hamper the student-teachers' ability to inculcate and develop reflection at the critical level (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). It will, therefore, be useful for ways and means to be found to encourage reflection at the early stages in a way which helps student teachers to appreciate its broader scope.

A number of suggestions were put forward by the participants for improving the enactment of reflection in the PGCE. These ranged from technical issues such as the inclusion and structure of certain reflective tools, finding ways and means to develop greater interaction between the university and the school part of the programme through enhanced electronic communication such as VLEs and more training opportunities for school co-tutors. On a broader plane, suggestions from the university tutors included taking the reflective discourse to the school level education and restructuring the teacher education on longer term basis consisting of a continuum of initial teacher education and continuous professional development through collaboration between the university and schools. Suggestions from the student teachers included making the process of reflection more informal and less directed as they considered the PGCE overly directed and formalised (see Hatton and Smith, 1995). Secondly, student teachers suggested a more explicit and frequent inclusion of reflection as a *concept* in the programme which they considered was inadequately

included as an introduction in the beginning of the central teacher development component of the programme. The implication is that reflection needs to be included in the programme not just as a means to an end but as an end in itself, because a concept can only be implemented usefully when it is adequately understood by the practitioners in terms of the *what*, *how* and *why* of it.

7.2 Contribution of the study

As is established in the literature review of this thesis there has been a plethora of research conducted on reflection as an educational concept. A consistent theme coming out in most of this research, however, is the complex nature of reflection, (Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Hatton and Smith, 1995; Harrison and Lee, 2011), something that does not seem to have been fully resolved, yet. Kember et al. (2008: 379) note, 'What is perhaps surprising, inspite of the wide interest in reflection and the volumes written about it, is that the concept is ill defined'. Literature reviewed for this current study, however, shows that that concept is elaborately defined by many writers and academics; however, the problem is more a lack of knowledge and appreciation of the diversity and, hence complexity (which is not always a bad thing), of the concept at the practitioners' level. There is, therefore, a theory-practice divide regarding the conceptualisation and implementation of reflection. This calls for a more overt, elaborate inclusion of reflection in initial teacher education programmes such as the PGCE studied for this research. One way to do this would be to provide a comprehensive framework for reflection to be appreciated by the practitioners (tutors and student teachers) on a more collaborative and rational rather than on an

individual, psychological level (Akbari, 2007). For this to be the case at the practical level, a useful framework identified in this study revolves around the ‘what, the how, and the why-and-so-what’ of reflection. As is indicated in this study, the framework could be used for a more ample comprehension, implementation and evaluation of reflection as a teacher education concept. This framework has the potential to help the inculcation and enactment of reflection in educational programmes with its focus ranging from the immediate practical concerns the educational process to its broader goals and ends.

Besides, a significant contribution of the this study comes from the fact that the concept, in terms of its meaning was explored in the light of practitioners’ (that is the university tutors’ and student-teachers’) views rather than primarily through putting any measuring and classifying mechanism to the student-teachers’ written work such as journals or essays or through *primarily* theoretical or philosophical analysis the of concept. Most previous studies have focused on an *indirect* measurement of the reflective abilities of student teachers in the light of theoretical frameworks (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Pedro, 2005; Kember et al., 1999; Harrison and Lee, 2011). This research studied the concept in a more *direct* way by exploring the views of both university tutors and student teachers regarding their understanding of reflection in terms of its connotation and implementation. The study, therefore, on the one hand provides direct access to the participants personal views about reflection and on the other it helps in making a comparative analysis of the university tutors’ and student-teachers’ perceptions regarding the concept. Reflection in this way, in so far as the

literature reviewed for this study reveals, has not been explored. The study, thus, provides very useful insights in to the comparative positions of university tutors and student teachers and the possible factors impacting these positions.

This study also claims to have explored reflection in a more comprehensive manner, looking at issues affecting it ranging from the various conceptual interpretations of the concept to the practical issues impacting its implementation in the programme. For instance, on the one hand the impact of various theoretical models and interpretations of reflection and on the other the influence of practical factors such as the time available for the programme, the amount of work involved, the school and university-based factors, and the broader policies regarding ITE on the government level have been explored. The concept, therefore, it is hoped, has been studied in a more comprehensive, contextualised manner.

Further, the reflective focus in the programme under study was particularly associated with the new introduction of the M-Level in the PGCE, which the participants argued was aimed at the professional development of student teachers at a more critical/theoretical level as compared to the previous competency-focused character of the course. Reflection was, therefore, considered a central feature of this new emphasis with the inclusion of more reflective practices such as the M-Level essays, critical incident analyses and individual action plans over the period of the course. This study, however, indicates these practices did not seem to have a very significant impact on the reflective development at the higher level and student teachers,

generally, did not seem to appreciate their role towards that end. This is significant at this stage and calls for a reappraisal regarding the content, structure, focus and aims of the PGCE for a more useful enactment of reflection in the programme.

Another significant contribution of this study is an exploration of the comparative impact of the university and the school and of theory and practice on the development of student-teachers' reflection. The impact of theory and practice on reflection has been discussed on more conceptual, philosophical level by academics such as McIntyre (1993, 1995), Demaine (1995) but this current study has explored this intricate interaction on a more empirical basis in line with that of Lawes (2003) and in the light of the perceptions of practitioners that is, of the university tutors and student-teachers. A related significance is the finding in this study that both university tutors and student teachers markedly supported the important role that the university plays in the professional development of student teachers and the possible negative repercussions if this role is further diminished. This goes against the current trend on the policy/government level which does not seem to appreciate the role of theory and of the university in the initial teacher education programmes. This study, therefore, contributes to the argument and shows the importance of the role of the university in the initial teacher education which seems to have been increasingly being reduced at the policy level.

The case, therefore, is for a more significant inclusion of educational theory in general and of reflection itself in its historical, theoretical context, in the PGCE and in similar

programmes of initial teacher education. This will have the potential to prepare beginning teachers on a more critical, professional level who will not just be practitioners and implementers of curriculum but will be able to critically evaluate the curriculum development process and to question and assess the aims and objectives of the educational process as a whole. Further, instead of reflection/reflective practice as a replacement for theory (Lawes, 2003; McIntyre, 1993), this present research shows the complementary interaction of the two. The implication is that the development of reflection at the higher/critical level is more likely to be the case if the process is grounded in the theoretical understanding of the educational process. Inclusion of reflection in its historical/theoretical context and with a comprehensive framework, encompassing issues ranging from the immediate practical to broader critical levels, would, this researcher argues, in the light of insights coming from this current study, provide an opportunity to beginning teachers/practitioners for its more comprehensive articulation and useful implementation in educational programmes such as the PGCE.

7.3 Implications for further research

This study indicates a number of avenues for further research regarding different aspects of the issue. The present research explored the topic in the light of the views of university tutors and student teachers. Although an initial intention was to include school co-tutors, this was decided against largely due to access and resource issues. An interesting extension, therefore, of this research would be to conduct a future research from the perspectives of the third category of stakeholders that is the school

co-tutors/mentors, exploring similar themes. As a qualitative case study from one PGCE programme, this research was not aimed at wider generalisation in terms of implications, although there is room for generalisation of its findings to programmes with similar structure and content. It, however, would be interesting if similar studies were being conducted of similar programmes and then a metanalysis of the overall findings done, aimed at broader, cross-institutional implications.

The present study has established the importance of at least the minimal inclusion of theory and hence of the university/HEI's in the initial teacher education. This reinforces similar views regarding the importance of theory and of the HEI's in the ITE (McIntyre, 1993, 1995; Williams and Soares, 2000; Lawes, 2003; Lawes, 2006; OFSTED, 2009/10). This is interesting in view of the increasing marginalisation of the role of the HEI's and of theory in the initial teacher education in England primarily due to government support (see for instance the new School White Paper, 2010) for more school-centred ITE's. It would, therefore, be interesting to conduct a comparative study of the perceptions of people in the academia/the HEI's, the schools, the student teachers and the educational bureaucracy and government policy makers, dealing with ITE in England to analyse why, despite research supporting the importance of HEI's and theory in the ITE, the trend on the policy level is not appreciative of this role. It would also be interesting to investigate why in the current climate the ITE is increasingly going down the school road and why teaching is being considered a *craft* that is best learnt through imitation and practice.

Another interesting issue raised by a number of participants among the university tutors group was their relating the ability of better reflection among student teachers, to a background in the social sciences, as compared to those coming from the natural sciences background. This seems to be due to a belief in *education* as a subject of social sciences or because of a belief in essay writing as a prime reflective ability which it was argued was relatively easier for social science students. This needs further exploration and it would be useful if some future research is conducted for a comparative analysis of reflective development among student teachers coming from the sciences and social sciences background. Last but not least the relative usefulness of different practices for developing reflection among student teachers remained an unresolved issue as most university tutors expressed a 'belief' in their collective usefulness but did not seem to have explicitly evaluated these practices. It would, therefore, be a useful and complex issue to explore further.

7.4 Reflections and conclusion

'Ah, yes

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of our exploring

Shall be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time.' T.S. Eliot

Reflecting back, towards the end of this thesis, on the journey from the beginning, I find it an enormously enlightening experience. In 2008, when I arrived from Pakistan for my PhD, my understanding, of issues and concepts explored in this study, was predominantly one-dimensional, and, to an extent, simplistic. For Instance, although I was interested in the notion of a *thinking* teacher, I had no idea of the complexities involved in the *what*, the *how* and the *why* of that thinking. Similarly, I considered the role of theory and practice as distinctly straightforward in teacher education programmes. As a novice in the field, first as a school teacher and then as a new Lecturer in Education in Pakistan, I didn't see theory of much relevance to the teacher education programmes and considered it a waste of time for beginning teachers to be excessively exposed to theories of education. It was this thinking that led me to write an article entitled 'Are teacher education programmes a complete waste of time?' (See Appendix VIII) in a Pakistani newspaper in 2005, suggesting the non-relevance of theory to the needs of beginning teachers. I, therefore, argued for a more practical emphasis in the B.Ed programme in Pakistan, which is a required initial training for secondary school teachers.

Interestingly, I find similar tendencies towards further marginalising theory and the role of the university in initial teacher education in England and hence there is a congruence between my earlier thinking (in 2005 in Pakistan) and of the education policy makers in England (in 2010) about the role of theory in teacher education. However, now that I studied, on a deeper level, the intricacies involved in theory and the theory-practice interaction in professional development, I feel that to be able to

appreciate the role of theory in teacher education, a more composite understanding of the issue is required. I am, therefore, thinking of a reconsideration of my earlier view regarding the role of theory in teacher education. I now strongly feel that theory and hence the university has a highly important role in the preparation of beginning teachers as well as in the continuous professional development of teachers. I tend to agree with researchers referred to, and with participants included, in this study that an exclusion of theory from the teacher education programmes, even at the earlier stages, would result in the de-intellectualisation and de-professionalisation of the teaching profession.

I consider the structure of the PGCE in England a better preparation as an initial training for new teachers when I compare it with the B.Ed in Pakistan which is excessively *theoretical* in structure with just five weeks of practical teaching experience in the school out of the thirty-six week in the programme, the rest of which is being spent by student teachers in the university listening to *lectures* about pedagogy, the history of education, educational philosophy, child psychology and other such *theoretical* subjects. However, I feel keeping in view the amount of work student teachers have to complete in the PGCE (studied for this present research), and the more *practical* orientations of the programme, the exposure to theory including the conceptual understanding of an intricate concept, that is, reflection, is inadequate and so needs reconsideration in terms of structure and content.

My interest, thus, as a teacher educator in Pakistan would be in thinking of ways and means to develop an initial teacher education that is aimed to take the strengths of both these systems and to minimise their weaknesses. For instance, between the two programmes, that is, the PGCE which is mainly *practical* and school-based and the B.Ed which is overly *theoretical* and university-based, there could be a mid-way bringing in more balance to the theoretical and practical components and to the role of the university and the school. This, however, would need further deliberation and exploration.

Further, at the beginning of my PhD my understanding of knowledge and the processes of exploring it was at the elementary level. Although I had done a masters level thesis in Pakistan, I didn't have exposure to the philosophical and theoretical grounding of knowledge or reality. I considered the process of research as collection of data (mostly in quantitative form), their analysis at an elementary level (such as on the basis of average and means) and then their presentation at a descriptive level. There was thus no grounding of the research question(s), data analysis and theorisation vis-à-vis the ontological and epistemological considerations of the process. My PhD journey has, therefore, I think, equipped me to see a more comprehensive picture of the nature of reality and to use systematic processes to explore it in the light of ontological and epistemological considerations. In other words, I have learnt during this process that academic knowledge is explored and developed through an organized process of inquiry with consideration for the principles of validity, reliability and ethics during this process.

In terms of my interest in the notion of a *thinking* teacher which later on transformed into an exploration of the concept of *reflection* as a result of my initial simple, literal translation of the term, the journey so far has been extremely enlightening. During the process of exploring the concept, I discovered the philosophical nuances of the *Western* education system in general and the teacher education in particular as the literature I reviewed for this study mostly came from countries such as the UK, Australia, The USA and Canada. More specifically, my simple understanding of *reflection* as a thinking process went through significant changes as I read, initially with anticipation, curiosity and interest, then with bewilderment and finally with enlightening involvement. Reflection in this sense, since my introduction to it in late 2008 and early 2009, has never ceased intriguing me as an ever-encompassing, ever-evolving, ever-deepening phenomenon on the practical as well as philosophical/conceptual level.

At the end of this study, therefore, I feel I have a much deeper understanding of reflection and by extension of the educational phenomenon in terms of its aims and objectives. This, I can as much claim for my enhanced understanding of the complex role of the teacher and hence of the teacher education programmes. Based on my personal experience, during this study, regarding the value of understanding reflection as a wide-ranging educational concept, in terms of its help in understanding educational phenomenon, I strongly suggest its overt inclusion with explicit theoretical underpinnings regarding its origin, nature and different models; and implementational strategies in educational/teacher education programmes.

My fascination with reflection has never ceased since I got introduced to it in the beginning of this study. I feel I have not yet fully grasped the full promise of the concept and so my exploration of it would, therefore, continue. My eventual satisfaction, however, comes from the fact that I am now able to see the process of education as an intricate, multifaceted and highly interesting phenomenon that needs to be actively pursued, explored and seriously debated for it to be usefully employed for an ample development of the individual and the society.

Reflection as an educational concept is what I feel of great help in such an understanding. That is how I found it, every time; I read something new about it, although a common thread seemed to run through all various definitions and conceptualisations, every time I found something new in those meanings and conceptualisations. Exploring reflection thus far has not only resulted in my deeper understanding of the concept but also of the complexities involved in my own thinking and actions. It is in this sense that I feel that in the process of exploring reflection, I explored my own self more than anything else. The following beautifully reflects the above and my evolving understanding of and reflection on *reflection*:

'I look at my reflection in the mirror

I smile

The Reflection changes.

I smile again

The Reflection changes.

So I frown

The Reflection changes.

I remain neutral

And in doing that too,

The Reflection changes.

I begin to play in the mirror

The mirror in me

Me in the Mirror.

But

Who authors who?'

(Norris, 1993: 255).

Appendices

Appendix I

Interview Schedule for University Tutors

The 'what' question(s)

- What does 'reflection' as a teacher education concept mean to you?
- What do you think student teachers should reflect on during the PGCE programme?(Prompts: curriculum i.e. the subject they teach, teaching-learning methods/strategies, the student, the school or larger socio-economic and political issues)
- How would you describe some of the characteristics of a reflective teacher/practitioner and do you think those characteristics can be properly developed during the PGCE programme?
- In your view where should the balance between 'theory' and 'practice' (practical teaching experience) lie in the development of more reflective teachers in the PGCE?

The 'how' question(s)

- Are you able to describe some of the reflective practices/strategies within the PGCE programme? How effective are they in developing reflection in trainees?
- How easy do student teachers find it to implement the concepts of reflection (as defined in this programme) in the practical teaching-learning situation

during the PGCE? (Prompts: elaborate - e.g. on what facilitates/inhibits implementation)

- Do you think the National Curriculum for ITE allows sufficient flexibility for the incorporation and development of reflective practice in the PGCE?
- How is the development of 'reflective practice' assessed in the PGCE? And is it adequate?
- What are some of the hindrances/barriers in the way of implementation of reflection in the PGCE and how can they be dealt with?

The 'why' question(s)

- How important do you think it is that reflection as an educational practice is incorporated into the PGCE?(Prompts: immediate, long term benefits)
- What (if any) would be some of the changes that you would wish to make to any aspect(s) of the current provision of 'reflection' in the programme?

Appendix II

Questionnaire 1 for student teachers

Dear colleague, please answer the questions in the box given below each question.

You can type your answer in the box after clicking inside it.

- What does 'reflection' as a teaching-learning concept mean to you?

- What do you think should one 'reflect' on as a teacher?

- What (if any) have you found to be the most effective strategies for 'reflection' as a student-teacher *so far*?

- Do you think you have had enough opportunities in the PGCE for 'reflection' as a student-teacher *so far*?

- What did you find as some of the hindrances/ barriers in the way of involving in 'reflection' in the PGCE *so far*?

- Do you think it has been useful for you as a student-teacher to engage in 'reflection' in the PGCE *so far*? If 'yes', how? ; If 'no', why not?

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Name _____

Educational qualification (last degree) _____

Subject-group you are in the PGCE _____

Brief description of previous teaching/teaching-related experience, if any _____

Duration of previous experience (in months/years) _____

Your age (in years) _____

Date of response to the questionnaire _____

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Kindly send the filled-in questionnaire as an attachment to any of the following email

addresses: mik7@le.ac.uk or ilyasjans@yahoo.com

Questionnaire 2 for student teachers

Dear colleague, please answer the questions in the box given below each question.

You can type your answer in the box after clicking inside it (The box expands as you write inside it).

- At the beginning of your PGCE, I asked you to define what 'reflection' meant to you as it refers to teaching and learning. Your earlier response is attached with this email (**Previous Questionnaire**) for reference. Reading it back now, do you still adhere to your previous understanding of 'reflection' or would you like to review it now?

- What is it that you have been 'reflecting on' most often in your school placement(s) so far?

- Thinking now about the university-based part of the PGCE programme, what (if any) practice(s) did you find most useful during the PGCE for developing you as a reflective teacher? Please give reasons for your answer.

- Thinking specifically about your school placement(s), what would you say have been some of the practices/strategies in which you have been involved that you found most useful for your development as a reflective teacher? Please give reasons for your answer.

- Do you think your school co-tutor(s)/mentor(s) have helped you to reflect on your practice? If 'yes', how did they help? And what is it that they wanted you to reflect on?

- What (if any) did you find as some of the hindrances/barriers in the way of 'reflection' in your school placement(s)?

- Which part of the course did you find more useful for your development as a reflective teacher: the university-based part or the school-based part? Kindly give reasons for your response.

- Do you think the one year (nine months) PGCE is enough for you to develop as a reflective practitioner? Please explain your answer.

- Did you get enough time/opportunities so far in your school placement(s) to properly reflect on your practice?

- Any other comments/suggestions for improvement regarding 'reflection' as a teacher education concept in the PGCE programme?

Note: You can review any of your responses to my **Previous Questionnaire** to you if you feel so. Kindly highlight in case you wish to review any response. (Your responses to my **Previous Questionnaire 1** are attached with this email as a separate file)

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Kindly send the filled-in questionnaire as an attachment to any of the following email addresses: mik7@le.ac.uk or ilyasjans@yahoo.com

Appendix III

Participant Consent Form for tutors

Subject: Perceptions of university tutors and student teachers about the connotation and implementation of 'reflection' in the PGCE (Secondary, M-Level) at a university in the UK.

Dear tutor,

I wish to invite you as one of the participants in this research study. This research seeks to explore the concept of 'reflection' as is it interpreted and implemented in the PGCE Secondary Programme at Your participation in the study is of immense importance to the study and could result in our understanding of and in possible improvement of the programme under study.

The research is conducted with respect to your rights, interests and dignity in conformity with rules and regulations of the British Educational Research Association (BERA), Revised Ethical Guidelines (2004). Any information given by you will be used for research purposes only, will be reported with utmost integrity and objectivity and will be treated with respect to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. No participant in the study or the institution in which they work will be identifiable in the final outcome of the study.

Your participation will be in the form of an interview. You will be interviewed verbally for about one hour. Information will be recorded both in written and audio-taped form with your permission at the time of the interview. As a participant you are free to withdraw from the exercise at any time if you wish to. Written transcripts of your interview will be given back to you for any possible omissions/corrections or reconsiderations and only then will they be included in the study for further analysis.

Should you agree to take part in this research study keeping in view the above information, please complete the following together with your signature.

Thank you.

Your name _____

Position/status _____

I Agree / Disagree to participate (Please circle your choice)

Name.....Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher: Muhammad Ilyas Khan, PhD student, School of Education, University of Leicester, UK.

Appendix IV

Participant Consent Form for student teachers

Subject: Perceptions of university tutors and student teachers about the connotation and implementation of 'reflection' in the PGCE (Secondary, M-Level) at a university in the UK.

Dear Colleague,

I wish to invite you as one of the participants in this research study which seeks to explore the concept of reflection as is it 'interpreted' and 'implemented' in the PGCE(Secondary) programme. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Your participation and cooperation will be much appreciated as this could result in our understanding of and in possible improvement of the programme under study.

The research is conducted with respect to your rights, interests and dignity in conformity with rules and regulations of the British Educational Research Association (BERA), Revised Ethical Guidelines (2004). Any information given by you will be used for research purposes only, will be reported with utmost integrity and objectivity and will be treated with respect to privacy and confidentiality. No participant in the study will be identifiable in the final outcome of the study.

Should you agree to take part in this research study, kindly fill in your responses to the questions in the Questionnaire given below at page 2 of this document and send it back via email as an attachment to any of the following email addresses.

mik7@le.ac.uk or ilyasjans@yahoo.com

Thanks a lot in anticipation for your time and cooperation.

Muhammad Ilyas Khan,

PhD student,

School of Education,

University of Leicester, UK.

Email: mik7@le.ac.uk , ilyasjans@yahoo.com

Appendix V

Extracts from an interview with a university tutor along with an illustration of the data reduction/analysis process and identification of themes

I: What does reflection as a teacher education concept mean to you?

Difficult to define

UT13: I think it's a very difficult one to answer because there are so many different conceptualisations of reflection and around that I am not sure that I would want to pin myself down to a particular side or view of what reflection is.

So in a sense I have, um I would want to say a unique or contextualised view of what reflection is in terms of the sort of students that I deal with. So there are two dimensions to this really.

Traditional/immediate/ classroom issues

Firstly is reflection I guess in the more traditional sense of a teacher who examines his or her performance in the classroom, dissects it, analyse it and seeks to find strategies to transform teaching strategies, learning strategies so that the students themselves get the benefit of that reflection. And to me that's a constant process and it's a professional process. It's something that in fact, I think, many teachers get to do, virtually, not consciously because it's so much ingrained into their professional practice. But I think there is a second dimension to this which, because I am a social science trainer, which deals with sociology and psychology students.

Reflection on broader social issues, open education and development of a critical attitude

I think there is another dimension to that reflection which is related to the nature and critique of the society in which we live. In other words what I would want social-science trainees to reflect upon is the subject-dimension, the sociological, psychological dimensions of living in a particular sort of society and developing, through reflection, developing strategies which best assist there students to actually operate within that society successfully. In other words as a social scientist it's not just about getting students through their exams, it's about training social science teachers to offer a broad, open education to their students, to develop if you like a critical attitude in their own students towards circumstances in which they live. By critical here I don't necessarily mean negative, it could be positive as well. It's just about being open to other things. So to me it's not just about teaching practice or professional practice. It's also about the nature of the subject matter which I deal with as a social scientist.

I: Thank you for this.

Own practice as classroom teachers. Wider issues: equal opportunities, diversities, stereo-typing.

I: What do you think should student teachers reflect on during the PGCE programme? Probably you covered a part of it.

Reflection on: Immediate practical issues

UT13: Yeah I have. Well certainly I think they have to be encouraged to reflect upon their own practice. And in a sense that's a sin-e-qua-non in the sense that actually unless they do that they won't pass the course because unless they show development over the course of the year which shows that they actually can think about what they are doing and change their practice to deal with better then I am not sure that they ever get through the course really. So in a sense it's absolutely vital to the successful completion of the training programme.

Wider beyond the class issues.

But what we try to do in our particular course is also to get them to think about the wider issues which their students will have to address and deal with. Remember most of the students in the classrooms that my trainees will teach will be 16 to 19 so they are older than the average PGCE student teachers' students. So I want them to reflect on the wider issues such as equal opportunities, issues about diversities, issues to deal with opportunities, issues to deal with stereo-typing, and issues to deal with the wider social arrangements within those nineteen year olds are going to emerge. So again it's a two-fold thing, it's about their own practice but it's about teaching social scientifically as well.

I: So when you talk of practice do you mean teaching strategies and techniques?

Modelling rather than telling and independence of thought and decision making

UT13: Yes but not in some sort of mechanistic way. What (mentions a colleague here, excluded for anonymity) and I try to do. I work with a colleague (name excluded for anonymity). What we try to do is not tell them how to teach. We try to model different ways of teaching and try to get them to reflect upon why they might adopt a particular strategy in particular circumstances. So it's all about getting them to think about why they might be doing it that particular way and having made that decision did it work? So that's practice bit but there is the wider social bit as well which is important to us.

I: How would describe some of the characteristics of a reflective teacher or practitioner and do you think those characteristics can be properly developed during the PGCE programme?

Open-mindedness

UT13: Hm. That's quite difficult. Well the first thing is openness to critique. So that the trainees are willing to listen to people who are going to critique their performance. And I am quite happy that they discuss those things, argue with me about it and because in a sense there is a win, win situation here because if they actually don't agree with you, if you offer them something and they don't agree with you, then that's part of the reflective process. But it's and it's an openness to learn from the situation and the colleagues that they are engaged with. So that would be keeping, having an open mind. To me the trainee who has one way of teaching and is not willing to consider or try other ways of teaching is not going to be the best they can possibly be. They might be ok but they are not going to be great in my view. So openness to critique is the first thing.

Bravery

The second aspect is that they actually have to be brave. What I mean by that is that it's a very, very difficult thing that we ask them to do. After six weeks of training we throw them into the classroom and say there you are, get on with it. And the temptation I think especially in the early days is to play it safe. So how do they play it safe? They do the same things that were done to them when they were school students themselves, when they were school children themselves. So we always say to them that one of the earliest failings of the starting teacher is that they talk too much. Because the traditional view of teaching is that the teacher stands there and tells the students what to do. So we would encourage them to get around that by trying different things. And again that's quite dangerous because things can go wrong, if you are not used to that style, it can blow up on your face, students may not like it. And so in order to do that we have to sort of create a very safe environment in the schools where their tutors in the schools are very supportive of them trying different ways. So that's what I mean by being brave. And being innovative as well. Again we do not give them a set of strategies; they have to explore these themselves.

I: So open to critique, brave and innovative?

Organised and responsible

UT13: Yes, yes and then you know very much getting them to be, umm they have to be very well organised as well to make sure that, when they have a teaching episode, they reflect upon that. We have ways in which we structure that but actually they have to do it. So it's about them being very hard working and rigorous in taking the responsibility seriously to actually think about what they are doing. Rather than just saying, "I have got to do it another day, that's fine, I'll prepare next day". And then again that takes a year for them to get their heads around. And the second part of the question was is a year enough?

I: Yes, I asked can those characteristics be properly developed during the PGCE year.

UT13: Um I am not sure 'properly' is the right word, because we can recruit very, very high calibre... student teachers. We get the cream of the cream. They are normally very, very good... and at the end of the year the majority of our trainees will actually have performed very, very well.

Mostly yes, Reflection as an attitude of mind, Student teachers' previous background impact, Difficulty to establish or engender.

So in one sense yes, we can get them there. But I think if they got to the end of the year and thought that's all it was, we would have failed because unless we have given them the habit of reflection that they are going to carry in to their first year as teachers and throughout their teaching career then I think we failed. So it's really about an attitude of mind and that's slightly more difficult to engender and to establish...May be one or two of them a year who don't quite get it, who just want to do things in their way, they want to do them and never want to try anything new. Yeah not many a year only one or two will be like that.

I: In your view where should the balance between 'theory' and 'practice' (practical teaching experience in the school) lie in the development of more reflective teachers in the PGCE?

Modelling theory, theory through practice

UT13: Ahh dear interesting. I am not a great fan of theory in many senses. And although I do recognise that theory is often a good way of conceptualising and help you, you know to grasp concepts. But we certainly don't start at the theoretical level... you know. We sort of leave that to the course as a whole, where the Teacher Development Course which is the overall bit of the course. And we do I guess touch upon theoretical issues when they are doing their assignments but there are very few occasions when I am teaching or when (mentions a colleague) is teaching that we lecture them about theoretical positions on reflection. Our view is we try to model it, show it in our own practice but we are very explicit that this is where we want them to end up.

Uni-school balance: No split between theory-practice, uni-school. Partnership

So in a sense I guess in the practical. In terms of the balance between school and the university, I certainly don't see any split between, the university deals with theory and the school deals with practice. That's not the way we operate as a partnership. And ... we have built a very strong cohort of tutors in schools who understand what we are about, who are supportive of what we are about and who deliver the sorts of advice and support that will help our trainees to move towards better reflection. In large part that's because many of them are products of the course themselves, so they have been through the course and they know what it's like.

I: Actually I ask this question in the background of the debate that taking out in a way teacher education terming it as teacher training from the university will eventually de-intellectualise the profession, and will be reduced to an apprenticeship model. So do you think that is the thing that is happening?

UT13: Oh yeah that's umm, yes, yeah

I: It is happening?

1. Balanced present model 2. Shifting everything to school leads to de-intellectualisation and teacher disempowerment 3. Preference for teacher education rather than training 4. Complementarity of theory and practice

UT13: Um, well, I think there is an interesting dimension to it. I think we have been through that model when training was moved predominantly into school so you know the university has overall responsibility, I mean two-third of the time is in school and I think we have gone through that. I think with the re-introduction of the Masters level for PGCE I think we have moved backside towards the theoretical in the course as a whole because to do Masters Level you have to be familiar with the literature. I think the big issue would be if the Conservatives get into power next time, will they just shift everything into schools, and that in my view would lead to not only de-intellectualising but would be a disempowerment, you know, take away power from teachers because you would be reduced to an apprentice and effectively be replaced very easily and that's certainly not the model I am in favour of at all.

I: So the thing is about the involvement of the university, if it is there, it wouldn't be any problem but if you totally take away the training to the school without any involvement of the university then it would be a problem?

UT13: I think it will be a big problem and for one very, very specific reason which is that if someone is trained in one school, they actually only get access to one model of teaching and as I have tried to explain that what we want out of it is where they are open to lots and lots of different models because the university firstly gives them two different practices that's what the rules are. But also because of our own experience and the fact that we see loads and loads of different practices in all of the schools we go to that we can offer a student something that one school cant. And that is a much wider view of what teaching is all about. So I certainly don't see myself particularly as a teacher trainer in that sort of technical sense. I am teacher educator in the broader sense. But in my view without the implication that somehow I am a theoretician and I don't bother about the classroom practice because that's not where I come from and it's not what I am into..

I: How important do you think it is that reflection as a teacher education concept is incorporated into the PGCE?

Importance: against the apprenticeship concept of training, adaptation according to new demands of the society.

UT13: Oh vital, absolutely vital. To me it would be pointless otherwise. All we will be doing will be yeah producing some sort of apprentices. They might well be in schools, just sitting in someone's lessons, just watching. It has got to be more than that. Otherwise the students in school suffer. So I think it's absolutely vital.

I: So what do you think are the longer term benefits of this?

UT13: Well you know this openness of mind that you continue trying new things and you are open to new ways of working. I mean you know, in the education system

where ICT has increased and varied effects. **If you only want to do things in one way and not reflect upon what you are doing then how would you incorporate these wonderful new opportunities for use?** So if you look into social networking sites, the non-reflective teacher would be saying, “Well I don’t want to do anything with those things, what’s the point?” Reflective teacher will say, “Well how can I exploit this? How can I use these new facilities to actually help in the learning of my students?” So if you don’t have that reflective attitude we’ll just be back in the 1950’s, where we all will be standing there, talking and the students will be bored. It’s not the reality.

Appendix VI

Extracts from a student teacher questionnaire along with an illustration of the data reduction/analysis process

- What does ‘reflection’ as a teaching-learning concept mean to you?

Focus on lesson evaluation and improvement and development of skills

Reflection as a teaching and learning concept to me means **to be aware of how to improve by acknowledging what made my lesson either a success or failure.** Instead of adopting a defeatist approach which can be fatal in teaching, it is imperative in order to improve and reflect in an effective way, to recognise how to improve on a previous lesson, thereby becoming a far more rounded teacher with a repertoire of skills which I can then employ in future situations.

- What do you think should one reflect on as a teacher?

Focus on technical/practical classroom issues

Simply how to make the previous lesson better for my pupils in the future would be my instinctive answer to this. Therefore, a teacher when teaching a lesson should try and bear in mind throughout the lesson how effective their methods are and how absorbed their pupils are in understanding their given tasks. A teacher should be aware of pupils who become distracted and disheartened and reflect on how to engage their interest better next time; ...

Broader level of reflection beyond the classroom

...it is the duty of the teacher to identify whether a pupils lack of interest is the result of the ineffectiveness of their lesson or a consequence of something outside of the classroom, such as family issues at home or with their friends for example. Often it can

be a combination of both, and a teacher has to be able to cater for such issues that can be a regular occurrence.

- What (if any) have you found to be the most effective strategies for 'reflection' as a student-teacher *so far*?

Reading as a help in reflection

Well, in terms of reflecting on practical teaching methods taught during the course, I'll have to direct you to my answer below. However, the main way by which I reflect on what I am taught as a student teacher is to try and read as much as I can after sessions at university...

Time work tension

... yet with the course being so intensive, there isn't a great deal of time in which I can commit myself to reading, since there is always something else which needs to be completed, such as a directed task, a lesson plan assignment or scheme of work.

- Do you think it has been useful for you as a student-teacher to engage in 'reflection' in the PGCE *so far*? If 'yes', how? ; If 'no', why not?

Theoretical and contrived nature of the initial phase of the

I would say 'yes' and 'no'. There have been moments on the course in which we have as a group been able to recognise the effectiveness of certain classes over another; most notable when watching DVD clips of teachers on the internet and this has helped to show good and bad ways of teaching a class. However, there are the obvious issues of these classes being recorded and the pupils in the class will be fully aware of this and so there is an element of contrivance which can distort for student teachers like myself and my peers, how effective certain teaching methods actually are in reality.

Obviously, another issue which I have already raised is that concerning the lack of opportunity early in the course to see how effective these teaching methods are in practice, until we are actually sent out onto our first phase A placement.

Questionnaire Part 2

- At the beginning of your PGCE, I asked you to define what 'reflection' meant to you as it refers to teaching and learning. Your earlier response is attached with this email (Previous Questionnaire) for reference. Reading it back now, do you

still adhere to your previous understanding of 'reflection' or would you like to review it now?

My original definition of 'reflection' has stayed the same but I have been able to see the benefits of reflection for myself by using it to enhance my classroom practice. Without reflection, I still stand by my belief that you cannot improve or progress and it is an integral aspect of the teaching profession.

- What is it that you have been 'reflecting on' most often in your school placement(s) so far?

Reflection in the school(s): Students' learning needs, discipline issues, the how and what of teaching

The time when reflection was most beneficial to me was in learning to cater for the various learning needs in my first placement. In a particular class, I experienced a variety of issues regarding discipline and negative attitudes, yet I was unable to identify the main problem. Through reflection, I was able to consider how I taught as well as what I taught yet if I hadn't reflected on my classroom practice, I would have continued having problems.

- Thinking now about the university-based part of the PGCE programme, what (if any) practice(s) did you find most useful during the PGCE for developing you as a reflective teacher? Please give reasons for your answer.

Sharing and reviewing ideas in group

The most effective part of the PGCE for me was the constant encouragement to share experiences with peers, of ideas and experiences in and out of school. I found this to be very good in helping to share thoughts about how to improve since people could testify personally to their successes and failures in the classroom. Reviewing such ideas in groups and sharing these with the whole PGCE group has been a particularly effective tool in developing as a reflective practitioner and learning to know how to reflect correctly on what needs to be done to progress both for myself and my students.

- Thinking specifically about your school placement(s), what would you say have been some of the practices/strategies in which you have been involved that

you found most useful for your development as a reflective teacher? Please give reasons for your answer.

Discussion with tutor/fellow trainees and lesson evaluations

I found speaking with my co-tutor and with fellow trainee teachers was very useful in developing my own ability to maintain discipline and also develop an effective teacher presence which for me were the two key issues. I also found that while they are very tedious, the process of evaluating each lesson was a good tool by which to think about what went good or bad about a lesson, since this encourages you to think about what needs to be done to ensure more success next time.

- Do you think your school co-tutor(s)/mentor(s) have helped you to reflect on your practice? If 'yes', how did they help? And what is it that they wanted you to reflect on?

Critical role and psychological support.

Undoubtedly. Without the help of my co-tutor at school who has been there all the way through, I wouldn't be on the road to QTS now. The usefulness of your co-tutor depends to a large extent on their individual approach, to which some of my fellow students were not so lucky. Mine however always made sure that he was there every day, making it clear that he was there to help all the time and not just prescribed times on a timetable. For me, this was invaluable; someone who you know is there for you because they want to help and not someone who is there simply because they have to be. Through their guidance and support, I was able to modify my classroom practice and think critically about my approach to dealing with students and making lessons productive and fun.

- What (if any) did you find as some of the hindrances/barriers in the way of 'reflection' in your school placement(s)?

For me there were no such barriers, especially when it came to speaking with teachers and people with specific expertise. The only issue hindering my reflection that I can think of may be infrequent meetings with people, and so assumptions can set in about how to do something that if corrected later on, will make subsequently make it harder to change.

- Which part of the course did you find more useful for your development as a reflective teacher: the university-based part or the school-based part? Kindly give reasons for your response.

I thought both were very useful but in different way. The university based part was good in helping me understand what reflection was all about, yet without firsthand experience on my placement, I could not understand the value of it without putting it into practice. Therefore, both were very important, but until I was in a classroom, I could not reflect on my own experiences and this was also key since although the university part was good in showing me how to reflect, I was still personally detached from it because I cannot reflect on something someone else has done because it may not have been the action I would have taken.

- Do you think the one year (nine months) PGCE is enough for you to develop as a reflective practitioner? Please explain your answer.

I think nine months is enough time, but it is made extremely difficult with the sheer amount of work that we are expected to do. Students have enough planning and marking to do while at school and this is made far more intense by having projects and assignments to do for university at the same time.

Work time tension and uni-school overlapping

Instead, I think there needs to be far more relaxation in the course in terms of deadlines. For instance, assignments could be given a date towards the end of the course in which students are informed of. It is their responsibility to complete their assignment by the end of their placement for example, and not while they are planning since in my view, there should be far more separation between university and placement; when you are at school, you focus on school and that's it. So in short, it is enough time but it is made very hard by the amount of hoops you have to jump through.

Appendix VII

Data reduction/analysis illustration

Category5:

School-university relative usefulness for developing reflective practice:

Which part of the course did you find more useful for your development as a reflective teacher: the university-based part or the school-based part? Kindly give reasons for your response.

Importance of practice, reflection in action, real, contextual, more meaningful, practical advice, more support.

Illustrative quotes

The school-based part was probably most important as the practice is much harder than the theory. In theory I am able to control a classroom; in practice the dynamics of a class can change so rapidly that you always have to think on your feet which is a skill that can only come with practice....BC2

School based part. I found it incredibly tiring and overwhelming, but it is where you are in the situation that it all makes sense, it's all in context and you can see the results of changes that we make directly there in front of us, not in theory, not in writing. It is a rollercoaster, but it's far more meaningful than being at Uni. Although Uni does give many ideas to try, but it somehow doesn't mean as much until after the first placement....FS6

The school based part, because I knew what I was reflecting on....JR10

- **Theme 2: University-based= 4**

Time to think, read and discuss, working in groups

Illustrative quotes

The university part as there was time to think and to read. Time to talk and develop ideas...EP5

University – more time and would often do as a group...JG8

The University part, since there was at least time to evaluate it...RH19

- **Theme 3: Both: 6**

Interdependent, conceptual-practical

Illustrative quotes

Both, I find they are inter-dependent...AR1

I would say that it is roughly equal. Without the University guidance I may have struggled with being a reflective practitioner, but it is something I improved at through actually doing it whilst on placement....CM3

I think a bit of both, but school allows you to reflect more as it is reflection through practice...DS4

Both were very useful but in different way. The university based part was good in helping me understand what reflection was all about, yet without firsthand experience on my placement, I could not understand the value of it without putting it into practice....MM16

tly, humans have that he is still puzzled by our compar- globalization of environmental proto- Dawn/Guardian Service

ers

me comet that keeps crossing the sky: the 'le.' Mr Moretti's quantita- imply the latest in a rts to make literary re like science. From m in the 1920s to New 1950s and structural- ics in the 1960s and

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we's major movements o portray literature as ed by hidden laws and e operations it is the veal. But in its formal f individual texts — catively, of reading — p, at least as he w Left Review, is con- radical than anything : dreamed up. t mean that he always make of his findings. sparate novelistic gen-

edium institutions. The is that most of these affed with teachers id of the language is Consequently, most of e done in Urdu. Why lge not being imparted : schools in the first ich-like fashion, we ch realities. unscrupulous individu- and colleges all over ey professionally qual- school? Will the chil- as students be able to schooling on the same ars from now? Or, will and the students left ok for another school might repeat itself? end is to name your nd-so school system'. ese schools have to be , overseas examination tering and taking exams ly affair. No regard is

res, when mapped out together across a time line, appear to share some intriguing features: an individual life span of about 25 to 30 years and a tendency to emerge and die out in clusters. Thirty years is the length of a human generation, Mr. Moretti notes. But then, he concedes, people are born — and generations begun — every day. So what explains the regularity with which genres appear and disappear? Mr. Moretti isn't sure. But it is precisely this kind of question, he argues, that scholars have overlooked by focusing on specific texts rather than literature as a whole.

As he put it in a telephone interview from Rome, where he was on vacation: "The big picture is not just bigger in terms of the number of texts. The system is literally a system with different properties than individual texts. This is something literary studies would never face if we just kept reading and rereading the same texts."

Maybe so. But given the extent to which instruction, research and reputations in the field are yoked to just that activity, even Mr. Moretti's admirers say his approach is unlikely to win many converts. "It's an extraordinarily brave and promising project that carries the danger of taking the study of literature away from reading, which is what keeps us and our students going," said Jonathan Arac, the chairman of the English department at Columbia University and a specialist in the 19th- and 20th-century novel.

Harold Bloom, the Yale English professor famous for his prodigious command of canonical literature, was more dismissive. Interrupting a description of the theory, he pronounced Mr. Moretti "an absurdity."

"I am interested in reading," he said with an audible shudder. "That's all I'm interested in."—Dawn/NTT Service

given to parents whose back is broken trying to meet such expenses. If this is not enough parents are advised to make their child re-appear in a subject to improve his grade and this entails additional costs. Usually, the grade never improves but again a totally unnecessary fee is charged and the beneficiary is the overseas examination board.

May one ask why all this money cannot be spent to improve conditions at home? Have we as a nation become so apathetic and lazy that we have handed over such a high priority and important portfolio over to foreigners who may not have our best interests at heart?

The "direction" we have acquired in our education system is, to say the least, disturbing. We are going nowhere, just gasping and coming up for air from time to time. The new examination board could provide a model for the existing boards to get their acts together. The Agha Khan University is known for its transparency and excellence in maintaining standards and an examination board under its auspices would have much credibility.

The writer is a teacher in a private school in Lahore.

Textbooks that kill creativity

By Muhammad Ilyas Khan

It seems that in Pakistan the purpose of education is to enable students to memorize things without understanding them. To enable them to accept ideas as they are, without assessing their worth. Our examinations place a premium on the acquisition of facts and figures and that the learner is able to reproduce them whenever they appear in the examinations.

For a closer examination of these questions, let's take a closer look at the kind of comprehension questions that appear at the end of a lesson in our school textbooks?

For instance, the main English textbook prescribed by the NWFP Textbook Board (in use since 1972) contains the following comprehension questions. It has a lesson on the last address of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and then has these questions: Who were the Quraish? What was the name of mountain where the Holy Prophet (PBUH) used to retire and pray? When was the Holy Prophet born?

Answers to all these questions are all of a factual nature. The only thing students need to do is to refer to the text, learn the dates or names and reproduce them at the time of a test or an exam.

Similarly a lesson on Taxila has the following questions given at the end: What is Taxila famous for? Who made Taxila one of the most important cities? Who destroyed Taxila? Who rebuilt Taxila?

What can we get out of these questions? What is being evaluated here? Memory or comprehension, or understanding? Surely it can't be understanding or even comprehension. And if it is memory then why only focus on testing memory? Do we want an education system that produces robots or do we want to have schools that develop and sharpen the analytical and thinking skills of their students?

Other than that why are such questions being asked in an English textbook? Is an English textbook a general knowledge book? If not then what is the point in having such questions? Doesn't the textbook board and those who write textbooks know that there is a world of a difference between a text that should be used to teach English and one that tests the general knowledge of students?

These are only a few examples and one can find them in practical-

ly most textbooks prescribed by boards in other provinces as well. Actually, it would be safe to say that more than 60 per cent of the comprehension questions in textbooks used in government schools belong to this category. And what is the outcome of such questions? A closed mind, having no capability to think or analyze. What does such an education do to an individual? It kills creativity and originality of thought. It encourages nothing but making students thinking that the biggest virtue lies in complete conformity of things and with accepting them as they are.

The pattern of questions set in board exam papers adds to this problem. Most exams usually take questions directly from the textbooks. Besides, students, teachers and even the parents expect this to happen — i.e., questions in exams being from the textbooks. And this means that if an examiner even wants to choose other, more stimulating, questions, he or she can expect a chorus of disapproval from students and their parents who complain that the questions are 'out-of-the-course' questions.

One can well imagine the use and relevance of an examination and assessment system under which students cannot be expected to be asked questions not already known to them. Intelligence thus ironically means the capacity to memorize things. The better you are at doing this, the more educated you are. You need absolutely nothing to be creative, original and intelligent to get through the examination but to be very good cheater (by the word 'cheater' I do not mean a person who copies from a piece of paper or another student during an exam but someone who learns by heart the ideas of others, in the words of others, and reproduces them as his own).

Is all this going on in the name of education, really education? Is such a system going to produce original and independent thinkers, discoverers, explorers, and for that matter leaders?

The answer to that would a simple, and quite obvious, no. Our system of education adds to the number of uneducated. Education is supposed to prepare tomorrow's leaders not blind followers.

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take place in school. It is also world knowledge which facilitates language comprehension; there is no real language understanding without the support of this knowledge.

* Communicate fully with the surrounding world. The deaf child, like the hearing child, must be able to communicate fully with those who are part of his/her life (parents, brothers and

child will meet his/her needs, that is, communicate early with his/her parents, develop his/her cognitive abilities, acquire knowledge of the world, communicate fully with the surrounding world, and acculturate into the world of the hearing and of the deaf.

The bilingualism of the deaf child will involve the sign language used by the hearing-impaired community and

world.

Sign language must be the first language (or one of the first two languages) acquired by children who have a severe hearing loss. It is a natural, fully-fledged language that ensures full and complete communication. Unlike an oral language, it allows the young deaf child and his/her parents to communicate early, and fully,

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Textbooks and their questions

By Muhammad Ilyas Khan

THE main purpose of education should not be to enable students to learn facts and figures and accept ideas without showing any dissent. The purpose should be to enable them to think, to criticize things, to analyze situations and come to their own conclusions. Conclusions should not be thrust upon them.

How can we achieve this end? By asking questions of factual nature or by asking questions which compel students to use their brains and to think hard and think critically? I think the right way to do this is the latter one. Help the students to think and discover things for themselves.

Having said all this let's again move to a textbook, consider some of its comprehension questions and try to find out how can they be reformed in order to be useful for the sake of comprehension. First, let's have a look at some of the questions given at the end of lessons in the English textbook for the secondary level by the NWFP textbook board.

First questions which have nothing to do with comprehension and the way they can be made better. Questions in the book are first, followed by suggested questions that should be asked instead:

* "What did pre-historic people eat?" Suggested alternative: "Why did the pre-historic people eat wild roots, fruits, and seeds?"

* "Did people from far and wide come to visit Taxila?" Alternative: "Why did people from far and wide come to visit Taxila?"

* "Who were the real founders of modern science and technology?" Alternative: "Why are Muslims called the real founders of modern science and technology?" * "What orders were given by the king when he heard the reply of his youngest son?" Alternative: "Why did the king order that his youngest son be put to death?"

* "What is sympathy?" Alternative: "What does sympathy mean and what is its role in our life?"

* "Is it essential for a great man to be a great reader?" Alternative: "Why is it essential for a great man to be a great reader?"

* "A computer works quicker than a man. Who is then superior: a man or a computer?" Alternative: "Although the computer works faster than a man, still a

man is considered superior to the computer. Why?"

The book also has some comprehension questions but even a cursory look at them will suggest that they have nothing to do with understanding or the comprehension of the topic under study. Most of them are of a factual nature: e.g. "Who was Taimur?", "Who proposed for the first time that Muslims should have a separate homeland?", "When was Shall Waliullah born?" and so on. Answers to all these questions are plainly available in the text and hence there is no need for students to use their brains.

There is yet another type of question the purpose of which I'm not sure I understand. They look absurd and it is not clear how one should answer them. One such question is given at the end of the lesson "Energy from the Sun". The question is: "Do you know how to boil an egg?" How should a student answer this, and besides what kind of question is this in any case? If the writers of the textbook are really all that keen on asking a question on the boiling of an egg, they could perhaps change the question slightly and ask "how is an egg boiled?"

Teachers may argue that since they have to prepare students from the examination point of view and because exams ask exactly these kind of questions, they (the teachers) have no choice but to carry on teaching them. But the fact is that such questions do nothing to develop comprehension skills in students and only place a premium on memorization. While the teachers might have a point in that exams do contain such questions, is it not their moral responsibility though to help their students develop their intellectual and comprehension capabilities?

My suggestion is that teachers should at the very least ask more analytical questions in their school's internal exams. If even that is not possible, they can perhaps ask such questions during class so that students get some real learning and development of their analytical abilities. After teaching a lesson, a teacher should not confine him/herself to asking only those questions given in the textbook. Surely, this isn't all that much to ask of a teacher. Or is it? ■

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The 'for curriculum

THE government's clarification in the National Assembly on Friday over textbook and curriculum revision needs to be carefully examined in the context of education reform.

The clarification or apology came after legislators of the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) walked out of the assembly in response to a written reply by the federal education minister in which she had said that Quranic verses which used to be included in the biology textbooks for Classes XI and XII had been shifted to the biology text for classes IX and X. However, what seems to have particularly angered the religious alliance's MNAs was the statement by the minister, read on her behalf by the parliamentary secretary for education (MNA Dewan Syed Jaffer Hussain), that the "inclusion of Quranic verses is not a requirement of the curriculum".

The MMA's members then asked supplementary questions in response to which the parliamentary secretary

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Moot to exam

THE United Teachers Forum (UTF) and the Society of Economic Geologists and Minerals Technologists (SEG-MITE) have issued a call for papers for their forthcoming conference scheduled for April 10. The title of the moot is "Future of higher education in Pakistan in the context of the Higher Education Commission's policies" and it will be held in the University of Karachi's Audio Visual Centre.

The sub-topics of the symposium include the following: The Model University Ordinance and its implications; the restructuring of governing boards; the impact of educational reforms on the student community; the effects of the MUO on the teaching community; the role of the media in developing a reformist culture; academic freedom; mobilizing resistance against the HEC's reforms; globalization and its effects; importance of legislation in the reform process; the foreign faculty hiring scheme; the tenure track system; the Ph.D. scholarship

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Are teacher training programmes a complete waste of time?

By Muhammad Ilyas Khan

In response to an earlier article 'A way out of the silence' (May 1, 2005), a number of emails were received. However, the one that led me to write this piece was from a UK based educator and researcher, Doreen Crawford. She wrote: "You refer to teachers 'throwing away' most of the knowledge they gained during their training once they join a school. This is a most disturbing situation and I'd be very pleased if you can explain this to me. Why do they do that? Is it because their training did not include any teaching practice in a school? If so, should that be part of the training?"

Regretfully one cannot help feeling that once teachers join schools, after 'successfully' completing their various teacher training courses such as P.T.C, C.T B.Ed., M.Ed., etc., many dispense with it.

The issue was discussed with a number of teachers and school principals. I wanted to ask them what difficulties they faced that prevented them an effective implementation of the knowledge that new teachers gained while enrolled in training programmes. Almost all of the teachers and principals said that training programmes do bring some change in one's thinking and outlook. However, the ultimate of enabling the teachers to apply what they learn in their teaching was not realized because teachers found it difficult to follow the way of teaching used in a training programme.

Thus there is this problem of a gap between theory and practice. Now the other questions such as why do teachers abandon what is taught to them during the training programmes? Is it because their training does not include any experience of teaching in a school?

Teaching practice is actually a part of nearly all training programmes. It however must be argued that this practical aspect of the training programmes is not adequate either qualitatively and quantitatively. Only a fraction of the training session is allocated to actual teaching in a school. The courses are primarily theoretical in nature and trainee teachers are taught quite a number of subjects that have little practical or applicable value. During the B.Ed. training programme teachers are required to teach for a week initially and later for four weeks, at the end of the training programme. A number of factors are responsible for the attitude of teachers who abandon to a large extent what they have learnt during a training programme. They include the situation on the ground, the physical infrastructure of schools, the quality of textbooks used, the attitude of administrators and parents, and the examination system.

One subject that teachers are taught in training programmes and which is perhaps the most important as far as professional development is concerned is educational psychology. What is the purpose of offering this subject to trainee teachers? This can be understood if we try to understand some of the key concepts of educational psychology. 'Individual attention' is one such concept that comes out of educational psychology. This means every individual (student) is a distinct being and needs to be treated uniquely. Every teaching programme aims at teaching trainees to pay individual attention to each student because every student is distinct.

After training, however, when a teacher joins a school, he/she finds him/herself in a class with dozens of students, not the ideal situation to implement the first-learned concept of



Classrooms even in public schools in the US are better than those in private schools in Pakistan

Another subject that is a part of a training programme is educational guidance and counselling. For such a practical subject to be more useful, there should be practical guidance and counselling services in schools. This is not the case in most schools in the public sector which means that a teacher who is taught such a course has no opportunity to put in practice what he or she has learnt.

Curriculum planning and development is another course offered during a training programme. However, due to a highly centralized system of education, teachers, especially those starting out in the profession, have no say in the process of curriculum planning and development. Consequently, this aspect of the training programme also goes to waste. There is very little coordination between curriculum planners and schools, and what comes from the education department is accepted by teachers and taught to students without any analysis or examination of its suitability or otherwise.

Also, in their training trainee teachers are told of the harmful effects of treating children harshly and specially on the consequences of using corporal punishment. Despite this, the situation in schools is not improving with reports of corporal punishment frequently appearing in the media. There are many factors that contribute to this and unless they are removed, the problem will not go away.

I discussed this problem of corporal punishment with a number of teachers and principals. One of the principals had two thick canes lying beside his table. He was asked why he kept the canes since corporal punishment was banned. He smiled and said: "The canes are lying here for our own protection. These students come from such backgrounds that the minute you leave the cane they will disrupt everything in the school."

The principal then went on to complain about the political interference that happens in schools. "We cannot expel a student on grounds of indiscipline because the minute we do that, he goes to a politician or an influential person and we are forced to take him back. So the only choice left for us is to deal with undisciplined students in our own way," he said.

Another headmaster was also asked about the continuing use of corporal punishment. He

parent's side in the educational development of their children. They do not maintain any contact with the schools to enquire about their children, and hence the only choice we have is to allow teachers to use corporal punishment to force students to follow school rules and to do their homework regularly."

Trainee teachers are also taught the importance of keeping close coordination with the parents of their students. However due to poor socio-economic backgrounds of most parents (whose children study in government schools), it becomes impossible for any kind of relationship between teachers and parents to develop.

Furthermore, trainee teachers are taught the importance of preparing lesson plans in advance. This requires a lot of time and resources from the teacher's side, both of which are generally not forthcoming. More often than not, a teacher has to teach five to six classes per day in addition to the extra periods that need to be taken for absent teachers. Not only this, he/she has to teach more than one subject, sometimes three or four different subjects a day. Then, many teachers supplement their government salary by giving tuitions after school. Given all this, there is not enough time to prepare lesson plans for the next day's teaching. This will partially explain, though not justify, why so many teachers in government schools come to class unprepared.

Many teachers were of the view that the ideas and concepts taught during to them during their training programmes were better suited to the conditions prevailing in the developed countries, where resources were abundant and where education was given top priority and schools provided with all kinds of facilities.

This was obviously not the case with Pakistan and hence the content of the training course seemed a bit out of place. One senior teacher said that in fact unless things were improved on the ground, requiring teachers to enroll in training programmes seemed a complete waste of time and resources.

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Why students are afraid of exams

By Muhammad Ilyas Khan

EXAMS are a significant part of the process of education. In Pakistan, they assume perhaps even greater importance because over time they have become the primary end of the process of formal education at the school, college and university level.

Exams are now considered so important that for many students, and their parents, they seem to have become an end in themselves. It seems as if schools, colleges and universities have been established for the purpose of preparing students for exams. The teachers, students and parents have taken it upon themselves to ensure that those who sit for the exams do their best to get the best results.

Students remain preoccupied for much the year with a teaching routine that revolves around completing the syllabus on time followed by examination. Similarly, the teachers are mostly concerned with providing notes and other aids to students which can help them score higher marks. Also, the part of a textbook is not in the exam syllabus is not taught at all by teachers. They leave almost half of the textbook untaught, because these sections, in their estimation, are not likely to figure in the exam. This leaves a bad impression on students who seem to think that only the material in their syllabus is worth studying and learning.

In most educational institutions in Pakistan, especially in government schools, the process of examination and evaluation often consists of a single written test held for a few hours at the end of an academic year. Hence, a student's entire academic and future career depends upon him or her doing well in those few hours. That is why the exam has so much importance and consequently the immense pressure it brings to bear on students. This leads to many students developing an acute fear of exams which further compounds their problem because this makes them nervous and increases the likelihood of them not doing too well on the day of the exam.

Thus, such students, and there are more around than we tend to think, remain in a state of mental and psycho-



logical distress. They either lose their sleep or fall victim to excessive sleepiness and drowsiness. The more sensitive ones lose their appetite as well and have a high chance of falling ill during exam days. Thus in many cases, otherwise capable and intelligent students do not perform as well in an annual exam.

The examinations are mostly based on questions that seek to measure a candidate's memory and ability to memorize information. There is very little in them which measures a student's real understanding of the subject matter, his or her level of analytical skills or ability to think originally and creatively. Such exams tend to place a premium on those who learn things by heart well rather than those who can think independently. Even good students can do badly in such exams because there is always a possibility that of forgetting some of the material memorized during the exam due to stress and nervousness. Such memory-based exams are a horror for students and need to be replaced with ones that test their other

cognitive abilities, especially their analytical, thinking and comprehension skills.

Exams in most educational institutions are held at the end of every year or half-yearly term. A student should be made to go through a more regular process of evaluation under which he or she is tested more frequently. This has several benefits all for the student. First, the subject matter for each exam might be significantly reduced if spread out over three or four exams in a term rather than one final comprehensive exam at the end of the year. Second, by having frequent exams, the students will feel less pressurized because they will know that if they do badly in one exam they will have the chance to make up for it the next time around. This will help, to a great extent, allay their fear of exams in general.

Educational attainment in terms of grades and higher marks is a defining feature of our education system. This leads students to try all means possible to do well in an exam in the hope that getting high marks will get them admission into

the college or university of their choice which in turn them will increase their chances of getting a good well-paying job.

There is significant repetition of exam questions and this needs to be addressed as well. Those who set the exam papers should be encouraged to set new questions so that students don't spend most of their time looking up and learning past paper questions. This will also force teachers to stop focusing on some parts of the syllabus or textbook and to teach other material as well to students.

All these factors have a very bad cumulative effect on students during exams. It is up to our policymakers in education, especially those in charge of setting examinations and the examination boards to realize that matters have to be set right if we are to have an assessment system that accurately measures the comprehension, learning and analytical skills of students. ■

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A way out of the silence

By Muhammad Ilyas Khan

THIS is with reference to the article 'Breaking the culture of silence in class', written by Mohammed Faiq and published on April 24.

The writer is correct in his assertion that classrooms are excessively silent in our schools. The teacher is predominantly the only person in the class who absolutely controls everything going on in the class, while the students remain inactive, silent and indifferent. It is the teacher who steers the train, while the students play the role of silent, unconcerned, irrelevant travellers.

Teaching and learning thus become one-way traffic, flowing from the teacher's side towards the students. This phenomenon leads to a role for the teacher, which requires unconditional submission from students, and places the teacher in the position of dictator. Traditionally, in our society a lot of respect is associated with the person of a teacher and it is regarded as highly disrespectful if a student does not agree or shows dissent with what the teacher says or does. Anything coming from a teacher, no matter how much against reason or truth is to be obeyed.

This gives the teacher the impression that he or she is right all the time, which leads most teachers to think that they know everything, and that they are the repository and fountainhead of all knowledge and learning. It also makes them think that students are empty pails with no brains of their own who must be filled with knowledge and information.

Thus education moves far away from the mutually cooperative endeavour or exploration of knowledge that it is supposed to be. The result is that the teacher thinks it appropriate that the class remain silent so that he or she gets the students' maximum attention.

However, the assumption that the behaviour of the teacher is the only factor or even the most important factor causing such a situation to materialize might well seem like an oversimplification. Some pertinent questions that can be asked in this context would be: Why does a teacher behave like a dictator? Why has he or she been given such an authoritative position in our education system? Or, why are students forced to remain passive listeners?

A slight investigation of the situation would lead us to observe that a number of factors other than the teacher's behaviour cause students to become passive recipients of learning. There is no doubt that, as Mr Faiq says, "silence kills creativity and hinders the interest of the learners" and "therefore, teaching should be based on interactions, discussions, dialogues and cooperative work". But all these fine things are taught to nearly all teachers in their training programmes and when the study for their B.Ed. or M.Ed. degree.

However, as soon as the teacher joins

a school after getting training, he or she starts using the traditional mode of teaching, throwing away most of the knowledge gained during the training.

Then there is the problem of class size. As we all know, in most government schools classes are overcrowded. Average class size can be anything between 70 and 90 students and some classes have over a hundred students. In such a situation, how can a teacher be expected to "productively engage" his or students? Individual attention obviously cannot be given to students in such large classes and discipline also becomes a problem. The result is that if the teacher tries to pay individual attention or allows students to talk and engage in free discussion, he would find himself in a situation resembling pretty much a fish market.

The best possible course for a teacher

in nature and which measures only the rote learning skills of the students, also contributes to the phenomenon of silent classes. There is no room for evaluating what has been taught through activity-based assessment or via an application of the acquired knowledge and skills learnt by a student. The examination system places a premium on passive evaluation, hence the 'silence' in our classes.

The behaviour of the parents and the environment students have in their homes also add to the problem. Students in government schools mostly come from the financially and socially backward strata of society. In many cases the parents are uneducated or less educated and do not know the damaging consequences of suppressing their children, which they do readily. Such parents would even persuade teachers



in such a situation is to keep the class quiet by using coercive methods. This would seem necessary, at least in the mind of the teacher, in order to make the students listen and to bring about some order and discipline to the class.

So, something clearly needs to be done about reducing the number of students in a class because that will reduce chances of teachers becoming dictators. This means more space in schools and this requires more financial resources for the improvement of the physical infrastructure.

Activity-based teaching needs classrooms to be well equipped and laboratories and libraries provided with all other facilities. Unfortunately this is not the case with the majority of schools in Pakistan for reasons such as lack of resources or financial mismanagement and corruption.

The other factor that contributes to many classrooms being silent is the poor quality of textbooks. Textbooks used by most students in Pakistan are not very challenging for either teachers or students. Teachers teach them in the traditional monotonous way and students remain silent and sit quietly listening to what the teacher is doing (usually reading right from the text). An improvement in the quality of textbooks would be quite helpful in raising the level of interest and participation in classrooms.

The examination and evaluation system, which is predominantly theoretical

to physically punish their child if he/she does some mischief.

On the one hand this gives licence to the teacher to suppress the child by any means, and on the other deprives the student of any courage to show dissent or question the authority of the teacher, even when the teacher uses overly coercive methods. This means parents need to be educated in ways how to treat their children. This is possible only by launching campaigns in the print and electronic media to create awareness among the illiterate and less-educated parents about the rights and social and psychological needs of their children.

These are only some of the factors contributing to the harmful trend of silence in many Pakistani classrooms.

It has to be said that this problem is to found mostly in government schools and is almost non-existent in the elite private schools. That is the reason why children from the elite schools are the most active and cheerful, followed by those who study in second-tier private schools (found in smaller towns or cities, or in middle-income neighbourhoods) and then the students in government schools who are the most silent, scared and lack confidence and initiative. ■

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Wrong way of language instruction

By Muhammad Ilyas Khan

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THE primary purpose of language learning is to enable someone to speak it. It is natural that speech should come directly after listening and that ignoring speech and emphasizing reading and writing leads us to poor grasp of a particular language. Language learning does not mean only to be able to read and write a language but to speak it fluently.

As far as which of these is more important, one must note that it is listening and speaking, which are to be emphasized first. A number of reasons can be put forward to support this line of thinking. We know that the most fundamental channel of communication among human beings is speech. We also know that speech precedes aural activity or listening. No proper listening, no effective speech. Reading and writing are both secondary sources of communication. Majority of the people in the third world countries are illiterate. They do not know how to read and write. But they know to listen and to speak. Speech is thus more natural and so indispensable for the sake of communication. It should, therefore, be the primary aim of any language-learning programme.

Having said this, let's take a look at the way English is taught in schools in Pakistan. The books used provide material that is useful for acquiring skills only in reading and writing. We teach our students through these books, how to read lessons and how to write answers to the various questions given in the exercises contained in these books. English, a language, is thus treated in the same way as social studies or science.

Many people in Pakistan treat English merely as a source of knowledge and information and miss the point that not all knowledge and information in English is in the written form.

Students can phrase their sentences and can discuss more freely in Urdu than they can in English. This is this case because students and teachers

use Urdu as means of oral communication in class and outside class. If they are made to converse in English in the same way as they do in Urdu, there is no reason they will not be able to acquire proficiency in oral English. It thus does not mean that English should be discarded as a means of instruction. It only means that the defective way of teaching English should be replaced with more effective ways and techniques.

we not only ignore the most vital aspect of language learning but also hamper attainment of fluency in the language. Most schools in Pakistan teach English in the following manner: students read English, write English and listen to passages in English read out to them by their teachers from books. But, most importantly, they hardly ever converse in English. More than that there is nothing in the exams to test the oral capability



Those who advocate changing the medium of instruction from English to Urdu also ignore the problem that will arise for students who want to learn English. How will they acquire proficiency in English if it is discarded as a medium of instruction, which means ignoring the oral aspect of it? My point is not only to emphasize the primacy of speech in learning a language but also to highlight something more important.

It's not that one is advocating that speech be given priority to enable students to speak better English. Speech is not only good for its own sake but because fluency in speaking a language supplements one's writing and speaking skills in that particular language.

A good speaker is without doubt a good writer as well. Fluency and quality in speech leads to fluency and quality in writing. On the other hand, there is no guarantee that a good writer may also be a good speaker. By ignoring speaking skill in our teaching of English,

of students in this language.

The results are before us and shown by the very small percentage of the educated population which can speak English with some degree of fluency. In fact, it would be safe to say that a vast percentage of English teachers in the country cannot express themselves in spoken English. It is a shame that even our graduates and postgraduates, who have been taught English for many years as a compulsory subject, are unable to say a few grammatically correct sentences in English.

Keeping in view the above arguments we must have to do something to give some more prominent place to speech in our language teaching programmes. We have to include more oral activities in our textbooks and questions in exams that test a candidate's oral skills. ■

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Critical thinking requires the pupils to consider/evaluate their descriptions and explanations. In the context of this lesson, this would take the shape of 'which is the most important crop for the farmer and why?', 'what are the advantages to the farmer of owning his land?', 'what are the disadvantages of hiring a tractor and plough if he can't afford to buy them?' and so on.

Creative thinking requires the pupils to consider possibilities such as 'is there anything the farmer could do to increase his income?', 'what is likely to happen if he doesn't get his supply of irrigation water?', 'what difference would it make if the farmer had all his fields in one block?' and so on.

Discussion by pupils with the teacher and each other is an important aspect of the thinking classroom but it is particularly important for the development of creative thinking. This thinking skill can be encouraged by allowing students to discuss ideas with at least one other student. If two students discuss then there are actually three opportunities for creative ideas to arise, one from student A, one from student B, and a third from the creative link between A and B. Thus each of students A and B has their learning enhanced by this exercise. Without the opportunity to discuss neither student A nor student B may have had any ideas at all.

This classroom revolution can't be achieved overnight. The teacher should aim to introduce these new strategies very slowly over some weeks or terms. This will help to build up the teacher's confidence and expertise. As stated above, the teacher should relax and enjoy this new-style of teaching in the knowledge that teaching pupils to think is of greater value than lecturing to passive pupils whose mental processes remain mainly undeveloped. What difference might all these thinking citizens make to Pakistan? Which of the three thinking skills is needed to answer this question? ■

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How to make teachers ask good questions

By Muhammad Ilyas Khan

IN previous articles, I discussed the problem of comprehension questions in textbooks and pointed out their unsuitability. Suggestions were provided to change such lower-order (factual) questions into some sort of higher-order (analytical/thinking) questions, so that the comprehension abilities of students could be enhanced.

A number of emails were received in response to these articles. One in particular came from a researcher based in the UK. She had written an article on this issue herself (*What kind of questions to ask students*, *Dawn*, Feb. 22) and put forward three questions: (1) How do you think teachers might be trained to ask higher-order questions in the class given that they have probably not had any experience of being asked such questions themselves? (2) How can those who set the exam questions be trained to set different, higher order, questions - and then be trained to mark them? (3) Whether there is a fear or reluctance to discuss issues (current affairs related) in class and if so, why and how such fear or reluctance might be overcome?

The answer to the first question is not a simple one: you cannot just simply devise a training programme enabling teachers to ask higher order questions. You can do it in a limited and a particular area, i.e., in a school or a small network of schools for a specified period of time. That, though, is only a limited and localized solution to

and the differences were as clear as day. I got the point and came to the conclusion that the book that I studied during my student life was pretty useless in terms of developing my comprehension skills.

As far as the second question is concerned (about how to train examiners to set and to grade higher order questions), we have to refer to the answer of the first question. If teachers are trained in asking higher order questions and if higher order questions are included in the textbooks, there is no reason for examiners not to include such questions in exam papers. Another thing that needs to be done is that exam questions should not be taken from textbooks - because that would make it too easy for students to do well in an exam.

Comprehension questions should be based on a paragraph given in the paper which the students have not previously done in their textbook. After all, developing comprehension skills means that a student should be able to read, understand and ask questions regarding material from any source and not necessarily his or her textbook. Giving comprehension questions from textbooks

Comprehension questions in exams should be based on a paragraph that the students have not previously studied in their course.

SAF Games

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ISLAMABAD, Mar 20 — Efforts are afoot to make the opening and closing ceremonies of the forthcoming 9th SAF Games as dazzling and spell as the Sydney Olympics.

The organizers of the 9th SAF Games, however, are optimistic from the first same man, Richard de Vos, is devoting his attention to the opening and closing ceremonies of Sydney SAF 2004 as compared to other as possible.

"He is doing all to revive the colour and spirit of Sydney Olympic Games," said an official entrusted with the opening and closing ceremonies of 29-April 7 SAF Games in Pakistan capital.

Curzon has been seen to see the preparations for the opening and closing ceremonies overall but of the Aussie's attention is repeating here an unmatchable fire Sydney Olympics.

The fireworks will be staged at Shalimar Dam-e-Koh and in addition to Paki Complex itself.

SALE OF TICKETS

The sale of tickets for the opening and closing ceremonies of the 9th SAF Games is progressing at a brisk pace to the officials.

Both these ceremonies will be held at the 45,817-seat Shalimar Dam-e-Koh stadium, Pakistan Capital. The stadium has been named "enclosure innum Enclosure and 11

The sale of tickets for the opening and closing ceremonies will continue till March 27 respectively where events actually take place. Barring these two ceremonies for the 15-day Games will remain the same.

Tickets of Rs 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100, 120, 150, 200, 250, 300, 350, 400, 450, 500, 600, 700, 800, 900, 1000, 1200, 1500, 2000, 2500, 3000, 3500, 4000, 4500, 5000, 6000, 7000, 8000, 9000, 10000, 12000, 15000, 20000, 25000, 30000, 35000, 40000, 45000, 50000, 60000, 70000, 80000, 90000, 100000, 120000, 150000, 200000, 250000, 300000, 350000, 400000, 450000, 500000, 600000, 700000, 800000, 900000, 1000000, 1200000, 1500000, 2000000, 2500000, 3000000, 3500000, 4000000, 4500000, 5000000, 6000000, 7000000, 8000000, 9000000, 10000000, 12000000, 15000000, 20000000, 25000000, 30000000, 35000000, 40000000, 45000000, 50000000, 60000000, 70000000, 80000000, 90000000, 100000000, 120000000, 150000000, 200000000, 250000000, 300000000, 350000000, 400000000, 450000000, 500000000, 600000000, 700000000, 800000000, 900000000, 1000000000, 1200000000, 1500000000, 2000000000, 2500000000, 3000000000, 3500000000, 4000000000, 4500000000, 5000000000, 6000000000, 7000000000, 8000000000, 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Baroness Blackstone was Britain's education minister from 1997 to 2001.

After I became a teacher, I came across some other better English texts and realized the difference in the questions they asked and the ones I was asked when I was a student. I compared those texts with my own

A good teacher should talk about both the good and bad sides to an issue and let students come to their own conclusions. This will make them more independent, creative and analytical in their approach. There are more chances of all of this happening in a society whose members are not only educated but open to criticism, debate and discussion. Teachers in such tolerant and forward-looking societies can create quite a lot of freedom for themselves to discuss issues freely and without any fear or reluctance. ■

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There are two possibilities can cross to dummy with a diamond at trick two and take a heart. If it succeeds, he can return dummy with another diamond and repeat the finesse. Since David West are equally likely to have dealt the heart king, the chance this approach will succeed is an 50 percent.

South's other option is to attempt to establish dummy's diamonds can be accomplished, if the diamonds are divided 3-2, by putting the defenders to win the lead of the suit and later using remaining diamonds as an entry dummy.

In trying to choose which line of play is more likely to be successful, it is obviously helpful to the declarer to know that the chance 3-2 division is 68 percent.

Consequently, the winning line of play in the long run would be deliberately lose the first diamond trick, which would succeed all two-thirds of the time, as opposed to relying on a heart finesse, which would win only half the time.

In the actual deal, declarer loses four trump if he concedes a diamond trick early in the play, but gains one if he tries a heart finesse instead.

Lesson: The queen can do no wrong.

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