Newly Qualified Teacher Professional Development: An inquiry into the utility of an NQT programme that focúses on using action research to reflect on teaching practice

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Newly Qualified Teacher Professional Development: An inquiry into the utility of an NQT programme that focuses on using action research to reflect on teaching practice.

Abstract

In this mixed method approach I research the utility of a Professional Development (PD) programme for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) that is devised around elements of action research. PD should contribute to the sense of agency and expertise necessary to continue to cope with degrees of ambiguity and uncertainty in process of decision making and discretionary judgement (Sugrue & Mertkan, 2017). PD is used for the development of all staff, but the specific needs of NQTs suggests the programme should be informal, reactive and implicit arising from the new teachers' changed context and is most effective in a collaborative environment where professional discussion is the norm (Williams, 2002).

This study seeks to understand NQTs reactions to a professional development programme that builds up to encouraging the early career teachers to conduct research that will help them understand and develop their practice by introducing them to the process of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action (Lewin, 1946). 6 NQTs enrolled in the statutory NQT programme, and 2 additional early career teachers made up the focus group for this study. During the first phase of the study NQTs were given four tasks to complete that would guide them in collecting information from the classroom. The group sessions were used to present and reflect on the findings from the tasks. Using the Likert scale to discern how useful the NQTs found phase 1, the project scored an average of 4.14 out of 5, indicating it was useful for the development of the NQTs.

Phase 2 introduced the larger personally led Professional Learning Project (PLP). For this project the NQTs were encouraged to develop the first iteration of an action research project. 100% of the NQTs found phase 2 to be useful in helping them to develop their skills as an NQT, and in helping them to prepare for after being an NQT. 88% of participants found Phase 2 to be useful in connecting them to wider educational research. The open-ended questionnaire results indicate overall that Phase 2 was considered useful due to the agency that was given to the NQTs and the impact that this practice had on their understanding of the classroom and relationship with their students. The limitations of using such a small sample size and the short duration of the project are discussed.

In this study, contemporary educational research and implications for future practice are discussed, focusing on the benefits of an open-ended programme not limited by time constraints that would allow NQTs to move from an induction programme into continuing professional development with additional cycles of the circular process of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action.

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1.0 Introduction

It is widely accepted that Professional Development (PD) can foster improvements in teaching. However, teachers are frequently characterised as managers, actors, mediators, role models, salespeople and so forth. With different conceptions of teacher come different conceptions of PD. This review seeks to explore the construction of a PD programme for NQTs according to its underlying theories of action, where a theory of action includes two important parts. First, it identifies a central problem of practice that one can become more informed about, and second, it devises a pedagogy that will help teachers enact new ideas, translating them into the context of their own practice. (Kennedy, 2016, p. 946). Whilst it is widely accepted that PD can foster improvements, it is unfortunate that, from my own experience, and an often spoken about feeling amongst other staff, the 'improvements' are rarely felt, as PD is often done to staff, presented as a multitude of one size fits all sessions. I have been lucky enough, in the school that I am currently working, to have seen several different PD structures. I have received externally delivered PD sessions by Kagan and TEEP, both of which engage with many 'best practice' teaching activities that engage the staff in attendance but are limited by their lack of knowledge of the school's needs and situations due to being external sources. I have also received the previously mentioned one size fits all lecture sessions, where a problematic number of plain slides with large amounts of text, copied and pasted from several websites, have been read to a disengaged staff body.

Since Charters & Waples (1929) first tried to define teachers' practices, researchers have struggled to find a common language that could define teachers' work and delineate the knowledge needed to guide that work. Add this to the notion that teaching has become a 'more and more complex activity' (Flores, 2017, p. 123) with existing literature suggesting, amongst other issues, fragmentation of teachers' work, increasing accountability, bureaucracy and public scrutiny

(Esteve, 2000; Estrela, 2001; Hargreaves, 2001) it is not surprising that, whilst there is a wealth of literature and information about PD for teachers, it has remained a potential quagmire for schools, and in many cases programmes delivered offer a severe lack of fostering improvements in teaching. Sugrue and Mertkan (2017) state PD should contribute to the sense of agency and expertise necessary to continue to cope with degrees of ambiguity and uncertainty in the process of decision-making and discretionary judgement. Knowing that I would oversee the NQT programme this year, I began to wonder if I could challenge myself and devise a programme for the group sessions that would be engaging, NQT led, and most importantly, useful for them as developing practitioners.

I was also aware of wanting to help them prepare for the following years as NQT+1, NQT+2 and NQT+3. It is the three years following the NQT year that are often spoken about in the teaching community as the hardest years. This is largely due to their being the first years of hands-off approach, where teachers must critique and learn from their own practice, rather than being guided and facilitated by a personal mentor. I therefore wanted the programme to be centred around the development of tools from which NQTs could extrapolate, even though on a small scale, the impact their teaching was having on the students in their classroom.

In terms of the relevance of PD beyond the context of the school where I teach, it is clear when perusing the TES magazines in the staff room, or the plethora of articles on their website that there are many teachers country wide who feel wary about how PDs are presented. These articles summarise the zeitgeist of the teaching community, and as such are important to discuss within the introduction. One such article suggests that boring CPDs can turn teachers into stroppy teenagers, referring frequently to the notion that adults are fully autonomous and so CPDs should consider this (Simons, 2019); just as teachers in a classroom need to consider the needs and engagement of a room of students, so too should those providing CPD to the staff. Another article (Derrick, 2019) suggests that the best form of CPD allowed teachers time to talk. Here Jay Derrick suggests the idea of "informal learning through work" being a possible solution to the difficulty of finding time

for CPD and avoiding the 'work-load increasing' feeling that so many teachers deal with. He suggests that without enough autonomy and enough unstructured time away from the classroom, formal CPD events will often be like water running off a duck's back.

Regarding the issues surrounding NQTs, many articles are referencing NQT burn out, with one article by Michael Green (2018) referring to more than a quarter of teachers now leaving within three years of qualifying, according to statistics from the Department of Education. He poses the question 'How are you building on your NQTs' "initial" training with further professional development opportunities?' A supporting article comes from Helen Ward (2018) who adds that new teachers face 'shock' in their second year. During the first year of teaching, newly qualified teachers have fewer teaching hours and formalised support from the school; this means that the second year of teaching, when they are expected to take on a full timetable with no mentoring, can come as a shock.

The final, and possibly most pertinent article to my research, is by Yvonne Williams who discusses how we can cut the levels of NQT burnout (Williams Y. , 2018). She talks about the individual needs of teachers, whereby not everybody progresses at the same rate over the course of their career. The programmes developed need therefore to be perceptive in determining what would be most enabling for staff. She argues that 'if we are to keep new teachers connected to the education community for longer than the first five years, we need to provide supportive structures'. For example, developing a classroom action research programme that allows teachers to select topics, focus and methodology for a longer-term project, plays to an individual's interests and strengths. Having NQTs present their findings can be inspiring to all involved and the subsequent discussions highly analytical and thought-provoking. She concludes by arguing that 'taking a developmental approach to the education of new teachers would involve structuring the right programme of training. This training should take an NQT from the nuts and bolts of classroom practice to self-realisation and higher-level pedagogical expertise'.

Yvonne William's statements through her article rang true to the programme I was hoping to develop within the school and is largely the basis through which I am going to conduct my research. This leads me to the core questions I want to explore within my literature review, these are:

- What elements of Professional Development are perceived as most effective for building teacher capabilities?
- How can action research be used by teachers?
- What is considered important for NQT Professional Development?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 What elements of PD are perceived as most effective for building teacher capabilities?

The term Professional Development (PD) is often used synonymously with descriptors such as: in-service, training, continuing education, staff development, and self-improvement (Bredeson, 2002). Yet, these descriptors that are often used synonymously with PD, hint at part of the issue with the PD provision many teachers receive. Lois Brown Easton (2008), a consultant and coach, with a particular interest in learning designs for adults and children, talks about 'training' as being what educators underwent before and sometimes during the school year. Easton argues that the word 'training' conjures up images of a factory model of education, or of animals being 'taught' to sit, roll over, and play dead. Easton later posits that the term 'development' may be an improvement, but only slightly. She explains that 'development' evokes images of what someone does to someone else: develop them. PD continues to be the most common prescription for all that ails our educational system. Any issue of complaint lodged against schools has a remedy that involves PD (Brown & Militello, 2016). Yet many staff development initiatives take the form of something that is done *to* teachers rather than *with* them, still less *by* them (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). Adey, a researcher and lecturer at King's College London, claims it is 'obvious that we are unlikely to encourage teachers to use active methods in their classroom by delivering to them a monologue and expecting them to take notes' (Adey, 2004, p. 162) In similar sentiments to Easton, Fullan & Hargreaves draw on empirical work in Canada, England and the United States

and state that ‘such top-down approaches to staff development embody a passive view of the teacher, who is empty, deficient, lacking in skills, needing to be filled up and fixed up with new techniques and strategies’ (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992, p. 17). By PD often being reactionary to administrative pressures, it treats the teacher as a partial teacher, and not as a total teacher, lacking understanding of how teachers grow and change. This form of PD approach ‘at its best, introduces teachers to new ideas and possibilities. At its worst, it makes faulty assumptions about the giving and receiving of knowledge and skills without paying attention to the need for practice, support and feedback’ (Lieberman & Miller, Teachers Transforming their World and their Work, 1999). The above literature as yet does not determine the elements of PD that are perceived as most effective, but they do all concur that PD presented as a “one size fits all” solution where teachers are “developed” by “experts” is not appropriate for the educational setting of today.

There is no one-size fits all model to PD; it can take many forms, such as lectures, action research, workshops, reflective journals, and collaborative planning. Previous literature regarding PD does not present a uniform path to best PD practices; nonetheless, through the literature there has developed an understanding of effective elements of PD. Firstly, effective elements of PD allow continuous and ongoing professional growth opportunities and promote collaboration with experts and peers. These are often realised by the notion of practice, practice, practice, whereby teachers reflect on their classrooms and attempt to collect information from multiple sources that are used to future-alter areas of weakness or interest. Linda Darling-Hammond and Robert Rothman (2015) compare the educational policies of four internationally recognised public education systems: United States, Finland, Ontario (Canada), and Singapore. Finland is referenced as a model for teacher recruitment, whereby education reform is partially due to the positive cultural shift in public perception toward the teaching profession. Sahlberg’s (2015) exploration of Finland’s educational reform injected a new dimension into education debates. Finland has very high standards for entry into teaching; there is no such thing as ‘Teach Finland’ that would allow inexperienced young

graduates to teach in Finnish schools. Sahlberg describes a 5-year teacher preparation programme that all teachers much complete in order to teach in Finnish schools. Aafter admission to the national department of teacher education program the Finnish teacher preparation focuses on a combination of research, practice and reflection. Sahlberg (2015) concludes that this fosters scientific inquiry within teaching practice and encourages educators to continue to advance their practices beyond the professional development offered by district/ government funding.

Another approach to investing in teaching learning is presented by Burney and Elmore (2002), who investigate how one New York City school district uses staff development to change instruction system-wide, discussing the role local school districts play in systemic school improvement and the role of professional development in connecting reform policy to school improvement through professional development. They argue that teachers do not respond to simple exhortations to change their teaching, as would be fitting with the idea of 'training'. Instead, the process of instructional change should involve at least four distinct stages – awareness, planning, implementation, and reflection. Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) argue that the four important aspects of the total teacher that has often been overlooked in PD is the teacher's purpose, the teacher as a person, the real world context in which teachers work, and the culture of teaching; the working relationships that teachers have with their colleagues. What is clear from both reflections on successful elements of PD is the central place that teachers must have in the PD, but also that learning should be placed front and centre – in other words, it is about teachers' learning. Additionally, what is clear is the need and desire for teachers to have time to practise. Recipients of PD 'must have a trial period of practice' (Rogers, 2003). Time and space are needed to receive feedback on the implementation of something new. This should culminate with a period of reflection to evaluate what worked and what did not work, and finally what additional resources are needed for future learning. Research cites the lack of follow-up and measurement as having a negative impact on professional growth (Darling-Hammond, 2013). Effective elements of PD are

therefore about knowledge of what is impactful on students; knowledge of the skills and needs of the teacher; knowledge of ways to implement research in the classroom; and, time to plan, implement, and reflect.

Taking specifically the notion that an effective element of PD is providing teachers with the knowledge of ways to implement research in the classroom, Timperley (2010) talks about using evidence in the classroom for professional learning. Timperley, a Professor of Education at the University of Auckland, primarily focuses on ways to promote professional learning of school leaders and teachers that positively impact on student outcomes. In her abstract to a paper presented to the Ontario Education Research Symposium she states, 'for teachers to use evidence to improve teaching and learning in their classrooms they need information about what their students know and can do, evidence about their own practice and its impact on students, and knowledge of the research evidence from other established sources to give direction for improvements to practice' (Timperley, 2010). Timperley also states, 'we now know much more about what is required if evidence in the classroom is to have a significant impact'. She argues that what needs to be involved is the integration and interpretation of several kinds of evidence: formal and informal curriculum-relevant evidence of teachers' own students' learning that is seen as a source of information to improve teaching and learning; evidence of teachers' own knowledge and skills so that the evidence about students can be interpreted in terms of the implications for teaching practice; and, knowledge of the research and other evidence relevant to the specific practices to inform further directions and changes to practice in response to the evidence (Timperley, 2010).

In addition to the above effective elements of PD, another requirement for effective PD is one that places high importance on the collaborative and collective minds of teachers and the education community. Lieberman (2000), who conducted a study of sixteen educational reform networks, suggests that 'although bureaucracies work because they can process large numbers of people, they have difficulty responding to changing conditions and the discrete needs of schools, teachers, and

students' (p. 221). She then states that, 'educational reform networks, partnerships, and collaboratives are organizations that on the other hand, are loose, borderless, and flexible, and are particularly well suited to this era of new technology and rapid change' (p. 221). The importance of a network is that unlike bureaucratic organisations, the network puts the needs and interests of the members at the centre and can be responsive to the members. In a five-year study, Newmann and Wehlage (1995) were investigating how schools develop the capacity to inspire high achieving students. They found a self-conscious professional community was a salient characteristic of those schools most successful with students. A professional community meant that teachers pursued a clear and shared purpose for all student learning, engaged in collaborative activity to achieve that purpose, and took collective responsibility for their students' learning. For a network to be truly successful, it must account for the daily pressures of teaching, even as they seek to advance larger ideals (Lieberman, 2000, p. 223). In agreement with the need for networks, Bredeson (2002) applies architecture's principles of function, structure, and beauty to professional development policies and processes. He argues that 'professional development advances the fields of teaching and administration through the establishment of professional networks, the exchange of ideas, and development of standards for professional practice' (Bredeson, p. 666). This presents another facet of effective PD – it needs to feel part of the network of teachers and education, and not born of bureaucratic agendas. The teachers who take part in this project should be encouraged to reflect, comment and share with the teachers around them, with elements of reflection focused both on the present daily trials and tribulations of teaching life.

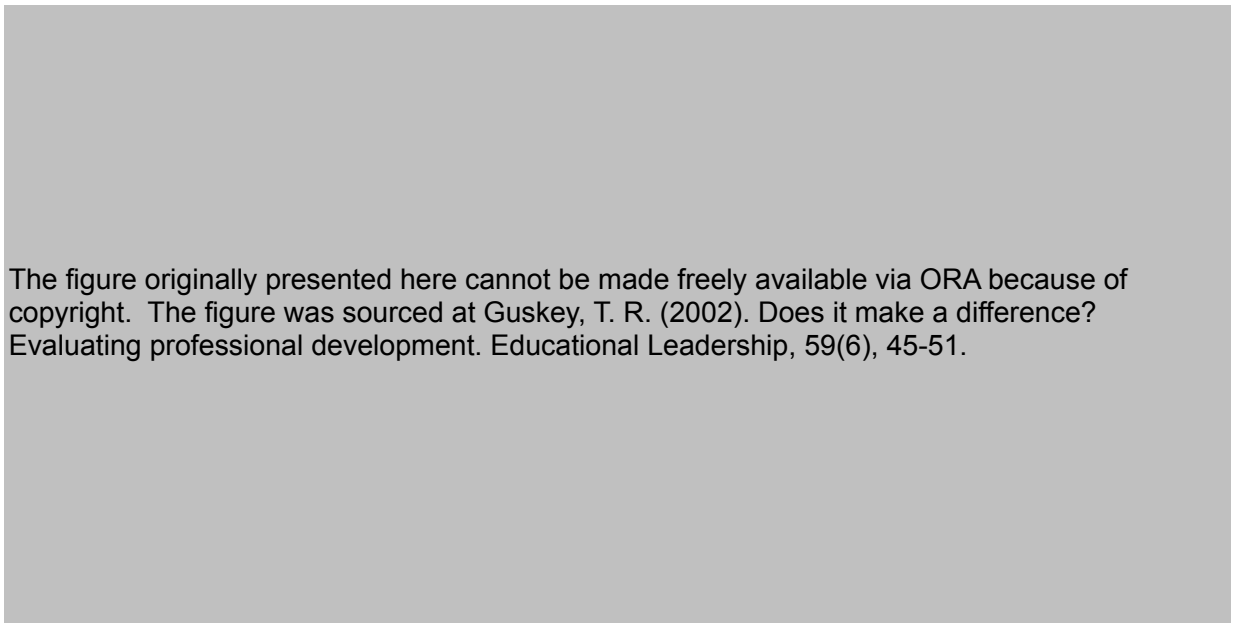
The effective elements of PD that much of the literature consults can be summarised in the *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* (Easten, 2004). Written by educators who have successfully done this work, the chapters describe how significant professional learning strategies work in practice, a rationale for their use, and the steps involved in introducing and using each strategy. A synopsis of these are:

1. *Powerful professional learning arises from and returns benefits to the real world of teaching and learning*
2. *Powerful professional learning requires the collection, analysis, and presentation of real data from student work and teacher practice.*
3. *Powerful professional learning begins with what will really help young people learn, engages those involved in helping them learn, and has an effect on the classrooms where those students and their teachers learn*
4. *Powerful professional learning leads directly to application in the classroom*
5. *Powerful professional learning experiences may not formally end*
6. *Powerful professional learning honours the professionalism, expertise, experiences, and skills of staff members*
7. *Powerful professional learning is content-rich*
8. *Powerful professional learning is collaborative or has collaborative aspects to it*
9. *Powerful professional learning establishes a culture of quality*
10. *Powerful professional learning results in automatic "buy-in" because it uses the local talent*
11. *Powerful professional learning slows the pace of schooling*
12. *Powerful professional learning designs provide the activities that make professional learning communities (PLCs) more than just a structure*

Whilst it has become apparent through the literature that teachers' learning should be the focus of PD, it raises a pertinent question about how this will be evaluated. In a time where legislators and policymakers are questioning what is right, and with education budgets growing tighter, it leads schools to look at what they spend on professional development and whether the investment yields a tangible payoff. Educational budgets growing tighter may lead to professional learning initiatives falling down the pecking order as an idealised form of PD, with 'training' and 'development' taking an easier, cheaper centre stage. These potentials make effective evaluation of professional development programmes more important than ever. Guskey (2002) presents a professional learning evaluation that requires consideration of five critical stages or levels of information. The five levels of this model are hierarchically arranged, from simple to more complex. Each level also builds on those that come before, therefore success at one level is usually necessary for success at higher levels. Figure 1. (Guskey, 2002) details a summary of the five succeeding levels in the process of gathering evaluation information.



The figure originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. The figure was sourced at Guskey, T. R. (2002). Does it make a difference? Evaluating professional development. Educational Leadership, 59(6), 45-51.



With a similar agenda to Guskey, Joyce and Showers (2002) also present the importance of monitoring the implementation of changes in approach to PD. Using detailed case studies and extensive research evidence, they state, 'failure to monitor…innovation has cost school improvement efforts dearly in the past, resulting in both inability to interpret student learning outcomes and spurious conclusions regarding the impact of change programs' (p. 95). They go on to state that, 'the primary reason to monitor implementation of innovations is to interpret their effect on students' (p95). Whilst this is important, on such a small scale investigation without the time to monitor the impact of teacher centric PD programmes, the five stages of evaluation presented by Guskey is a far more manageable approach to evaluating the programme. It is apparent though, that an effective PD programme is one that pays attention to the evaluation process and monitors the implementation of the innovation.

2.2 How does effective PD for NQTs differ from the needs of whole-school PD?

First, in order to discuss the elements of an NQT programme that will make it effective, it is necessary to discuss the statutory requirements a school must provide early career teachers. According to the Department for Education (2018), the purpose of induction for NQTs is:

…the bridge between initial teaching training and a career in teaching. It combines a personalised programme of development, support and professional dialogue with monitoring and an assessment of performance against the relevant standards. The programme should support the newly qualified teacher in demonstrating that their performance against the relevant standards is satisfactory by the end of the period and equip them with the tools to be an effective and successful teacher.

Along with this statement, the Department for Education also makes it clear that the NQT must be provided with an induction tutor, 'mentor', to be able to provide effective coaching and mentoring. The NQT 'should be observed at regular intervals…to facilitate a fair and effective assessment of the NQT's teaching practice, conduct and efficiency against the relevant standards' and that 'feedback should be prompt and constructive' (p17). The NQT should have at least three formal assessments carried out by the headteacher or induction tutor in the year. Evidence used in assessments must be 'clear and transparent and copies provided to the NQT and appropriate body' (p17). Whilst the provision provided for NQTs in England focuses upon the teaching practice standards and is designed to highlight any concerns and prompt the implementation of a support programme so as to encourage the NQT to meet the teaching practice standards it is by no way comparable to the previously mentioned five-year programme in Finland that encourages teachers to have a scientific enquiry-led approach to their professional development. Simply following the statutory guidelines means that for many NQTs across the country their induction period will be the grand total of three observations and an assessment submission. Whilst many schools will provide a programme that is far more developed and enriching than simply three observations, there will likely be a large discrepancy between the quality of induction programmes different educational facilities around England provide. In order to develop an induction programme that effectively goes beyond the statutory requirements it is necessary to explore the literature around the unique needs early career teachers have compared to the wider more experienced teacher body, and the consequences this has on the needs of an effective induction programme.

As is the case with the wider teaching body within a school, for NQTs a "one-size fits all" approach will not meet the needs of the individual teachers. Yet, often, new teachers are treated as a

homogenous group rather than as individuals with different needs and abilities. In many education settings there will be an additional responsibility for somebody to construct an induction programme that will further facilitate NQTs beyond the statutory requirements. The organised leader would most likely desire to map out the NQT programme for the academic year before its beginning, providing 'flavours' of the different aspects of education, where experts within, and external to, the school will be engaged to 'develop' the NQTs. Yet this sounds too familiar to the form of PD that has already been debunked and rejected for the rest of the teaching body. As argued by Billett & Somerville (2004) in their paper that examines how identity and learning are constituted and transformed at work, 'learning cannot be predetermined, instead it is a product of 'negotiation, circumstances, individuals' dispositions and interests, and just plain energy''. This acts as a counterargument to the organised leader who may predetermine the needs of the NQTs and provide an induction programme of expert speakers. A programme thus designed would not be a programme that invokes the individual's identity and intentionality.

Additionally, counter to mapping out an entire induction programme at the beginning of the academic year, the professional learning that the NQT experiences is very much fashioned by the school context in which they are placed, and the expansive/restrictive nature of the environment therein (Robson & Mtika, 2017). The nature of a programme for NQTs requires elements that in some ways reflect the more current, responsive, reflective elements of a network, and not a predetermined programme 'done to' NQTs. Research undertaken in the UK by Williams (2002) suggests the majority of early professional learning is informal, reactive and implicit arising from the new teachers' changed context and is most effective in a collaborative environment where professional discussion is the norm. Drawing on the work of Eraut, Guile and Griffiths, Williams conducts a case study of new teachers, using interviews and survey data from work with new teachers who have completed their statutory induction year. Williams states that "encouraging early career teachers to become aware of their non-formal and unplanned learning is likely to be as

important as ensuring that formal learning needs are met" (p10). The demands of teaching full-time and catering for students' multifaceted needs, along with the school's additional expectations and procedures is a challenging time for early career teachers. The development of a non-formal network of teachers going through similar circumstances is an important part of their professional learning. Onus is placed on the term 'network' here, as it is not a 'programme' designed to 'develop' the NQTs, but the provision of a network of other early career teachers who can come together to reflect on practice without fear of judgement. With the formal demands of an induction programme arguably being covered by the statutory induction set forth by the Department of Education this provides scope for an effective PD programme that encourages an informal element which in turn promotes the more current, responsive, reflective needs of an NQT.

Feiman-Nemser (2001) draws on a broad base of literature and proposes a framework for thinking about a curriculum for teacher learning over time. This she states will provide early career teachers with 'more powerful learning opportunities' (p1014). Feiman-Nemser argues that new teachers find themselves in an 'inherently paradoxical' situation. That is, 'like all beginning professionals, they must demonstrate skills and abilities that they do not have and can only gain by beginning to do what they do not yet understand' (p1027). Moreover, the complex and uncertain nature of day to day teaching proves as a further reminder for new teachers of what they do not know, and what they cannot yet do. She states that the conventional programmes of teacher education, induction and professional development are lacking in sustained learning opportunities, meaning that early career teachers are encouraged to survive, rather than thrive and strengthen their capacity for further professional learning. Potentially, one of the early, most important learning opportunities is to facilitate the NQTs in developing knowledge of the socio-economic needs of the area, the students' backgrounds, parental expectations, and previous history of the school. Research in Australia has shown that many new teachers are commonly placed in hard to staff or remote areas, like the placing of teachers in the UK's TeachFirst programme. This can mean that teachers have inadequate

knowledge of the demands of the situation they are placed in. This in turn can affect and challenge their prior knowledge and beliefs, and negatively impact the early career teacher's image of self as a teacher, leading to a loss of confidence and self-efficacy (Ewing & Smith, 2005: Khamis, 2000; McCormack & Thomas, 2003). This highlights again the need for a 'non-formal' network, where NQTs can feel safe in their environment, providing an outlet for any initial difficulties or shocks to the system they may face.

Through her research and review of literature, Feiman-Nemser (2001) recognised the need for a broader vision of early career teacher induction and learning. She developed a Framework of teacher learning based on a set of Central Tasks of Learning to Teach (CTLT) in the form of a continuum which ranges from pre-service through induction to continuing professional development. The areas of interest for this investigation is the induction and the continuing professional development elements (see figure 2).

Figure 2. Central tasks of learning to teach (CTLT)

Pre-Service	Induction	Continuing professional development
1. Examine beliefs critically in relation to vision of good teaching 2. Develop subject matter knowledge for teaching 3. Develop an understanding of learners, learning and issues of diversity 4. Develop a beginning repertoire 5. Develop the tools and dispositions to study teaching	1. Learn the context-students, curriculum, school community 2. Design responsive instructional program 3. Create a classroom learning community 4. Enact a beginning repertoire 5. Develop a professional identity	1. Extend and deepen subject matter knowledge for teaching 2. Extend and refine repertoire in curriculum, instruction and assessment 3. Strengthen skills and dispositions to study and improve teaching 4. Expand responsibilities and develop leadership skills

The importance of this CTLT is that it reflects the literature and research in PD for experienced teachers and the development of a professional teacher community. It also highlights the more

specific needs for novice teachers and their pre-service and induction steps. Of central importance is the sentiment that NQTs should not experience something so 'other' to the rest of the teaching body that their PD makes them alien to the learning community within the school; it should instead begin them on the journey to be able to join effectively and successfully into the learning community. This will again provide the NQT with the skills and ability to thrive, not just survive.

NQTs should be treated as individuals and their PD should reflect this. Nonetheless, there are certain elements of novice teachers' practice that should be a focus and can be grouped into agendas.

NQT as a reflective thinker

Firstly, 'reflective teaching is viewed as a paramount vehicle for enhancing the development of effective teachers' (Allen & Casbergue, 1997, p. 741). There is general consensus that growth cannot happen without extensive and frequent reflection. Cruickshank, Kennedy, Williams, Holton, and Fay (1981) and Ferguson (1989) emphasize the importance of reflection by stating that it is unlikely that full professional growth can be achieved without reflection on one's teaching. Reflection is important as it allows teachers to be self-directed. Reflection moves away from a "one-size fits all" approach and places the individual at the centre of professional learning. The mentoring programme often seen as the requirement of QTS awarding bodies can be seen to be 'primarily concerned with efficient and effective application of pedagogical knowledge' (Allen & Casbergue, 1997, p. 742), but an area of more interest and less attention is in developing the second level of reflection in a novice teacher. The second level, practical action, 'involves the progressing beyond technical rationality and becoming concerned with explicating and clarifying the assumptions and predispositions underlying competing pedagogical goals and assessing the educational consequences of a teacher action' (p. 742). This development of the second level places the novice teacher as a critical reflector, encouraging them to develop an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different pedagogical ideas to combine elements into their own unique

teacher identity. It is this that equips an NQT with the ability to thrive and strengthen their capacity, as opposed to surviving their initial first year.

One-way NQTs can undertake professional learning through reflection is in the form of narrative. This can be either written or verbal, presented formally, or informally, as long as it allows them to voice their most pressing issues or concerns, examine prior knowledge in the light of new understandings and construct new knowledge through the processes of reflection, dialogue and inquiry (Beattie, 2000; Doecke, Brown & Loughran, 2000).

NQT as an active participator

Another important element of developing an NQT is in developing them as an individual within a network. The hope of a successful NQT programme is that is taps into the 'individual's learning disposition', and that it 'encompasses a teacher's learning biography, their attitude towards and engagement with learning opportunities and how they react to environmental factors' (Shanks, Robson, & Gray, 2012). This is further developed to explain that engagement with learning opportunities can be understood 'as the extent to which teachers take part in learning and how this impacts on their practice'. This mirrors the elements of effective PD for whole staff as the importance is on realising the NQT as an individual and helping to unlock their active participation within the education community.

Reflected within professional learning, and underpinned by a collaborative framework, is situated learning, which suggests that effective professional learning for NQTs entails participation in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). NQTs, whilst novice teachers, are still learners who bring their prior knowledge, understanding and skills into the workplace and who contribute to their own learning. Providing a network/collaborative setting as an element of the PD programme may facilitate positive dispositions towards their work, profession and learning, and affect how they create and use learning opportunities at work (Evans, Hodkinson, Rainbird, & Unwin, 2006). Once

again this suggest that central to professional learning is the NQT being an active participator in a network of teachers experiencing similar situations and reinforces the need for a successful NQT programme to have elements of group sessions along with the conventional mentor/mentee set up. Through being an active participator, it allows for the values and dispositions of novice teachers to be co-produced and reproduced in the community, encouraging practice and reflection. Through being in a workplace community, NQTs can develop both a sense of how to be in the workplace and a sense of identity as a worker (Hodkinson, et al., 2004). Therefore, those who plan PD for NQTs should ensure that there is a community nature and network of NQTs.

NQT as an agent in themselves

As previously mentioned, it is not possible to find a universal way to improve learning and teaching, and one of the risks associated with this is treating new teachers as homogenous groups. Whilst it is important to ensure that there is a community network of new teachers in schools, this should not mean that all novice teachers in the community are treated the same. Autonomy and choice in professional learning are important (Sandholtz, 2002) and so an effective PD program for NQTs will encourage NQT agency.

Within educative mentoring, 'teaching is viewed as a complex activity where NQTs need to develop capacity to make intelligent decisions and handle ambiguous and often challenging situations' (Zeichner, 1996). Whilst providing a mentor is part of the statutory requirements of an NQT programme, according to the Department of Education, the power is with the mentor, who is 'developing' the mentee. Yet, there can be some forms of educative mentoring within a collaborative partnership that can help shift perspectives 'through mutual engagement in the exploration of possibilities, promoting mutual learning benefits' (Dolan, 2012). This additional element of a PD programme that encourages collaborative mentoring may help the NQTs not just survive, but to thrive in their situations, preparing them for being life-long learners and placing them in a network where they are not only equals, but have agency over their own development and

foci. One way that this collaborative mentoring could take place is through using 'experiments' in the classroom, in other words, engaging with action research. A study conducted by Youngs (2002) set in Connecticut examined the application of Connecticut's Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program in Bristol and New Britain. The report aimed to show what a valid induction can do to improve new teacher expertise. The induction programme involved taking new teachers from each participating district and allocating to them trained mentors for their first year of teaching, and in the second year the new teachers are asked to complete a subject specific portfolio. Whilst the English induction programme was set at one year, this report led me to think about the ways in which action research could be used to encourage new career teachers to complete something akin to a subject specific portfolio within their induction programme. This adoption of a subject specific portfolio would place the NQT as an agent in themselves as they would direct the shape of their own study.

2.3 How can elements of action research be used effectively in the development of an induction programme for NQTs?

Literature on professional learning uses a variety of terms, including reflection, enquiry, action and practitioner research, to describe how teachers try to understand and improve their practice (Baumfield, Hall, & Wall, 2013). According to Lassonde and Israel (2008), who developed a comprehensive guide to teacher research, teacher research is a type of action research, is synonymous with teacher enquiry, shares many characteristics with practitioner enquiry and incorporates reflective teaching and critical reflective practice. Whilst it can be considered that action research differs from other forms of research due to its nature being conducted around 'cycles of action' that inform the delivery of the next stage of action, for this study all forms of research will be considered under the same umbrella due to the nature of the induction programme being about equipping NQTs with the skills and knowledge needed to be able to complete action research during their continued development when not constrained by the statutory one year induction programme.

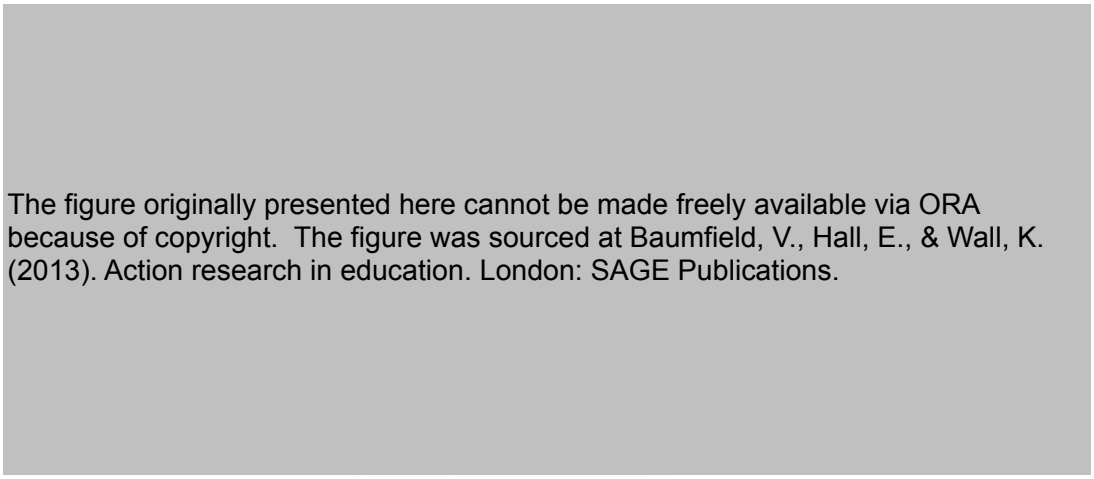
In reference to the importance of reflection being a key element of effective PD for NQT teachers, reflection is a key part of much of the action research carried out in schools. The term, 'reflection' in the content of professional learning is associated with Donald Schon, a social scientist, and the term 'reflective practitioner' became very popular after his work. For Schon (1983) teaching is an instrumental process requiring the application of learned skills in predictable, clearly defined circumstances. He states there are two types of reflection – reflection on action, which takes place away from the event, and reflection-in-action, which takes place in the moment of the event itself. Schon argues that our society emphasises "technical rationality" – in other words, the disciplines of knowledge and the methods that are believed to make formal, propositional knowledge reliable and valid. This emphasis however has led to an undervaluing of the practical knowledge of action that is central to practitioners. Whilst critiques of Schon argue that there is a lack of clarity applied to his definition of 'reflection-in-action', and that almost all of his examples in fact rely on the notion of 'removing' oneself from the action in order to reflect, it remains clear that there should be a separation between information and knowledge that is formally gathered through academic literature, and informal knowledge that is gained through one's own practice and experiences. For Dewey (1910), an educational philosopher, the reflective thinker 'impels to enquiry' (p7) and that teachers who are presented with problematic situations in the classroom look for solutions and collaborate with other people to develop an understanding of what they can do. A modern interpretation of both Schon and Dewey can be seen in the Finnish approach to the five-year induction programme for teachers that promotes a willingness to test ideas through experimentation. Encouraging NQTs to be part of a community of enquirers is indicative of a 'scientific attitude' and presents a continuity of learning, from student learning in the classroom to teacher learning in the classroom. It is therefore apparent that effective elements of PD for NQTs will have forms of enquiry and research that provoke reflection, both in the moment and after the moment, which can then be shared amongst a network of teachers in similar circumstances.

Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist, coined the term action research to describe research that will help the practitioner by providing clarity about what is to be done in complex situations (Lewin, 1946), he mentions the process is about working systematically through a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action and how this would result in objective standards for achievement and so facilitate agreement as to the conclusions to be drawn. The use of action research means that teachers are able to work with their usual classes, in their usual departments, and so their research has 'mundane realism' (Coolican, 1996). This 'mundane realism' is essential for an NQT who needs to develop their understanding of the contextual situation of the students, teachers and educational setting that they are in. Action research focuses more closely on these contextual situations and means that the novice teacher is placed as a learner whereby they can also learn from student feedback as well as colleague feedback, in the process of bringing about change in the classrooms and schools.

Baumfield, Hall & Wall (2013) drew on their experience working with teachers and constructed an understanding of enquiry that reflects the variety of practice and takes account of the information between three key aspects: the intention of the enquiry; the process by which the enquiry is pursued; the audience with which the enquiry is shared (Figure 3). Attached to these three key aspects are 6 sub-components. The details of these are:

- Agency refers to the extent to which the individual teacher/researcher has control of the focus of the enquiry, the methods used to pursue the project, and the analysis and interpretation of the data.
- Impetus refers to the problem posed that stimulates the enquiry and provides the focus for the action research. This can come from a multitude of sources such as from the individual level, subject specific, whole institutions, or sector.
- Tools refers not simply to the research methods employed – the observation, questionnaires, interviews or test scores – but to the extent to which each method provides data which operates on more than one level – answering the question and giving feedback information that enriches the learning and teaching process
- Analysis refers to the analytic process which broadly speaking assembles evidence to either prove or disprove a hypothesis, or a broad mapping of the data collected in order to generate a rich description and a new hypothesis

- Professional voice refers to what the purpose of the dissemination is
- Critical community refers not just to the final presentation of results from an enquiry, but how the researcher is placed in relation to others. The role of the community is dynamic, providing an area in which teacher-researchers feel confident to share their experiences and findings but also one in which they can expect to be asked tough questions



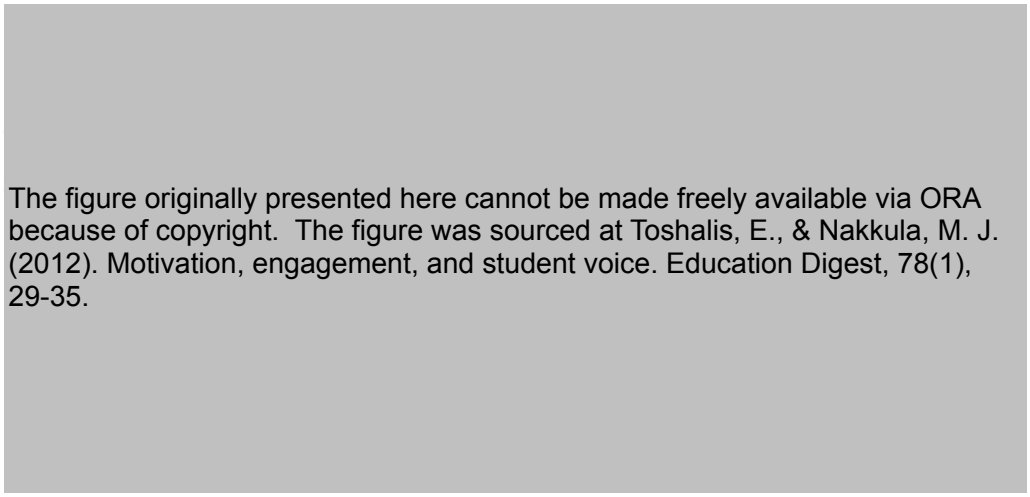
As mentioned previously a key component of successful professional development is that it is designed with the specific needs of the participants in mind – for NQTs this is developing their reflective capacities, developing them as active participants, and developing them as agents. For teachers to implement reform-oriented teaching successfully in their classrooms, consistent modelling is necessary (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001) which is why an effective induction programme would consider placing importance on training NQTs in methods that can be used to garner action research. By providing NQTs with the time to and knowledge of methods of data collection and reflection from the classroom, this can enable NQTs to develop these techniques further in order to complete action research within their classrooms. By providing modelling of potential techniques to gather information from the classroom the NQTs are given guidance on how to 'reflect-in-action'. The importance of modelling techniques that can be used to collect information from the classroom is tantamount to providing freedom of choice on a project of study, and thus an effective programme would provide time for both.

In addition to being given guidance on how to 'reflect-in-action' an effective induction programme would also attempt to help NQTs engage with 'reflection-on-action'. This can be done by engaging with recent influential educational ideologies such as growth mindset theory and the development

of ‘interleaving’ within a knowledge-based curriculum. The growth mindset theory explores the relationship between mindset and academic performance. After studying the behaviour of thousands of children, Dweck (2007a, 2007b, 1999) and her colleagues have found that a person may possess a growth mindset or a fixed mindset. People with a growth mindset subscribe to an incremental theory, believe they can increase their knowledge and ability, and are intrinsically motivated. The second current influential educational ideology, interleaving, refers to the benefits of sequencing learning tasks so that similar items are interspersed with different types of items rather than being consecutive. This results in a more variable and challenging task but is associated with benefits in terms of memory and transfer (Kang, 2016). Providing NQTs with the opportunities to develop their understanding of ‘reflection-on-action’ and ‘reflection-in-action’, will give the NQT a robust and sustained programme of development. Modelling techniques that can be used within action research aimed at new educational research could provide NQTs with an effective element of their professional learning and encourage them to be part of the wider education learning community.

An element of teacher research that can be useful for NQTs is the use of student voice mechanisms. The Economic and Social Research Council Teaching and Learning Phase I Network found through their research that all students have the right to be consulted and to have their voices listened to. An area of consultation that is usually neglected is teaching and learning, and yet this is an area that impacts the students directly (McIntyre, 2005). Arguably, ‘pupils themselves have a huge potential contribution to make, not as passive objects but as active players in the education system’ (Hodgkin & Newell, 1998). Additionally, if a teacher has experience in considering student input and that experience was positive and helpful, then the teacher is more likely to support incorporating student voice into his/her professional planning process (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). In a similar narrative to PD through the form of ‘training’ or ‘development’ being ‘done to’ teachers, so too can school feel like something that ‘happens to’ students; they are recipients of an educational experience.

Fletcher (2012) states that schools are for young people but are rarely designed in collaboration with young people and goes on to present that as adults have begun to embrace the idea of listening to and collaborating with students they have learned that these experiences can impact the students, the classroom, the school, and the teacher. This presents a social constructivist concept; whereby human development is socially situated and knowledge is accrued through the interaction with others.



Toshalis and Nakkula (2012) have also created a summary of student voice activities, as seen in Figure 4, which provides details of how teachers can enable students to contribute to their classroom and educational perspectives. This once again can be used to highlight the importance of practising practitioner research in the NQT year and provides rationale as to some activities that NQTs could practise with initially. Toshalis & Nakkula sees student voice on a spectrum, and so different activities will present different forms of information and knowledge. This may be a more appropriate area to start with novice teachers who are still trying to develop their own identity and voice within the classroom, and so this does not over-complicate their situation and allows them to still focus on the basic requirements of passing their NQT year, whilst still developing some knowledge and understanding about the power and potential associated with student voice.

A final element of practitioner research that NQTs may find useful is the power involved with observation. NQTs will already be familiar with the use of observations as the main tool for

identifying areas for improvement and highlighting key moments of strength within lessons. With most NQT awarding bodies there should be a minimum of three formal observations, with the advised amount being closer to 6 formal observations during the year. For NQTs the terms 'observation' can begin to feel akin to the word 'assessment' and that is due to the power imbalance of the formal observations. Observations can be one of the most powerful tools in a teacher's toolkit, and NQTs may benefit from being encouraged to use observations themselves, not just from being observed by their mentor etc. The Teacher Observation intervention aimed to improve teacher effectiveness through teachers observing their peers teaching and by being observed teaching by their peers (Worth, Sizmur, Walker, Bradshaw, & Styles, 2017). The key term used in this intervention is the term 'peers', suggesting a step away from the power imbalance associated with formal observations, and instead having observations about reflection and communication. This could once again be used for NQTs as a way of inducting them into the wider learning community of the school and giving them a network whereby they feel their voice is being heard. According to the Teacher Observation intervention there are two core observation domains and components. Firstly, there is the classroom environment, this involves respect, rapport, culture for learning, classroom procedures and student behaviour. Second, there is the teaching, this includes communicating with students, questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, use of assessment, flexibility and responsiveness. For an observation to be successful there should be focus and reflection upon elements within both domains and the components therein.

2.4 Reflections from Literature Review

Overall, effective PD needs to move away from the notion of 'training' or 'development' that feels done to teachers, and instead move towards a notion of 'learning', providing the teacher with opportunities to have their own agency and focus on areas important to them. For NQTs there is a duality involved, on the one side their PD does involve 'development' seen through the mentor and

mentee relationship that literature and research support as effective. It is part of the NQT's right and supported by awarding bodies that they have a mentor, and there are expectations placed on this mentor. However, whilst the mentor and mentee relationship is very important in helping NQTs develop their practice in regards to the teaching practice standards, there is still room within NQT PD to move away from 'surviving' and provide support to 'thrive'. The mentor and mentee relationship is also one that is unbalanced in regards to power, and so there is opportunity here to consider additional provisions that can help to place the power back with the NQT and place them as equal learners in a learning community. There is also reason to argue that the PD for NQTs should mirror in some regards the PD for the rest of the teaching body in a school, and thus work together to provide a learning community within the school. This will help the NQT to develop their skills to becoming a life learner and part of the education community, whether this be internally in the academy, or external. The development of networks is very important, particularly for NQTs who may find their first experience of full-time teaching daunting; this provides a community where trials and tribulations can be shared. Networks can also help novice teachers develop an understanding and awareness of the bigger picture of the socio-economic needs and demands of the students.

A network of group NQT sessions, in addition to their mentor/mentee relationship, that is focused around tools that can be used to do action research may be a way to move away from a "one size fits all" approach to NQT PD and treat the NQT as an individual learner within the network of NQTs at the school. These 'tools' and 'practice runs' could then be reflected on in the group sessions. Finally, these tools can be used to help the NQT devise a personalised project using elements of action research to look at an area of interest for them. The purpose of the NQT programme should not be one that is about results or attached to a pass/fail notion, instead it should be completely separate to the awarding body needs and should instead be intended to provide useful

tools for the NQT that prepares them for the following year and helps them to 'thrive' within the school and not just 'survive'.

From the research I can begin thinking about the specific elements within action research I would like this project to be focused on. Firstly, from the literature it is important that the NQT gets a clear outlook about the contextual situation of the school, evidence of this contextual situation can be collected by observing a student in their lessons and seeing how they respond to instructions. Secondly, it is important that NQTs experience discussing a new educational theory, such as 'growth mindset' and discovering the impact this has on their own specific context. Evidence of 'growth mindset' within their own classrooms can be collected through semi-structured interviews with their students focused on effort and ability. Thirdly, NQTs need to become reflective practitioners and agents within themselves, no longer relying on the input from mentors, but developing the ability to assess their own practice, this can be conducted through recording their own teaching and critically watching it. Finally, it is important for the NQT to experience collaborating with the students and informing their practice via listening and learning to the students in their lessons, this can be collected via a method of student voice.

The research questions I have formulated from the research conducted are:

- How useful do NQTs find group sessions in supporting their development as a teacher?
- How useful do NQTs find guided 'practice' research tasks in enabling them to reflect on their own teaching practice?
- How useful do NQTs find constructing their own research in enabling them to reflect on their own teaching practice?

3.0 Methodology

The programme involved six NQT teachers who joined the school in September and were participants in all the phases of the programme. They were later joined by two additional teachers, one an NQT joining from another school and in her final term, the other an experienced teacher

from abroad who was adapting to the English school system. These two teachers only took part from Phase Three. Of the sample – involving the final eight participants – all eight were female. The teachers taking part ranged in age and experience, as well as experience of an Inner City school with high percentages of socio-economic disadvantage. The participants remained as one group for the duration of the project as one of the areas of focus was the development of a group dynamic – a network of NQT teachers within the academy.

3.1 Research approach

This study is a mixed methods approach. Due to the nature of the project arising from a social constructivist perspective that learning is situational, it is important to also place the methods of research within this framework. The role of the qualitative data was to attempt to understand the social reality of individuals, groups and networks of the participants involved. The role of the quantitative data was to attempt to measure statistics to summarise data, therefore describing patterns, relationships and connections. As a proponent of mixed methods research, I agree with Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 17) who summarise the philosophical position of mixed methods researchers when they say:

We agree with others in the mixed methods research movement that consideration and discussion of pragmatism by research methodologists and empirical researchers will be productive because it offers an immediate and useful middle position philosophically and methodologically; it offers a practical and outcome-oriented method of inquiry that is based on action and leads, iteratively, to further action and the elimination of doubt; and it offers a method for selecting methodological mixes that can help researchers better answer many of their research questions.

My intention in following this mixed method approach is to be able to explore the breadth and depth of the participants' opinions through the same research instrument of the questionnaire. The use of the questionnaire as the central research instrument was due to the power imbalance that semi-structured interviews could have placed the NQTs in, and one that I was most trying to avoid throughout the studies. Following Richards (2014), I acknowledge the bias of the qualitative nature of my investigation, as is arguably the case in all social research, through the following declaration

of ideas. My frustration about the varying quality of Professional Development I have myself received, in particular the weak organisation and lack of drive I perceived as an NQT not long ago, has led me to be exasperated with the occasional stagnation I have seen, and the impact this ultimately has on students' engagement with learning. I did not assume that in directing a programme facilitating NQTs into using practitioner research that these frustrations would be fully mitigated. I was not testing a hypothesis but rather seeking to make sense of a situation. By embracing this notion that teachers should be learners, I sought to nurture a passion and drive for teaching that could be long-lasting, in stark contrast to reports of the percentage of teachers leaving the profession within the first three years. Additionally, as the research group consists of six participants in one phase, and eight in another, it would be too small a pool of subjects for a quantitative study to produce data from which concrete statements/ patterns can be deduced.

This is a piece of practitioner research. As previously mentioned in my literature review there is complexity surrounding the nature of research, particularly within education. Some authors use the terms action research, practitioner research, teacher research interchangeably. An important characteristic of these forms of research can be summarised as 'a process whereby teachers are looking critically not only at their own practice but at broader educational questions' (Burton & Bartlett, 2004). Additionally, Menter (2011) explores the complexity of research in general, and particularly within the field of education. He defines it as:

'Practitioner research in education is systematic enquiry in an educational setting carried out by someone working in that setting, the outcomes of which are shared with other practitioners' (p3).

The focus of this research is not directly having a critical look at my own practice, though as director of the programme and therefore helping steer NQTs to develop practitioner research themselves, I would argue there would be an inevitable impact and inward critique of my own practice, it is a critical exploration of broader educational questions. I would also hope to demonstrate through my dissertation a systematic enquiry. The structure of my research is following a well utilised structure of identifying a focus, engaging with literature, developing questions to research, an action plan of

delivering and recording evidence, culminating in the reporting and analysis of findings to answer the questions set at the beginning of the investigation.

Finally, it is not the aim of this project to definitively prove the success of impact of the NQT programme, and so the research questions being investigated are not set up to "measure" the success of the programme. Instead, this project can be located within the 'discovery perspective' as defined by Cohen et al., where a researcher aims to 'gain understanding of how individuals make sense of their worlds' (2000, p.43). All the research questions are approaching the concept of 'utility' and 'usefulness', which is a consumer centric focus. They are set up to therefore explore the NQTs' perspective and opinions of the programme. If I were to develop this study further, an initial consideration would be how to investigate some baseline data in order to provide some attempt at "measuring" success at the beginning so as to place the more interpretivist approach to the study into perspective – an approach described by Cohen et al. as offering 'complementary insights' to strengthen conclusions (p53). A reiteration of the research questions can be seen below, with a summary of the research method employed to explore that question.

- How useful do NQTs find group sessions in supporting their development as a teacher? (Questionnaire)
- How useful do NQTs find guided 'practice' research tasks in enabling them to reflect on their own teaching practice? (Questionnaire)
- How useful do NQTs find constructing their own research in enabling them to reflect on their own teaching practice? (Questionnaire and observed presentations of the projects)

3.2 Construction of the programme

I have included two diagrams, the first being a summary of the three phases of the programme that were designed, and the second being a timeline of my data collection. For each of the tasks that they were given the NQTs were also given readings that matched the tasks that they were doing, and a reflection booklet to record their reactions to each of the tasks. The minimum requirement of phase 1 was that the NQTs would share their findings from each of the tasks, and to summarise their experience of using the tasks in the group sessions. Additionally, for the final project (PLP),

the NQTs were given a guiding booklet to support them, but there was no expectation to follow the lay out. The minimum requirements were that the NQT would be able to present their project and engage in a Q&A format, making up phase 3 of the programme. As the programme constructed was not part of the statutory induction programme, but an additional programme provided on-top of the statutory one, there was no 'pass/fail' element of the programme. This was an important element of the group dynamic as again it takes away the power imbalance and pressures of pass/ fail and places the NQT as a learner, in control of their own pace, in a network of professionals facing similar circumstances.

Figure 5

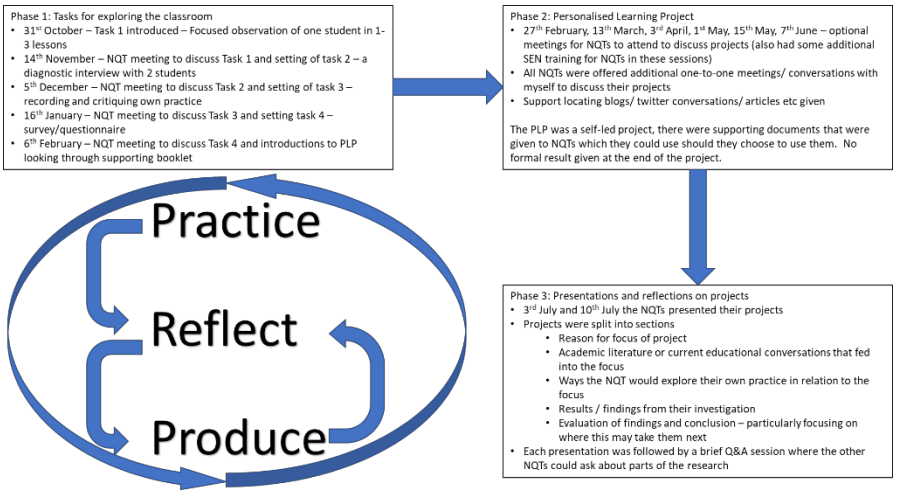


Figure 6

Date	Data collected about	Method of data collection
14th November	Utility of Task 1	Questionnaire
5th December	Utility of Task 2	Questionnaire
16th January	Utility of Task 3	Questionnaire
6th February	Utility of Task 4	Questionnaire
10th July	Utility of the PLP	Questionnaire Finished ppt / documents about projects
10th July – 15th July	Utility of the group sessions	Questionnaire

For the data collection regarding the questionnaires these were done anonymously to reduce the power balance between myself and the participants. However, the NQTs were asked to hold onto their own questionnaires for each of the tasks in phase 1 until the final task had been reviewed. This meant that the results could remain anonymous, but I was able to track the individual's responses

through the tasks and so attempt to better understand potential quantitative anomalies due to having such a small sample size. I could do this because the utility of each task did not feed directly into the development of the next task, and so was not data that was needed to progress the program.

3.3 Development of questionnaires

A paper-based questionnaire tool was used for collecting data for the tasks and the PLP. For the four tasks in Phase 1 Likert-scale questions based upon the Teaching Practice Standards were used. The Likert-scale was used because of its simplicity and ability to collect large amounts of data (Jha, 2014) while the inclusion of semantic differentials allowed information about values and activity to be obtained (Osgood et al., 1957) which was particularly important for the consideration of 'how useful was…'. The 5-point scale was built upon from 1 (not very useful) to 5 (very useful), and an open question of 'why?' allowed for further expansion on the answer. There are limitations about the inferences that can be drawn from data collected in this way. It should not be assumed that a participant rating the utility of the program as a '3' feels this any more strongly than a participant rating the utility as a '1'; the 5-point scale provides relatively crude data (Cohen et al., 2011), and a neutral midpoint. Despite these limitations, the questions did enable a general understanding of the utility of the task in relation to each of the Teaching Practice Standards. The use of the Teaching Practice Standards in developing the questions allows for a method of 'coding down' whereby direct patterns and comparisons can be made regarding how the tasks are useful or not dependent on what it is being judged against.

The questionnaire for Phase 2 used a mixture of Yes/No questions, and dichotomous questions such as: 'where did you get the information/ inspiration for your project?'. The use of open-ended questions may allow for some bias, where the researcher interprets responses in like with their own personal views or preference – beyond that intended by the respondent (Mitchell and Jolley, 2013). The questionnaires being used for teachers reduced the bias that may be seen when using questionnaires for students who may not have a strong grasp on communication and language skills

leading to the researcher in essence 'filling in the blanks'. Additionally, the anonymous fashion of the questionnaires was used as opposed to an interview as it avoided the potential bias created whereby the interviewer signalling to what they deem to be a 'correct' answer, influencing subsequent answers given (De Leeuw, 1992). Open-ended questions allow for a richness and depth in the participants' responses and allows them to express opinions and provide reasoning. In a project such as this, closed questions would not provide enough detail as to the nuanced details that made the project useful or not useful. This would have produced further bias as the data would have only been response options conceived by the researcher. However, the open-ended questions are slower to administer and interpret as written answers must be coded and collated to establish opinion (Brace, 2008). Additionally, due to the length and time taken to complete open-ended questionnaires it may lead to some participants not responding. This may skew the data as it is likely the participants most passionate will respond, skewing the data to the extremes.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Before beginning the research, ethical approval was granted by the Central University Research Ethics Community using Form CUREC 1A. Whilst I would not directly be impacting upon the students, the nature of the research would be encouraging NQTs to learn from the classroom and develop their practice, and so could impact upon the students. Whilst running the NQT programme was a part of my daily job, it was important that permission was sought from the headteacher, and from the NQTs involved with the programme. As an extra development structure for NQTs, and not part of their essential process to pass or fail the programme, the participants were reminded of their right to withdraw at any point, whereby alternative provisions would be provided to still allow them additional support whilst being an NQT.

Two of the most important areas of consideration within the project were the impacts that this research would have on the NQTs workload and therefore mental health at work; and secondly, the power dynamics involved when conducting the research and data collection. These were considered

and mitigated by keeping the research away from the more formal pass/fail relationships of mentor/mentee, and by allowing some flexibility in the schedule should the NQTs feel that the workload was particularly high at moments.

As with any educational intervention there is the issue that it was not accessible to all students. However, the school does expect their teaching staff, except for NQTs and those already on Professional Development courses, to conduct a learning project called a PLC within the academy. My constructing of Phase 2 reduced the ethical issues raised by NQTs not being part of the academy's PLCs as they too were now part of the educational community where it can be justified that there is a need to trial and pilot any pedagogical approach.

4.0 Findings

The findings presented here will be organised around the research questions as these also influenced the phases of the project, and thus the questionnaires that were asked. The depth of the findings is presented within sub-questions one and two that attempt to unpick what areas of the programme were considered useful, and which weren't. The third sub-question links heavily with the overall question of whether the NQTs find a programme designed around action/practitioner research to be useful in their development as novice teachers.

4.1 How useful do NQTs find guided 'practice' research tasks in enabling them to reflect on their own teaching practice?

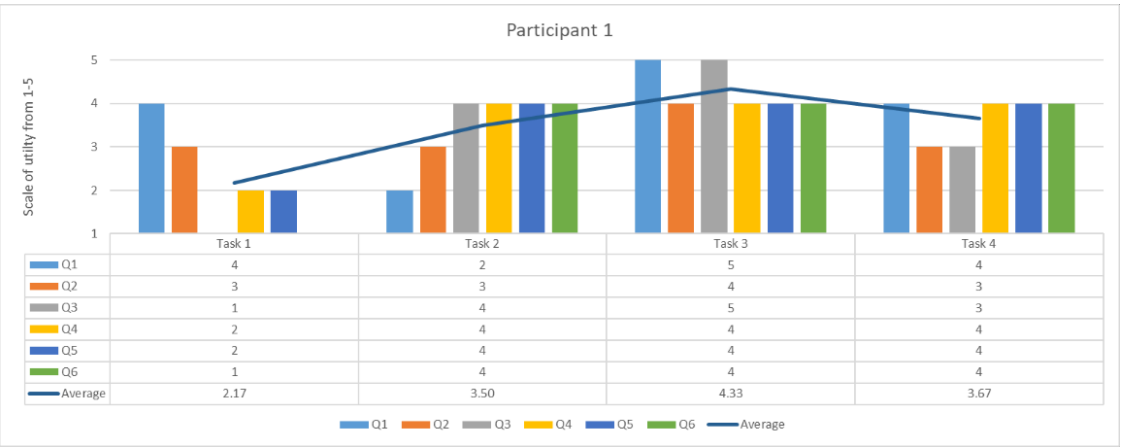
For all tasks within Phase 1 questionnaires were obtained from five out of six of the participants, one questionnaire from both task 1 and task 4 were excluded due to over 50% of the questionnaires being incomplete. Inclusion of such responses in the sample and subsequent data analysis could affect the validity of findings drawn (Athanasiou et al, 2010). The findings presented within this research question will look at the individual responses of each of the participants using the Likert scale with a score of 3.5 or more indicating that the task was useful to the NQTs, with an average score of above 4.5 being taken as 'very useful'. The responses will then be expanded on based

upon the participants' developments of their answers in the open-ended sections of their questionnaire. This can be done within this research paper due to the social constructivist argument that places each participant's opinions as central to the research, and can be managed due to its small size. Finally, a summary of the averages for each of the questions from the participants, and therefore a final average score for each of the tasks will be discussed. A reminder of the questions asked can be seen below.

Q1 - On a scale of 1-5, how useful did you find the task was in relation to considering how you direct and instruct activities in the classroom that stretch and challenge all students?
Q2 - On a scale of 1-5, how useful did you find the task was in relation to learning about student attitude towards their work?
Q3 - On a scale of 1-5, how useful did you find the task was in relation to setting activities that impart knwoledge and develop understanding?
Q4 - On a scale of 1-5, how useful did you find the task was in relation to understanding the progress being made by students in the lesson?
Q5 - On a scale of 1-5, how useful did you find the task was in relation to learning about how to motivate students in their learning?
Q6 - On a scale of 1-5, how useful did you find the task was in relation to the effective management of classes?
Q7 - Did you find the task useful in any other way?
Q8 - In what way has this task made you think about your own practice?
Q9 - Is this task something you would try again in the future?

Participant 1:

Figure 7



It can be seen in Figure 7 that for participant 1 only one of the four tasks scored above 4.0, yet three of the tasks scored above 3.5 and so is 'useful' overall to the NQT. The first task only scored a 2.17 and so is not useful for the participant. There average score for utility of the tasks for participant 1 was a 3.42, indicating that the tasks were only partially useful for them.

The participant scored for Task 3 Q1 a 5, indicating it was very useful. In developing their answer, participant 1 explained that, 'I dreaded completing the task, but it was the most useful in that I am good at questioning the students understanding and using bounce-pass techniques to generate discussions and keep students on their feet'. This sentiment suggests that for this participant utility

regarding the task was for them about demonstrating a skill or an ability – showcasing that they were able to do something. This was similarly expressed in their responses to task 1 and 4 in regards to Q1: 'good to see that I wasn't the only one struggling to work with this student' and 'judging by the students behaviour I didn't think they would be that concerned about their learning [and yet their student voice indicates they are]'. This resonated with the studies that suggest that NQTs can find themselves placed in working situations that are alien to their own previous experiences, and this can affect and challenge their prior knowledge and beliefs, sometimes negatively impacting their early career teacher's image and leading to a loss of confidence (Ewing & Smith, 200; Khamis, 2000; McCormack & Thomas, 2003). For this NQT confidence was so important when considering utility, and thus they would consider something to be useful if it helped them to find areas of their practice that they were performing well in.

For Question 1, the task they found the least useful was task 2, where they scored a '2'. The participants supporting statement was, 'most of the tasks I did in the lesson were quite challenging so for most of the students in the class I scaffolded their learning or used demonstrations/practicals to support it'. This highlights an interesting result, in that the task in which the participant is the most reflective about their practice is the task they have rated as the least useful. Cruickshank, Kennedy, Williams, Holton and Fay (1981) and Ferguson (1989) emphasize the importance of reflection, stating it is unlikely that full professional growth can be achieved without reflection on one's teaching. These results show an attempt from the participant to reflect on their practice, but their score regarding utility is deeply intertwined with their own confidence and abilities.

Participant 1 found task 3 to be the most useful overall, with a score across the questions of 4.33. The participant indicated in their questionnaire that this was an activity that they would try again in the classroom and expanded on their answer explaining, '[this was the] most effective way to look at all aspects of my teaching in a lesson'. This statement indicates that through this task the participant is beginning to enter Allen & Casbergue's second level: practical action. This

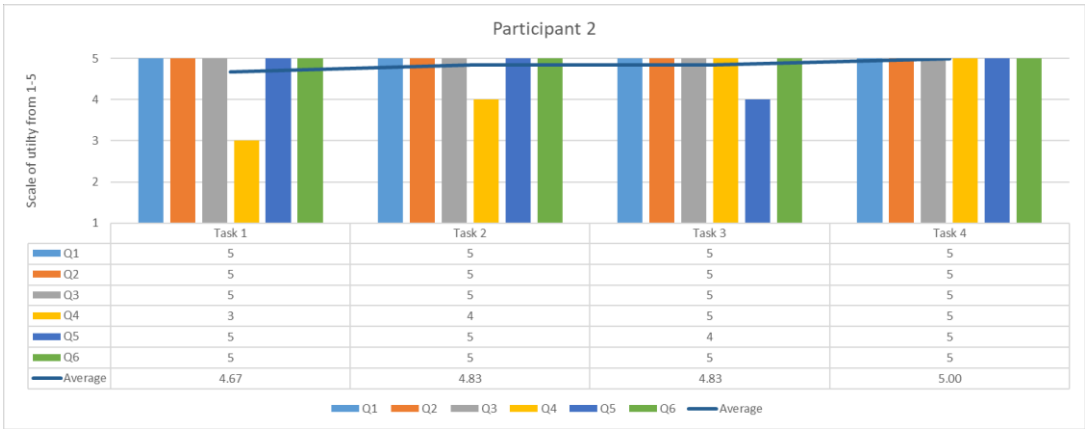
development of the second level places the novice teacher as a critical reflector, encouraging them to develop an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different pedagogical ideas. By looking at the different aspects of their teaching participant 1 is beginning to form their own unique teacher identify.

The task that participant 1 found the least useful was task 1, with a score of 2.17, below the neutral score of 3.0. In Q8 they explained, 'it didn't make me think much about my own practice, but just of other teachers. It wasn't specifically about my own practice'. However, they did indicate that it would be something that they would do again, explaining, 'to find out other strategies that other teachers use'. Whilst the participant has clearly indicated that for them this task was not useful there is still utility in being given a range in style of tasks and then choosing which tasks were useful to their practice and which weren't. In agreement with Sandholtz (2002), autonomy and choice in professional learning are important, and participant 1 explored and expressed through their questionnaires the elements of the tasks they found useful and the elements they did not. These reflections on the tasks helped participant 1 to discover they preferred holistic approaches when looking at their own practice, instead of breaking it down into different elements, an area that will be reflected on more in their results for the PLP and final questionnaire.

Participant 2:

It can be seen in Figure 8 that participant 2 scored all four tasks as very useful being above a 4.5. Of interest is their response to task 4 in which they argued it was very useful across all the questions. The lowest scoring was task 1 which scored an average of 4.67 across the tasks.

Figure 8



The lowest score that participant 2 gave was a 3 in task 1 Q4 indicating a neutral response regarding utility. Q4 is about the utility of the task in relation to understanding the progress made by students in the lesson and the participant developed their answer by explaining, 'in the observed lesson, the student made the same progress as the progress they normally have in maths and that is the reason why I want to read more about how to help these students make better progress'. This statement indicates the beginning of Burney and Elmore's process of instructional change. This indicates that the participant has become aware of similarities regarding progress within maths and would like to do some future research into this (planning). For the instructional change to be complete the participant would need to implement and reflect. Nonetheless, the NQT has begun the process through their awareness and planning.

Participant 2 was the only participant to adapt a specific focus of their observation, looking at how EAL students responded to instructions. By adapting the task to suit a professional interest, participant 2 has tapped into their 'individual learning disposition'. Shanks, Robson and Gray (2012) suggested that a successful NQT programme would 'encompass a teacher's learning biography' and the participant here has been able to adapt their task to suit their learning biography. Participant 2 explained that, 'some students, especially the quiet ones, don't necessarily understand what the teacher is saying. Students with EAL are usually quiet and scared to ask for help. Take the time to observe them and it will help teachers to improve their lessons to reach all abilities and all backgrounds'. Participant 2 further developed on this point when explaining why this was a task

that they would use again, 'observing students in multiple lessons is a very useful way to understand more about certain issues. When we teach the focus will be on many students and not one in particular but observing one student will help teachers understand and solve some of the issues related to that student in particular'. These statements indicate that for participant 2 this task provided informal curriculum-relevant evidence of students' learning that is a source of information to improve teaching and learning (Timperley, 2010).

Participant 3

Figure 9

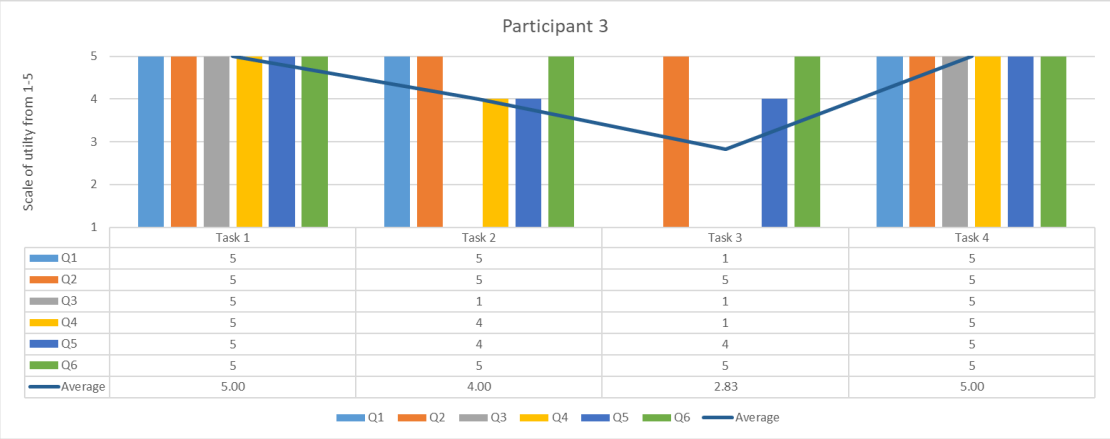


Figure 9 shows us Participant 3 found two of the tasks very useful in all areas – task 1 and task 4. Task 2 was useful, scoring a 4 or above in all but one area, scoring a 1 for 'setting activities that impart knowledge and develop understanding'. The overall average score for utility of the tasks in phase 1 was 4.21, indicating that the tasks were quite useful to them.

In task 3 the participant scored it an average of 2.83, suggesting that this was a task that was not useful for the participant. When exploring the additional information provided by the participant, they explained that at this stage their sole focus was to look at behaviour, and so they disregarded all other areas of focus, 'my focus was on behaviour. Other foci' and so in the questions which were not focused on behaviour the participant awarded a '1' and the explanation, 'this was not the focus of my recording'. This shows a reflective practitioner who has been able to access professional learning that is 'informal, reactive and implicit' arising from their changed context and

through this they have been in charge of setting their own foci. Ultimately, this shows a participant who is an agent in their own practice. Whilst the average score of 2.83 suggests that this was a task that was barely useful, the participants decision to adapt the focus of the task shows an awareness of their individual targets. This is useful because it indicates Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) four important aspects of the total teacher: the teacher's purpose, the teacher as a person, the real-world context in which teachers work, and the culture of teaching.

For participant 3, tasks 1 and 4 were deemed very useful for all elements. In the open-ended element of the questionnaire participant 3 engaged with the growth mindset theory, indicating that for participant 3 utility is equated with engaging with current educational theory. For task 1 they commented, 'a desire to be rewarded for contribution and effort whilst minimising off-task behaviour, though easily distracted and keen to impress peers. I realised a positive approach would be to get them involved at a higher rate than other students in order to keep them engaged and praised, thereby allowing their rewards to give them the attention they are desperate for'. For task 4 the participant adapted the student voice focus to discover what students in their class thought of regarding effort and ability. Participant 3 states, 'one of my questions asked if they thought effort was important and another asked if effort should be rewarded. Their range of responses was very insightful. When giving feedback, I explained the importance of effort and how I personally as a teacher will reward students for effort'. These reflections mirror statements from Fletcher (2012) that school is for young people, and that adults who have begun to embrace the idea of listening to and collaborating with students have learned that these experiences can impact the students, the classroom and themselves as a teacher.

Participant 4

Figure 10

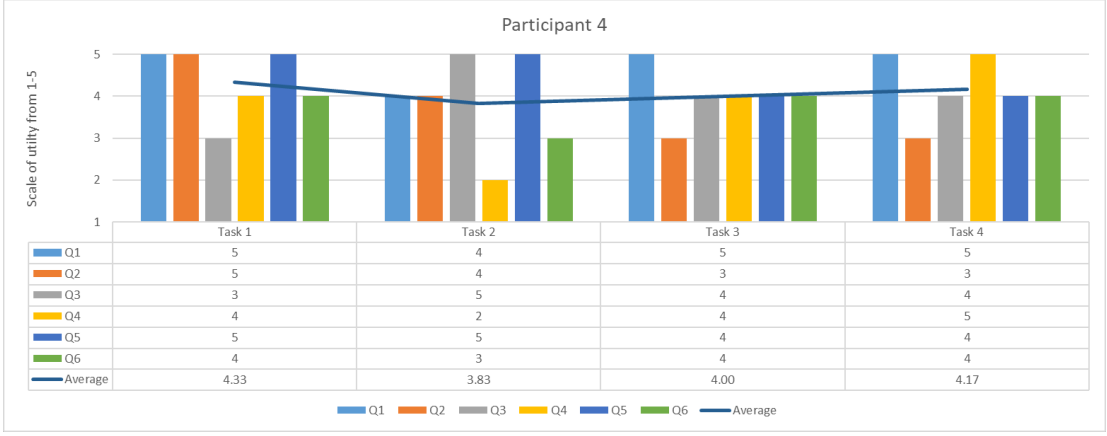


Figure 10 shows for participant 4 all tasks tended towards a score of '4' indicating all tasks were useful. Task 2 was the lowest scoring task at 3.83 suggesting it was only partially useful. Task 1 was the highest scoring at 4.33 suggesting it was quite useful for the participant. The average score for utility of the tasks for participant 4 was 4.08, suggesting that phase 1 was useful for the participant.

For participant 4 task 2 was important in terms of the teacher's relationship with the students and their contextual understanding of the school. Some comments made by participant 4 regarding Q1, 2 and 3 were: 'The students were really open and honest'; 'they [students] talked about the difficulty of naughty children getting the most attention, which has led me to check on all pupils within the sessions and ensure they are on task'; 'it was interesting to hear pupils' desires and what they thought could be done by teachers to improve their own attitude to their work'; 'I understood the pupils so much more after this open and honest conversation'. The use of language participant 4 uses interested me. Phrases such as 'had led me to', 'it was interesting' and 'I understood the pupils so much more' all indicate that what the participant found useful was their ability to investigate and strengthen their relationship with their students. This supports the argument from Hodgkin & Newell (1998) that pupils themselves have a huge potential contribution to make, not as passive objects but as active players. For this participant, it is likely that due to their positive experience with student voice they are more likely to incorporate it into their professional planning process

(Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Whilst this individual task was only scored 3.83 the actual impact of the positive student voice experience is likely to have longer consequences than the score would suggest.

Similarly, to Participant 3 there was also clear indication of reflecting upon the focus of the task and therefore the comment along with the score of 2 for Q4 was, 'I didn't find the task to really be about progression unless we're talking mental/emotional/ self-awareness progression'. This shows the participant was able to interpret this task and explore the nuanced differences the term 'progression' can highlight. This in and of itself is akin to the statements of Williams (2012) that, 'encouraging early career teachers to become aware of their non-formal and unplanned learning is as important as ensuring that formal learning needs are met'. Here, the informal learning has been around exploring the different elements that encompass progress, and the different forms of evidence that can indicate how progress has been made. When asked if this was an activity that the participant would try again, they replied yes, explaining, 'it is always good to get feedback from those you are teaching if you wish to improve and develop.' An additional point that this participant made was, 'I think it actually improved my relationship with my pupils to see things from their perspective and remind me that not all situations are black and white.' This again indicates informal learning has taken place, and this has positively impacted their relationship with the students and developed their understanding of these relationships.

Participant 5

Unfortunately, due to the questionnaires for task 1 and task 4 being less than 50% complete, the only data available for participant 5 is in response to task 2 and task 3.

Figure 11

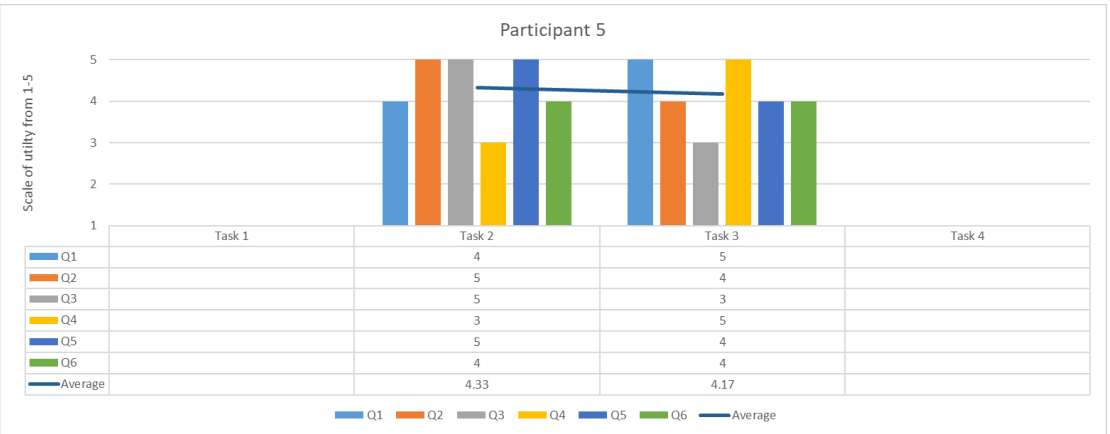


Figure 11 indicates that participant 5 found the average utility for task 3 and 4 to be useful, scoring them both above a 4, but below 4.5. An average across all the tasks has not been included here, as there are only 2 out of the 4 questionnaires, and so the overall average would be skewed. In response to task 2 question 7 the participant responded, 'students appreciated that questions were being asked to make improvements to my teaching practice and when they see these practices flourish, it filters through to the rest of the students. It's a good way to build relationships'. This comment connects with Feiman-Nemser's (2001) statements that early career teachers must be offered 'more powerful learning opportunities' suggesting the meaningful outcome of this activity was the development of their relationship with the students, and this led onto the participant's comment in response to question 9, 'It would be interesting to do this as a class interview session. Maybe two weeks into the school term, to hear what they would change, what lessons they prefer and why, and then make changes to my lessons so they can see I did my part'. This task instigated a wider reflection from the participant, and within their answer to question 9 it indicates that the participant is becoming a reflective thinker, and as Dewey (1910) describes it, becoming a thinker that is 'impelled to enquiry'. The participant is looking for solutions through the conversations with students to develop an understanding of what they can do to improve their classroom presence and skills.

For task 3, the participant scored the lowest mark for utility in question 3 and yet in their response they comment that, 'once again, I realised that I only picked the students that put their hands up and this was mostly used to check learning. I now know I need to add different ways to measure

Assessment for Learning (AFL)'. Whilst scored less favourably, the comments made indicate the participant has experienced powerful professional learning that has arisen from and returns benefits to the real world of teaching and learning. This is an effective element of PD summarised in the Powerful Designs for Professional Learning (Easten, 2004).

Overall

Averages	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4
Q1	4.75	4.75	4.2	4.75
Q2	4.5	4.5	4.2	4
Q3	3.5	3.5	3.6	4.25
Q4	3.5	3.5	3.8	4.75
Q5	4.25	4.25	4	4.5
Q6	3.75	3.75	4.4	4.5
Average	4.04	4.04	4.03	4.46

This table shows the averages for each of the tasks as scored by the participants. It also provides an average score for each of the tasks taking all the scales into account. Each task is above the score of 4, with task 4 nearing 4.5, the score needed to indicate that a task was very useful. This indicates that the NQTs found that the task element and phase 1 of their NQT course was useful to the development of their teaching practice.

These marks, and the comments that the participants have given suggest that at the end of the First Phase the NQTs had experienced Feiman-Nemser's CTLT Induction phase whereby they had successfully used the tasks to learn the context of the school community, students and curriculum. They had begun to create a classroom learning community where they had been able to reflect on their own practice and its effectiveness. The participants were beginning to enact a beginning repertoire, and each showed their individuality by finding tasks useful for different parameters. The participants were beginning to reflect on what activities they enjoyed, which taught them the most, and which was useful to them in different scenarios. Finally, through the comments it has become clear that the participants have begun to develop a professional identity that is unique to them, and from the comments there appears a growing confidence in their remarks from task 1 to task 4, demonstrated as well by an increasing in adapting the tasks to suit their own needs. Finally, Phase

1's design was to give the NQTs the time to practice (Rogers, 2003), and from the comments made, the NQTs found it useful that they had been given these tasks to trial and practice.

4.2 How useful do NQTs find constructing their own research in enabling them to reflect on their own teaching practice?

This question is connected to the Professional Learning Project (PLP) of Phase 2. Firstly, the questionnaires will be analysed, and a brief summary of the projects undertaken by the NQTs will be given with Q1b. For the PLP questionnaires 8 NQTs responded, this consisted of all 6 of the original NQTs on the project, an additional NQT who joined the school later in her NQT year, and a teacher who was new to the English education system who wanted to join the NQT programme. All questionnaires had over 90% completion and so all questionnaires were considered within the results; however, this does mean that on occasion not all responses were completed, and this may have some impact on the results due to the small sample size. The participant numbers do not mirror the participant numbers in phase 1 as these questionnaires were collected after the presentations of the PLPs. This helps to protect the anonymity of the participants as I witnessed their presentations and so keeps their responses separate from my influence.

The first question asked about the topic of the projects in two parts: firstly, a closed question asking whether the participants liked that they got to choose the focus of their own project; and, secondly asking what the focus of the investigation/project was. Of the 7 participants who responded all 7 gave the answer 'yes' to liking that they got to choose the focus of their project. This reflects the work of Baumfield, Hall & Wall (2013) who detail that agency refers to the extent to which the individual teacher has control of the focus of their enquiry, the methods used to pursue the project, and the analysis of the interpretation of the data. The participants responses' to Q1b (figure 12) highlights the range of projects and agency involved, further proving the programme was not a "one size fits all" approach. Through their positive responses to choosing their own focus it is clear the programme provided the NQTs with knowledge of ways to implement research in the classroom, an element of effective PD that Timperley (2010) argued was so important.

Figure 12

Q1b	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Pearticipant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8
	Questionnaire - do students remember content from one lesson to the next. Retrieval, interleaving. The findings from the questionnaire alerted me into action about strategies to overcome their forgetfulness	The investigation was about the impact of using the algebra tiles in factorising quadratic expression. This was done with year 10 mixed ability.	How to improve student's understanding of 8 marks questions within Geography using a modelling technique	Initially developing questioning in lessons, then critical thinking skills. I decided to focus on an aspect of critical thinking: Problem-solving skills	AFL	Student engagement and development in oracy lessons	To what extent does the environment of a classroom/ education setting affect behaviour?	I change the focus quite a lot! Basically the needs and the skills that I am building from interviews/ readings

The projects constructed by the participants ranged in focus from curriculum subject knowledge, to educational psychology, to pedagogical knowledge. The ability to choose their own projects honoured the professionalism, expertise, experience and skills (Easten, 2004) that the novice teachers have, and the NQTs felt it was a positive feature of the programme.

Question 3 was asked in two parts about whether the NQTs used any of the techniques from their phase 1 to help with their project. Out of the 8 participants, 5 said 'yes' they had, whilst 3 said 'no' they did not. There could be several reasons why 3 of the participants did not use the techniques from the first phase. Firstly, two participants in the second phase did not participate in the first, and so had not experienced the techniques explored through the tasks. Secondly, research focus would determine what data collection techniques are needed, and their focus may require different techniques to those explored in phase 1. This can suggest that more tasks should be added to future NQT programmes so as to provide practice in wider areas; it may also suggest that these NQTs felt confident enough to use their own data collection methods and thus focus on something that is of importance to them. For the participants that responded 'yes' the techniques most used were questionnaires and interviews with the students. This supports Hodgkin & Newell (1998) in their argument that pupils themselves have a huge contribution to make as active players in the education system. It also suggests that the teachers, through the tasks in phase one, had had positive experiences of using and reflecting on student voice, and are therefore more likely to support incorporating student voice into their long-term professional planning process (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Not a single participant observed a student across subjects, in keeping with task 1, yet it had scored a 4.04. This suggests that tasks are useful in certain settings, for example task 1 was useful for the participants in learning about the context in which they were working but are not useful for the projects the participants decided to focus on. This indicates that this programme provided

professional learning that encouraged the NQT to experience the school context in which they are placed (Robson & Mtika, 2017) whilst also providing sustained learning opportunities (Feiman-Nemser 2001) due to the range of techniques they practiced in phase 1.

Question 5a asked whether the NQTs had found the project useful in helping them to develop their skills as an NQT, with question 5b asking the participants to specify what they had found useful, or not useful, for developing their skills as an NQT. Of the 8 participants who were asked and responded, 100% found that the project had been useful in helping develop their skills as an NQT. The participants statements to 5b reflected the first step towards Timperley's directive to the Ontario Education Research Symposium (2010) whereby 'for teachers to use evidence to improve teaching and learning in their classrooms they need information about what their students know and can do, evidence about their own practice and its impact on students, and knowledge of the research evidence from other established sources to give direction for improvements to practice'. For example, participants 1, 2 and 6 felt that the project had helped them in understanding their students' learning and engagement, stating, '…helps me plan and teach and respond to students learning', 'the outcome after doing this project was massive on the students understanding', and 'it was interesting to find out what students engaged with the most regarding different oracy activities'. For these participants there had been an opportunity to learn from the students and in turn adapt their practice to meet their new understandings of the students.

Another key reflective point from participants was about the development of resources that suited their teaching style, subject knowledge needs and student context. This was evidenced by participants 4 and 7 who commented, 'I have developed a resource I can easily replicate for different elements in KS3-KS5 lessons' and 'it is going to inform my future planning'. Participants 3 and 8 demonstrated more reflective conclusions, stating 'having to reflect on decisions or changes to my practice means that I need to be able to make decisions that will help with my teaching practice' and 'I really needed to discover another perspective'. These comments indicate that phase 2 was

useful as it has allowed the NQTs to undertake professional learning through reflection in the form of narrative. The project allowed them to voice their most pressing concerns, examine prior knowledge in the light of new understandings and construct new knowledge through the process of reflection, dialogue and inquiry (Beattie, 2000; Doecke, Brown & Loughran, 2000). By promoting this narrative, it meant that the project could be adapted to meet the needs of the NQT, and for participant 5 this was adapted to be about meeting the targets set by their mentor. Participant 5 found the statutory requirements of their NQT year more difficult, and so the project enabled the participant to focus solely on the targets their mentor set and tap into a network of NQTs who they could collaborate with. This shows that the programme was useful for all NQT abilities, allowing those who can to thrive, but helping those who need more support to develop their understanding and skills to pass the statutory year.

Question 6a and 6b asked the participants how useful they found phase 2 in helping them to prepare for NQT+1 and beyond. Of the 8 responses, 100% felt that the projects they had undertaken had proven useful in helping them prepare for the following year. Participants 3 and 4 both indicated that the main use they found was in focusing on different elements and learning about students' responses to teaching. Participant 3 stated, 'I found it really enjoyable that I was focussing on an element of teaching that I am passionate in. Doing the tasks before hand – questionnaires, interviews – meant that I knew how to find out data and get better at teaching' and participant 4 stated, 'I can think of different aspects of my teaching and students learning to apply. The project sessions I focused on were the best lessons I taught because it was customised to my development and I really spent my time focussing on it.' The comments here suggest that there has been a process of instructional change for the participants due to them following the four distinct stages of awareness, planning, implementation and reflection (Burney and Elmore 2002). For the rest of the participants there was a clear focus in their responses upon the development of their techniques, understanding and skills, for example, 'it is going to inform my future planning' and 'the projects

and tasks are very useful to improve your teaching skills'. These all suggest that the NQT programme had provided 'powerful learning opportunities' (Feiman-Nemser 2001) because it had provided sustained learning opportunities which had encouraged the NQTs to thrive rather than just survive and has strengthened their capacity for further professional learning.

Finally, question 7a and b reflected on how useful the programme had been in connecting participants to educational research and conversations. Of the 8 participants asked, 88% found it useful, with 1 participant not finding it useful. Expanding on their answer, the participant who indicated it was not useful explained, 'the readings / prior research had already been done prior to getting this job which focused around this project'. This was a participant who had joined part way through the year to complete their final term as an NQT and had been hired specifically with the role she was researching in mind. Participant 7 responded, 'I loved doing readings again and relating them to my practice'. This shows that the programme did begin to enter Feiman-Nemser's (2001) third element of the CTLT with continuing professional development by extending and deepening subject matter knowledge for teaching. By doing research it again supports Dewey's statement that the reflective thinker 'impels to enquiry' (1910) and that teachers presented with problematic situations in the classroom look for solutions and collaborate with other people to develop an understanding of what they can do. Research can be useful in two main ways regarding Dewey's statement. It can firstly be useful in awakening awareness of the problematic situations that are arising in the classroom, and secondly, it can be useful because it is providing collaboration with ideas from people in the education setting and developing an understanding of what they can do.

Overall, NQTs found the second phase to be very useful for the development. The projects and presentation to their peers had given them time to practice and explore their classrooms and teaching. The majority of the NQTs during their presentations spoke about their topics passionately, indicating the project had facilitated extensive research and promoted agency, both important

elements for promoting continuing professional development. The responses from their questionnaires indicate a strong connection to Baumfield, Hall & Wall's 'three key aspects' of enquiry. Phase 2 encouraged the NQTs to develop a clear intention whereby they had agency in choosing the focus, and impetus for enquiry. The participants began to explore the use of tools and analysis when conducting research around an enquiry. Through presenting to each other the participants also commented positively about expressing the purpose of their projects.

4.3 How useful do NQTs find group sessions in supporting their development as a teacher?

Table 2	Average / Q
Q1	4.67
Q2	3.67
Q3	5.00
Q4	4.33
Overall Average	**4.42**

The participants were asked four questions using the Likert scale from 1-5, like that used in Phase 1, and the averages are shown in table 2. The questions for this section were designed around the utility of the group sessions in relation to the participants understanding of the school; providing an opportunity to investigate educational theories; helping to understand their own practice; and finally, helping to develop their practice. Q5 and Q6 were open ended questions that asked what was useful about the group session and what could have helped make the group sessions more useful. Q1 and Q3 scored an average over 4.5, indicating that the group sessions were useful in helping develop contextual understandings of the school, and in helping the participants to understand their own practice. Due to scoring above 4.5 for these two questions it suggests that the group element accounted for the daily pressures of teaching, even as they sought to advance the larger ideal of the PLP (Lierberman, 2000). This means that the NQTs felt supported and guided, even though they were conducting a larger piece of research.

Q4 explored how the group sessions helped the participants to develop their practice and scored 4.33 suggesting that this was useful. Perhaps one of the reasons that it did not score as very useful was because the participants did not feel that the group put the needs and interests of the members at the centre, or that the group sessions were not responsive enough to the members'

needs (Newmann and Wehlage, 1995). The development of one's own practice is quite a personal matter, and so it may be that this would not have been predicted to have been 'very useful' for the group element of the project.

Q2, looking at the utility regarding the opportunity to explore educational literature, scored the lowest of the four sections with 3.67. This indicates that the groups focus upon educational literature was only partly useful. This response was expected as I had predicted that I had not suitably followed through on the readings and did not regularly remind NQTs or plan sessions around reflecting on readings. This indicates that the programme was not as successful as it could have been regarding 'reflection-on-action' and indicates an area that needs to be improved in future projects.

In Q5, three participants, 1,3 and 6, responded with statements about feeling connected to other people going through a similar experience, for example, participant 3 said, 'the group sessions helped me feel connected to other people I can go to if I feel stuck' whilst participant 1 said, '…it was reassuring to know that others were in a similar boat and finding similar responses to the tasks'. For participant 2 the utility came from, '…seeing how many different ways it [the PLP] was interpreted and how the investigations were carried out', for participant 4 the utility came from, 'I felt like I had a voice in the group sessions and that people were interested in my presentation I put a lot of work into. It felt nice to have people listen to my work'. These comments demonstrate that the participants felt the programme allowed for the values and dispositions of novice teachers to be co-produced and reproduced, encouraging practice and reflection (Hodkinson, et al., 2004). Finally, for participant 5 the group sessions were important because they were chunked using Phase 1 building into Phase 2. For this participant the group sessions were useful because, 'the group sessions were focused on a specific agenda each time. I liked this as it helped me to only focus on one thing at a time and to explore a number of opinions'. The responses from all participants suggest that the programme provided a

collaborative setting that facilitates positive dispositions towards their work, profession and learning. Additionally, it affected how they created and used learning opportunities at work (Evans, Hodkinson, Rainbird & Unwin, 2006).

In Q6, three of the participants expanded on some of the weaknesses around the educational theory element of the group sessions. For participant 1 they commented the programme would be more useful with, 'a bit more discussion of the readings, or additional sessions that were focused on the theory, before we did our tasks'. Participant 6 agreed by stating the group sessions would have been more useful with 'sessions that focused on the readings or educational theory'. Participant 3 commented on the reading list that was selected and said that the programme would have been more useful with 'shorter readings and links to blogs that were linked to educational theory that we could have discussed [in the group sessions]. We didn't really discuss any of the readings beyond the first one'. As previously mentioned, this was a clear weakness of the programme and did not allow for a focus on the exchange of ideas.

Additionally, two of the responses for Q6 commented on the programme starting earlier and providing some 'taught' sessions at the beginning which covered the context of the school in more detail and covered some behaviour management techniques. Participant 2 and 5 both commented about wanting additional behaviour management sessions. Also stating that the programme would have been more useful had it started earlier was participant 4 who stated, 'start earlier so we can do repeats of some of the tasks to see how we have developed ourselves'. This was a particularly interesting statement because the notion of repeating a task or agenda would strengthen the NQTs understanding of action research as it would demonstrate the use of cycles, or repeat collection of data to track any changes.

5.0 Limitations, Conclusions and Implications for further study

5.1 Limitations

At this point I would like to engage with a criticism of the limitations that have arisen during this project. Firstly, one of the reflections from sub-question 3 was about starting the programme earlier in the year. Starting the programme in September with sessions constructed more intensely around the context of the school and behaviour expectations had been the intended plan. However, due to management decisions the NQT training and new staff training were combined for the first half term. This impacted the programme as it diluted the provision and meant that the original sessions had a far greater range of experience within the audience, meaning that the specific needs of NQTs could not be focused on. Where the first half term could have been dedicated to more intensive sessions about the context of the school and behaviour techniques, with additional tasks set to aid in these foci, instead there was only time for four tasks in phase 1.

Moreover, a core limitation to this study is the number of participants that were part of the research. The group was very small and so therefore this has limited me in being able to make any generalised conclusions on the grounds that the participant group is too small to represent NQTs more widely. Constraints due to time, workload and management meant that the study was only conducted with the NQTs at the academy and thus only from one contextual situation. This means that I cannot make generalised conclusions about how replicable this programme would be within other educational contexts.

Finally, this programme was developed without the subject specific input from mentors. The abilities and experience of the mentors in the school ranged. I thought that the range in quality of the mentors provided would create a disparity for the NQTs and have a negative impact on those whose mentors were not actively engaging with the programme. A really important element of

professional development, particularly in early career teachers is the development of their subject knowledge, and the programme was limited by the lack of subject specific content.

5.2 Conclusions

This study set out to develop a useful programme of study for NQTs that used action research techniques to inform their teaching practice. In order to achieve this aim, phase 1 was developed to provide the NQTs the opportunity to practice several ways to gather information from the classroom. Phase 2 then followed where the participants selected their own focus of enquiry and carried out research in the classroom according to their individual focus. The results from both phases demonstrate that the NQTs found the programme useful. The findings indicate that the programme was useful because it had encompassed much of the framework developed by Feiman-Nemser (2001), the Central Tasks of Learning to Teach (CTLT). The programme had assumed that through their teacher training years that the participants had engaged with the pre-service element, whilst the NQT programme provided a clear induction, moving towards continuing professional development. The findings from the programme indicate the NQTs successfully learnt the context of the students, curriculum and school community. Additionally, through the practice of tasks and group reflections the NQTs developed their skills of designing a responsive instructional programme. The findings from the student voice tasks in phase 1 indicate that the programme was useful because it aided the NQTs in creating a classroom learning community. In developing their own PLP the findings indicate it was useful for the NQTs as they were encouraged to enact a beginning repertoire, focusing on the three aspects of intention, process and audience (Baumfield, Hall & Wall). Most of all, the findings indicate that the NQTs found the programme useful as it helped them to develop a professional identity and placed their agency as high priority. The positive experiences that the NQTs reported indicate a high chance that they will continue their professional development.

In addition to judging the programme against the CTLT, the findings indicate the project included many of the effective elements of PD that were summarised by Easten (2004). Findings indicate that the programme encouraged powerful professional learning arising from and returning benefits to the real world of teaching through the journey from phase 1 to phase 2. Findings from phase 1 also indicate the participants found the programme useful as it evidenced that professional learning leads directly to application in the classroom. The PLPs in phase 2 highlighted to the NQTs that learning experiences may not formally end, and the findings suggest all the NQTs will repeat elements of the programme again to inform their professional development. Finally, the findings indicate that the NQTs saw the programme as useful as it established a culture of quality, with the NQTs suggesting that they were better practitioners by the end of the programme.

5.3 Implications for further studies

Whilst there is a wealth of literature regarding the many issues that faces professional development (Easten 2008; Fullan & Hargreaves 1992; Adey, 2004; Lieberman & Miller, 1999) there is little that engages with the development of action research techniques for early career teachers. This project was developed not to test a hypothesis, but to seek to make sense of a situation. In review of the literature base and through use of participant questionnaires, this study has sought to evaluate the participants' reactions, exploring their overall satisfaction with the experience. Through the participants reflections and presentations of the PLPs this study also sought to evaluate the participants' learning, exploring the new knowledge and skills of participants. For future studies, the continuation of Guskey's (2002) professional learning evaluation would lead to evaluating the participants' use of new knowledge and skills by measuring through questionnaires, structured interviews, portfolio reflections, direct observation etc the degree and quality of their implementation. Finally, evaluating the student learning outcomes and the impact that the professional development programme had on students by measuring the students' performance, achievement, attitudes and behaviour.

Additionally, this study developed a programme for NQTs that covers Feiman-Nemser's (2001) induction element of the Central Tasks of Learning to Teach (CTLT). Future practice that does not have such intense time constraints could explore the continuation of the programme into the 'continuing professional development' section of the CTLT that looks at developing cycles of action research that help early career teachers to extend and deepen subject matter knowledge for teaching; extend and refine repertoire in curriculum, instruction and assessment; strengthen skills and dispositions to study and improve teaching; and, expand responsibilities and develop leadership skills.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – CUREC Letter to Principal

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Director Professor Jo-Anne Baird

[redacted]

Dear [redacted]

I am writing to enquire about conducting research in school this academic year. As you know, I am studying for the Master's in Learning and Teaching at Oxford University, supervised by [redacted] In my final research project "Newly Qualified Teacher Professional Development: An inquiry into the utility of an NQT programme that focuses on using action research to reflect on teaching practice" I will explore how useful NQTs find a professional development programme that focuses upon three main components: (1) subject-specific readings; (2) conducting small-scale research within the classroom – i.e. structured consideration of different kinds of evidence to examine students' learning in their classes; and (3) a final action research project whereby NQTs will decide on a focus area and conduct research within their own practice and analyse their findings.

The research will take place through the NQT sessions scheduled into the calendar for the academic year. The NQTs will be given the option to allow me to use their findings as part of my research. NQTs will be given a number of general and subject-specific pedagogical readings, which will be discussed in sessions. In addition, the NQTs will be given a number of small projects to undertake: observing a student; conducting an interview with students; filming and reflecting on their own practice; using a questionnaire to get student feedback. These methods of collecting data will then be used in each NQT's own small-scale action research project, for which they will choose a focus within their teaching practice, seeking to develop their teaching in specific ways in response to what they have learned so far.

By participating in the research, the school would be contributing to a project that will deepen our provision for NQT professional development, intended to provide NQTS with an effective form of induction into the subsequent PLC projects to which the academy commits each year. I hope that the NQTs' capacity for professional learning will be enriched as they are taught how to collect data from the classroom, and to engage with this data to inform their teaching practice – but obviously it is extremely important to look carefully at the outcomes of this approach for both the NQTs and our students which is why I would like to conduct the project as a piece of research in its own right. I hope to conduct this research between November 2018 to July 2019, using the NQT programme schedules already built into the calendar.

Oxford University has strict procedures for conducting ethical research, consistent with current British Educational Research Association guidelines. The University also recognises, however, that my study is a piece of practitioner research, and that schools already operate with the highest ethical standards. Therefore only your formal consent as headteacher is necessary, and not that of

individual parents or staff. However, throughout the research, students and other teachers will be able to refuse to participate in any research activities at any time.

All participants, including students, teacher and the school, would be made anonymous in all research reports. The data collected would be kept strictly confidential, available only to my supervisor [redacted], and me, and only used for academic purposes. It will be kept for as long as it has academic value.

If you are happy for me to proceed with this study, please confirm that using the attached reply form. If you have any concerns or need more information about what is involved, please contact me or my supervisor. Further, if you have any questions about this ethics process at any time, please contact the chair of the department's research ethics committee, though: research.office@education.ox.ac.uk

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Appendix 2 – Phase 1 questionnaire sample

NQT Questionnaire Task 1 – All questionnaires for phase 1 were in this format, only the task number changed.

1. Did you complete Task 1? Yes/No
2. For the following questions, please circle your answer where 1= not at all and 5 = very.

On a scale of 1-5, how useful did you find the task was in relation to considering how you direct and instruct activities in the classroom that stretch and challenge all students?

1 2 3 4 5

Why?

_____

_____

_____

On a scale of 1-5, how useful did you find the task was in relation to learning about student attitude towards their work?

1 2 3 4 5

Why?

_____

_____

_____

On a scale of 1-5, how useful did you find the task was in relation to setting activities that impart knowledge and develop understanding?

1 2 3 4 5

Why?

_____

_____

_____

On a scale of 1-5, how useful did you find the task was in relation to understanding the progress being made by students in the lesson?

1 2 3 4 5

Why?

_____

_____

_____

On a scale of 1-5, how useful did you find the task was in relation to learning about how to motivate students in their learning?

1 2 3 4 5

Why?

_____

_____

_____

On a scale of 1-5, how useful did you find the task was in relation to the effective management of classes?

1 2 3 4 5

Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Did you find the task useful in any other way? Yes/No

If you answered Yes above, please explain what else was useful:

_____

_____

_____

_____

In what ways has this task made you think about your own practice?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Is this task something you would try again in the future? Yes/No

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 3 – Phase 2 questionnaire

Did you like that you got to choose your own focus? Y/N

What was the focus of your investigation/project?

Where did you get the information/ inspiration for your project?

Did you use any techniques from Phase 1 in your project? Y/N

What did you find out from doing your project?

Did you find the project useful in helping you develop your skills as an NQT? Y/N
Expand on your answer:

Did you find the project useful in preparing you for after being an NQT? Y/N
Expand on your answer:

Did you find the project useful in connecting you to educational practices and ideas? Y/N
Expand on your answer:

What do you think could have made the project better? (please be as detailed as possible)

Appendix 4 – Group sessions questionnaire

Q1 - On a scale of 1-5 how useful did you find the group sessions in helping your understanding of the school?

Q2 - On a scale of 1-5 how useful did you find the group sessions in providing an opportunity to investigate educational theories?

Q3 - On a scale of 1-5 how useful did you find the group sessions in helping you understand your own practice?

Q4 - On a scale of 1-5 how useful did you find the group sessions in helping you develop your practice?

Q5 - What was useful about the group sessions?

Q6 - What could have helped the group sessions be more useful?