

**Critical thinking and critical being; a study of international ITE
students' interpretations of criticality**

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Abstract

Critical thinking and critical being; a study of international ITE students' interpretations of criticality

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This qualitative, phenomenological study examines understanding, development of and engagement with criticality for ten student-teachers on an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme to qualify to teach in the Post-Compulsory Education (PCE) sector. Throughout the ITE programme, analysis and evaluation of pedagogy is essential as the student-teachers develop into critically reflective teachers able to evaluate their pedagogical choices in specific contexts. The student-teachers selected for this study are 'international' as they have previous educational experiences and qualifications from other countries, and British as they emigrated to the UK as adults. A study of intercultural students' educational experiences is under-represented amongst the abundant literature around international students' experiences of studying in the west.

Following semi-structured interviews that focused on the life stories of each individual student, the data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to gain insight into the lived experiences of each individual, and identify themes. Three themes emerged from the data: 'perceptions of the self', 'relationships' and 'culture/tradition' in relation to how each student interpreted and developed criticality during their ITE programme from their previous experiences. The themes highlighted the complexities in interpreting and developing criticality, and applying it to the ITE context.

The thesis proposes a framework to develop criticality drawing on two definitions of criticality that emerged from the literature. The first, a 'mechanistic' critical thinking approach similar to aspects that make up 'Study Skills', and a second 'critical being' approach that draws on Freire's definition of critical pedagogy, both of which are essential for ITE. Juxtaposing Freire's notion of criticality with Habermas' analysis of lifeworlds redefines the original framework to a revised one that includes a 'critical

space'. This space offers an opportunity for a nuanced definition of the emergence of criticality based on student-teachers' previous lived experiences.

Within the conclusion, I consider the implications of the study for the ITE programme, and suggest further research to define the 'critical space' with more clarity. The study highlights the importance of giving voice to individuals' lived experiences to enable student-teachers to feel confident and heard when reflecting on how each developed and engaged with criticality.

Key words: ITE; international students; critical thinking and critical being; life stories; IPA

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to the memory of my mother, Mrs Lilavanti Ruparelia, whose dream it was for her children to continue learning, and to my grandfather, Mr Karsandas Ruparelia, who was equally a passionate believer in education. I also dedicate this thesis to Reeya, Leeyata and Shanay.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Introduction

Within this chapter, I offer some background to my study while introducing the overarching aims before outlining my research questions. Prior to introducing my research questions, I provide a background to the context I base my study on, and the political backdrop to the professional status of teachers in the Post Compulsory Education (PCE) sector. This frames the context of my work, and leads into a more detailed description of the teacher education course structure that is the focus of my study. I describe the broad characteristics of the students that choose to follow this route into teaching, and reflect on some of the changes in the prior experiences and qualifications of the students the programme attracts, particularly because of the geographical location of the college the course is based in. Finally, I provide a brief summary of each Chapter.

The context

The PCE sector is varied and broad, encompassing institutions such as further education (FE) colleges, voluntary organisations and private industry to name but a few (Thompson and Simmons, 2013). Unlike the compulsory education sector, teaching qualifications were not mandatory until 2007, following years of debate about standards and professionalism by various governments (Lawy and Tedder, 2009). To support this notion of professionalism, the Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations 2007 stated that all FE teachers must be suitably qualified if employed in the sector after 2007. However, in 2012 Lord Lingfield overturned the requirement for compulsory teaching qualifications for the sector, stating that teaching in PCE requires an awareness of the diversity of the sector, as well as an appreciation of the varied experiences of the students that opt to follow this teacher qualification route (Foster, 2005). Debate has developed which focuses on the need or otherwise for professional teaching qualifications at FE level. The diverse nature of the FE sector might suggest that this debate is timely. The broad range of subjects taught, from vocational to academic, the student demographic, as well as the diverse experiences of the teachers demands flexibility

in the professional development needs and qualifications of the teachers in the sector.

Despite Lingfield's challenge on the notion of professionalism in the sector, many institutions and teachers within the PCE sector still value the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) qualifications, with the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) that I refer to in my study being one such programme. The PGCE runs in the FE college which is the focus of this study, and is designed in association with a Higher Education Institute (HEI) that validates six additional FE colleges to deliver the programme. The PGCE in PCE remains popular as students value the professional status attached to it and believe it adds strength to their attributes and skills for future employers. This is evidenced by the numbers of students applying for and being accepted onto the course; each year we interviewed large numbers of students and recruited sufficient numbers to run two PGCE groups of 15-25 students in each group. During the interviews, the majority expressed the value of the course in terms of their own learning and development.

The PGCE programme

As the PGCE course leader and a tutor, it was my responsibility to ensure that potential students were fully aware of the requirements of the course, and able to meet the academic demands of the programme. Part of the entry criteria included securing a teaching placement of fifty hours per academic year within a PCE setting, either as a volunteer or paid teacher. As the PGCE was a part-time, two year programme, there was a requirement for students to reflect on and evaluate pedagogy relevant to their practice, which was based on their individual subject specialism. The framework and standards for the course are defined by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), the organisation that oversees all aspects of the professional standards for the FE sector. The standards are interpreted into outcomes by the HEI and all students have to address the criteria as outlined within the course requirements. The PGCE students for my study were expected to demonstrate their ability to link theory and practice as part of the formal assessment

requirements designed to evidence their ability to plan and 'teach' effectively. At the beginning of my study, the Modules were:

Year 1 Modules	Assessment
Module 1: Planning and preparing for teaching and learning Alongside this Module is a Study Skills qualification	3,000 – 5,000 word written submission Portfolio of evidence <i>Deadline for submission: January</i>
Module 2: Teaching and learning process	3,000 – 5,000 word written submission (word count can be reduced if including small group presentations with feedback from peers) <i>Deadline for submission: March/April</i>
Module 3: Assessment and evaluation	3,000 – 5, 000 word written submission <i>Deadline for submission: May</i>
Module 4: Professional Practice 1 (ongoing throughout the year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edited excerpts of reflective journal • Critical evaluation of teaching • Tutor and mentor observations and feedback • Observation by 2 peers and feedback • Observe 2 peers and provide feedback • Plan and lead microteach for 30 minutes with feedback from tutor and peers • Certificates of attendance at Study Days at the University • Evidence of making use of the minimum core requirements • Study Skills portfolio <i>Deadline for submission: May</i>
Year 2 Modules	Assessment
Module 5: Theories and principles of inclusive learning and teaching	3,000 – 5,000 word written submission <i>Deadline for submission: January</i>
Module 6: Researching Practice	3,000 – 5,000 word written submission <i>Deadline for submission: March/April</i>
Module 7: Curriculum design and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-led, self-managed small group seminar to peers with feedback from peers and tutor • 1,000 – 1,500 word written summary <i>Deadline for submission: May</i>
Module 8: Professional practice 2 (Ongoing throughout the year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edited excerpts of reflective journal • Critical evaluation of teaching • Observation as for Professional practice 1 • Plan and lead microteach for 30 minutes with feedback from tutor and peers on research carried out for Module 6

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificates of attendance at Study Days at the University • Evidence of making use of the minimum core requirements <p><i>Deadline for submission: May</i></p>
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Table 1.1: Course and assessment structure

(University A, 2013)

However, in 2014, the programme went through a validation process with a different HEI, and the Modules were revised to reflect the new programme:

Year 1 Modules	Assessment
Module 1: Planning and preparing for teaching, learning and assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of an 'artefact' to do with teaching, learning and assessment • 2,000 – 3,000 word written submission <p><i>Deadline: October and December</i></p>
Module 2: Investigating and applying theories of learning for inclusive practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research seminars in peer groups • 2,000 – 3,000 word written summary of research and evaluation of process <p><i>Deadline: March</i></p>
Module 3: Exploring principles of assessment, evaluation and feedback	3,000 – 4,000 word written submission <i>Deadline: April</i>
Module 4: Wider professional development (part 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflections of experiences so far • Tutor and mentor observations and feedback • Observation by 2 peers and feedback • Observe 2 peers and provide feedback • Plan and lead microteach for 30 minutes with feedback from tutor and peers <p><i>Deadline: May</i></p>
Year 2 Modules	Assessment
Module 5: Developing practice through Action Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on Action Research project with feedback from tutor and peers • Written report <p><i>Deadline: April</i></p>
Module 6: Developing effective practice through Lesson Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer-led research seminar to include evidence of peer observations • Written reflection of process <p><i>Deadline: February and March</i></p>
Module 7: Designing an inclusive and innovative curriculum	3,000 – 4,000 word written submission <i>Deadline: January</i>
Module 8: Wider professional development (part 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflections and evaluation of own professional and personal development • Observations as for part 1 • Participation in research forum/conference <p><i>Deadline: May</i></p>

Table 1.2: Revised course and assessment structure

(University B, 2014)

As can be seen in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 above, the changes in the Modules included reference to more current pedagogical research as well as significant changes to the assessment structure. Students were required to reflect on their learning across wider contexts, and be engaged in more peer-led research tasks. These changes were made to ensure students were aware of the importance of peer collaboration as teachers, and to encourage more autonomy in how they managed the course requirements. The reflections and peer-led research tasks demanded a possibly deeper awareness of criticality, with reference to pedagogical theories applied to a variety of contexts. Working with their peers, the students had to demonstrate the ability to engage in critical debate.

In addition, as can be seen in Table 1.1, Module 4 included a Study Skills portfolio which consisted of evidence of the students' abilities to critically analyse and evaluate. The portfolio included evidence of critical reading of material relevant to each student's teaching specialism, an appropriately referenced report to summarise the findings, and a reflection of the whole process of critical reading and writing. As the institution received additional funding for each completed portfolio, this was compulsory for the students who began the course at the time. It was claimed by senior managers that in collating the portfolio, students would develop their ability to critically analyse and be able to apply this understanding to other Modules.

In the last five years, it had become evident that the programme appealed to students who came with a variety of international experiences and qualifications. On successfully being accepted onto the programme, it seemed that many of the 'international' students struggled to critically analyse and evaluate pedagogy as evidenced in their writing. To explore the reasons for this, I hoped to be able to understand the international students' previous educational experiences as their views may help to gain insight into the challenges with criticality they perhaps faced when on the PGCE course. Consequently, my questions that underpin this study are:

- What are the international students' educational experiences of criticality?
- What do the international students understand about notions of criticality?

- How do the international students' previous experiences and identities as students influence how they manage the academic expectations of the PGCE programme in terms of criticality?
- How do cultural differences impact on individual interpretations of criticality?

The aims of my study

As stated earlier, the PGCE in PCE was a part time programme based within a large, inner-city FE college. The college offers a wide range of courses for students aged 14 and over, from vocational to academic (Deem et al, 2000). Thus, teachers within FE were tasked with taking on responsibility for a wide variety of students and subjects (Lucas, 2004; Lawy and Tedder, 2009).

The institutions where the PGCE students were volunteering or working in as teachers expected the staff to be competent in their subject specialisms and additionally demanded that the teachers were able to reflect and critically assess their practice. This was in part driven by Ofsted (2012) and also by senior leaders who considered the ability to be critically reflective a core element of a teacher's development (Thompson and Robinson, 2008).

The student teachers that were successful in securing a place on the PGCE course within the FE sector were diverse in the scope of subjects and levels they taught, as well as their own past educational and life experiences. Despite being subject specialists, the majority were not qualified teachers in this country, and increasingly, more and more were also from international contexts, such as India, China and Zimbabwe, with some having held positions of responsibility in their professions in these countries. These factors led to a complex situation where the international students were learning to teach their subject, learning about pedagogy that may impact their teaching and their students' learning, and also learning to negotiate their journeys as students on an HE programme in an FE context within a diverse group.

The PGCE demanded that the students produce written assignments on pedagogy introduced through the programme that they were able to contextualise to their

practice (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2). In addition to this, they were required to keep a reflective journal and evaluate their practice following observations by tutors, mentors and peers. Consequently, being able to critically analyse pedagogy was a core principle of the course as this enabled the students, teachers and mentors to discuss the development and learning of the student-teachers that:

'involves a set of analytical skills and attitudes ... that might be evidenced in increased self-awareness and self-determination' (Harrison, 2006, p.448).

The PGCE was a generic teaching qualification and the students chose this option because of the context they were teaching in and the flexibility the course offered, which they expressed during their interviews as part of the application process. As it was a two-year, part-time option, students had to be teaching in the PCE sector whilst being registered on the course and they were able to fit their work on the course around their own busy lives. They had to arrange their own teaching placements (paid or voluntary) and workplace mentors, and ensure they taught for just a minimum of 50 hours per academic year while on the PGCE course. Because they chose to take this option, they entered the course on their terms and fitted the curriculum requirements to their teaching placements which ranged from private academies, training organisations, community centres, public sector organisations (NHS), prisons to FE colleges.

It became apparent that the student characteristics of the groups I was teaching had changed and continued to do so in recent years. Increasingly, students with broader and more international experiences and qualifications chose to enrol on the ITE programme in order to be qualified to teach in the PCE sector within the UK. The recent change in student demographics led to a need to re-evaluate how I, as the teacher educator, engaged with the international students to ensure they reflected on their learning and articulated their understanding of pedagogy throughout the course. The number of international students gradually increased over the last five years when I was the course lead; each year there were at least twelve from a cohort of thirty students who came from an international background

who had decided to follow this career path. Prior to this, the course was designed to be an In-Service programme with the students being employed at the college on the strength of their vocational skills and expertise. They were compelled to undertake this course by their senior managers to ensure they were able to better manage the demands of their roles through study of pedagogy and linking this to their practice. However, during the time I was the Course Lead, the course attracted more external students and was becoming similar to the ITE programmes that lead to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) from HEIs and/or schools.

The international PGCE students and the 'home' students who were accepted onto the course were learning to navigate an academic culture as students and teachers (Lucas and Nasta, 2010), a challenge that is described as 'tortuous' (Spenceley, 2007, p .89) for many. Yet what differentiated the international students from the home students was that the former have adopted an 'intercultural' identity (Meer and Modood, 2012), in that their previous educational and life experiences were quite different from their experiences in England (this is explored in more depth within the literature review). The home students perhaps also found criticality challenging, however, they were familiar with the structure and systems of British education.

The international students referred to were new to teaching in this country and were mostly volunteering to teach in PCE settings to meet the requirements of the course. They were not only engaged in learning to teach in a different culture, but also learning to 'learn' and navigate the processes of written conventions within academic literature to demonstrate their understanding of pedagogy and the subsequent correlations to practice. Their transition to an English setting often led to the need to understand new perspectives concerning criticality.

In addition to this, the international students were British citizens who were working in varied roles such as carers, insurance officers and financial assistants and thus had experience of working life in England. Some had attended vocational or language courses here and a small minority had studied at Master's level in their countries of birth or British universities. Despite this, learning to teach, study and

apply their learning to their teaching and evidencing criticality was proving to be challenging. This was evident in work submitted within the initial three weeks of the PGCE when the students had an opportunity to submit a draft assignment that covered the first two outcomes of the first Module of the course (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2). The uncertainty around criticality they felt was reflected in their written work, part of the educational challenges international students face (Franken, 2012; Daly and Brown, 2007) when studying in a new environment. As a teacher educator within this context, my role was focussed on ensuring student-teachers on the PGCE programme met the required standards to certify they were competent to teach within this sector.

My intention was to gain insight about these uncertainties by exploring the international students' previous educational experiences and their understanding of criticality within the context of the PGCE.

The importance of the study and possible challenges

Research of ITE in FE contexts is a focus of study for some researchers, however, much of this is focused on policy and structural factors (Holloway, 2009), mentoring of student teachers (Cunningham, 2007) and teacher identity (Springbett, 2018; Orr, 2012; Bathmaker and Avis, 2005). A study of student teacher identities that has at the centre a study of students with international experiences and backgrounds is new, particularly within the context my study is based on. The students that I interviewed are adults who, having assimilated into British life, decided to qualify to teach in the UK in the PCE sector after pursuing varied career paths having emigrated to the UK. In addition, research into examining criticality in teacher education is based on subject specific analysis and linked to critical reflection (Ramin, 2007; Flessner, Miller et al 2012). Although valid, I examine the prior experiences of students on starting an ITE programme and learn to be critically analytical, which is perhaps new within the field of research in ITE.

My study focuses on the lived experiences of international students who were trying to form an identity as teachers in this country, yet despite their qualifications and personal life events, they seemed to lack confidence in engaging with criticality, believing that their views and previous education mattered little. Working in an inner-city establishment with a hugely diverse population, examining the experiences of international students is timely and justified. The students were not a homogenous group, and there are many cultural or traditional norms within education that they may have been grappling with when they were on the PGCE. What was expected of them in the PGCE may have been quite different to what they were more familiar with in terms of student/teacher relationships, or writing critically, for example. This may have left them feeling isolated and/or reluctant to participate in class discussions, which was essential on the PGCE and which I discuss within my findings.

Another reason that engaged me in this topic is the fact that I too arrived in this country as a child, and my background is similar to that of some of the international students. I speak another language at home, and my cultural traditions and outlook on education is probably similar to theirs. The main difference between us is that most of the students I interviewed for this study emigrated to the UK as adults, and the majority had qualified in a variety of disciplines from other countries. When I observed that they were reluctant to participate and give their views in class or in written submissions, I understood why. For most, it was because they did not believe their previous qualifications and personal journeys were of value within a British academic context. Engaging in criticality requires an ability to justify views, and demonstrate a broad awareness of differing views, all of which perhaps demands confidence and an ability to provide a rationale. The international students were seen as equal to other students if they met the entry criteria for the PGCE, and yet there was no reference to where they had been educated previously, what they were familiar with in terms of HE academic norms, and how they developed criticality. It seemed as if their identities were ignored and they had to meet the demands of the PGCE without any acknowledgement of their previous education, therefore they were silenced.

The challenges I faced in this study were around the students who were perhaps willing to participate as they were all working, studying and raising families. As I was doing a small-scale phenomenological study, I was also concerned about conducting the interviews; I wanted the students to direct the interviews, therefore I wanted to ask as few questions as possible. However, as I have stated above, the students were from cultures where respect is owed to their teachers, and as I was or had been their PGCE tutor, they may not have been as honest with me. I discuss this in more depth within Chapter 3 of this study.

In addition, and perhaps more importantly, defining criticality is extremely challenging for all, and arriving at a definition may be more difficult for the students. They may provide examples of when they believe they engaged in criticality, however, applying this to the PGCE context may be more challenging for them. This is another reason why I think this study is important; what does criticality mean across cultures?

Overview of the chapters

I now provide a brief outline of the chapters that form the structure of my thesis. In the following chapter, the literature review chapter, I outline the philosophical stance I adopt for my study before attempting to define criticality in two ways and referring to a broad range of literature. I define criticality as elements that make up parts of a Study Skills portfolio, and extend this to include Freire's analysis of criticality, and critical pedagogy. From the literature, it seems development of criticality includes elements of affective reasoning which I examine in more depth. I also compare Freire's theories with Habermas' definition of lifeworlds, applying the concept to my context. I conclude this chapter with a conceptual framework of how I have defined criticality, and factors that impact its development in the Chapter.

Chapter 3 focuses on my research design, methodology and methods in which I justify the choices I make for my design and outline the steps I took to collect the data. I also provide details of some of the challenges I faced during this process

after providing a more detailed overview of my research questions. Within this chapter, I include more background details of the students who agreed to be part of my study, and provide vignettes for each student to try and provide more 'depth' to their stories and experiences, which I gathered through life story interviews. Following this, I discuss my choice of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a tool to analyse the data and end with a discussion of my positionality and ethical stance which require analysis because of the relationship between the students and myself, all of which are linked to an examination of validity within my study.

Chapter 4 provides some insight into the students' narratives following analysis and identification of three super-ordinate themes. Under each super-ordinate theme, I assigned three sub-themes. I provide details of where in the students' life stories I was able to find the super-ordinate themes that were mostly common across all the interviews I conducted, including references to extracts. The findings section is followed by a discussion of the analysis which refers back to the literature review in Chapter 2. Through this analysis, I suggest that a modified framework for criticality may be more appropriate than the one I initially produced in Chapter 2 and justify the reasons for this by referring back to the literature, in particular, Freire's notion of criticality which I link to concepts within critical pedagogy. I advocate that to develop an understanding and engagement with criticality, a critical space needs to be created within the PGCE to allow students to share their experiences, and find a way to perhaps form a bridge between the two lifeworlds.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion for my thesis in which I consider the whole doctoral study process, initially reviewing the aims of my study and the key findings for my research questions that led to my revised framework for criticality. I consider the implications of the study for the current PGCE course structure, and explore possible further areas of research that my study may lead on to. The chapter ends with a series of reflections about my whole doctoral journey and my own professional and personal development as a result of this whole process.

Chapter 2 – Literature review

Introduction

As part of my study of interpretations of critical analysis for international students on a PGCE programme, I begin this chapter by reflecting on what critical analysis means as part of the teacher education programme and summarising some of the ways the students have to evidence their ability to critically analyse within this context. I define criticality in two ways; one that includes aspects of reflection and questioning as part of a broader critical thinking framework, and the other that examines notions of power, emancipation, culture and identity. The latter is based on an analysis of how I use Freire's definition of criticality as a theoretical framework for understanding criticality as part of his concept of critical pedagogy. Evaluating Freire's definition of criticality leads me to an examination of Habermas' concept of 'lifeworlds' in which he advocates that for individuals to feel part of a new cultural context, they must abandon their previous identity to successfully immerse themselves in a new identity. I examine relevant literature that focuses on how international students interpret criticality in a British HE context, and whether there is pressure for them to discard their previous educational experiences in order to succeed on the PGCE and qualify as critically reflective teachers in England.

The ITE context

In order to answer the research questions I have outlined in the previous chapter, I return to the reasons why students need to be able to critically analyse as part of the PGCE programme. All ITE programmes require of students an ability to critically evaluate their own pedagogic practice (Myers and Simpson, 1997; Smith and Hodson, 2010; Cheng, Tang et al, 2012; Kaplan and Lewis, 2013). PGCE students are expected to critically analyse pedagogy to help reflect on their learning and evaluate their choices in their teaching approaches. The PGCE programme I refer to in this study demands that the students produce written assignments on their understanding of pedagogy, and keep a reflective journal to evaluate their practice following observations by tutors, mentors and peers. Consequently, being able to critically analyse pedagogy is a core principle as this enables the students, teachers

and mentors to discuss the former's professional development and learning as teachers which includes highlighting the personal attributes teachers must demonstrate as part of their ability to reflect on their practice, and their ability to engage in criticality which is further defined below (Harrison, 2006).

What is criticality?

The PGCE for this study is designed to address the professional standards as stipulated by the ETF and is validated by a University. In an introductory statement, the ETF (2014) states that some of the characteristics of professional standards must include evidence that:

‘Teachers and trainers are **reflective** and **enquiring** practitioners who think **critically** about their own educational assumptions, values and practice in the context of a changing contemporary and educational world’

Defining ‘criticality’ is challenging for researchers and students alike and particularly so for student-teachers who have to demonstrate the above qualities to qualify as professionals. The ETF highlight two crucial aspects within the above statement; the first that teachers must be continuously reflecting and questioning, and the second that they need to consider their own perspectives of education and its impact within a broader context. This suggests that a definition of criticality emerges that focuses on reflection and questioning, standards and competences, and the ability to use appropriate academic conventions taught within critical thinking frameworks. However, my study suggests that there is an additional definition of criticality beyond this familiar emergence of criticality taught through critical thinking frameworks.

Referring back to the ETF standards above, teachers must also consider their own ‘values, assumptions and practice’. Such terms are ‘weighty’ as there is an inference that teachers are expected to consider how their own ‘values and assumptions’ inform their practice, which, while laudable, can be in conflict with FE institutional demands of teachers’ roles. Policies outlined by the government which institutions must put into place include a focus on curriculum issues and monitoring of student data as stipulated by Ofsted, all of which is tied to funding (Greatbatch and Tate,

2018). Teachers are under pressure to ensure students pass their qualifications to meet targets that lead to funding, therefore time to focus on pedagogy is limited (Greatbatch and Tate, 2018).

Despite this, student-teachers on the PGCE are expected to reflect on and evaluate their pedagogical approaches, and consider the link between their own values about education. Thus, the international students need to be able to consider how their educational values and assumptions' are formed, and this may include reference to power structures and aspects of culture and identity. The 'values and assumptions' are formed from their previous educational and life experiences, and within this study, I refer to the work of Freire and Habermas as part of a framework to form an alternative and perhaps more complex definition of criticality. Thus, I examine how reflection and critical thinking approaches can be part of a definition of criticality that is perhaps achievable for the PGCE requirements, the 'mechanics' of criticality, and I also analyse the complexities of criticality from an alternative perspective which contends that both definitions need to work together to ensure the students succeed as professional, qualified teachers.

Critical thinking skills

The students I am focussing on have varied life and educational experiences from their own countries, yet when they are successfully accepted onto the PGCE, we, as the teacher educators, expect them to be able to interpret the academic jargon and terminology based on these previous experiences and qualifications. We do not ask them about their experiences, nor how they gained their qualifications; we assume that the qualifications are evidence that they are able to critically analyse pedagogy, and in doing so, able to reflect and question.

Research on international students studying in English-speaking HEIs tends to focus on the transition process, including language difficulties, culture shock and home sickness that the students may face (Furnham, 1997; Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009). In addition, many international students at HE level struggle with the demands of academic writing when studying in a new environment (Franken, 2012; Daly and Brown, 2007). However, the international students on the PGCE are British citizens

who have migrated to Britain. Therefore, they are not here temporarily as students; they are studying to forge new careers as teachers and are also working in other sectors while studying. Their language skills and previous qualifications meet the PGCE entry criteria, and they seem to understand the concept of criticality in tutorials, yet within their writing for the Modules (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2 for assessment requirements), they tend to cite theory with little evidence of analysis or evaluation which form part of the marking criteria. This became evident within the first few weeks of the course when students had the opportunity to receive feedback on some early formative assessment, and during subsequent discussions in tutorials.

Consequently, how do they learn about reflection and how to question as required within the PGCE? Reflection and questioning can be taught within a critical thinking framework (also referred to in many contexts as Study Skills) and include the teaching of academic writing (Klimova, 2013), as well as the ability to read and interpret academic sources, and compare data (Holmes, Weiman et al, 2015). Pontzer Ehrhardt (2011), in her definition of critical thinking, outlines ways of focusing on how the mind works, and offers multiple exercises for readers to practice these skills. Some of these exercises include rewriting questions into 'arguable propositions' by the end of which the reader will be able to debate a strong proposition, as well as other exercises on sense-making using Lewis Carroll's Jabberwocky poem (Pontzer Ehrhardt, 2011). All of these exercises around argument, evidence-gathering and reasoning include ways to practice critical reading and writing and offer a step-by-step guide in how to become a critical thinker (Pontzer Ehrhardt, 2011). In addition, there is a wide range of research that contextualises the teaching of critical thinking skills within disciplines (Wang and Seepho, 2017; Cheng and Wan, 2017; Hakim, Liliyasi et al, 2016), as well as the testing of the skills once taught (Hyytinen, Nissinen et al, 2015; O'Hare and McGuinness, 2015; Hatcher, 2011). As an example of disciplinary critical thinking, Burke, Sears et al (2014) highlight the importance given to 'critical thinking' within the teaching of psychology. They stress that students of psychology need to examine their own thinking and questioning processes as they make decisions in order to be better informed about their own lives and the wider world.

Exercises that practice such skills form part of a Study Skills programme which offers students ways to develop and practice their academic reading and writing skills, research and referencing skills, as well as broader aspects of time management and the ability to work with others (Cottrell, 2013; Freeman and Stone, 2006).

Hammersley-Fletcher and Hanley (2016) and Johnston, Mitchell et al (2011) categorise these skills as part of a lower level of a taxonomy that defines criticality. They cite Barnett's (1997) taxonomy of criticality in which students move up levels and forms of thinking to become 'critical beings', which I define further in the next section. Study Skills form an integral part of critical thinking and there is abundant research that details how to teach critical thinking skills across all ages (Simister, 2007; Horvath and Forte, 2011; Johnston, Mitchell et al, 2011; Richhart, 2015). In addition to this, reflection is stressed as integral to a teacher's development, so I now consider the role of reflection as part of critical thinking, and the vital role it has within teacher education.

The PGCE course demands that the students examine their own values and beliefs to then reflect on their own development as teachers (Schön, 1983; Pajares, 1992). For the students, criticality is evidenced through their reflections 'in' and 'on' action (Schön, 1983), reading of and writing about pedagogy, awareness of how their own identity and culture influences and develops their practice, and understanding of academic conventions when writing. The process of being able to express their thinking through dialogue or in written form can enable the student to formulate a deeper understanding of the pedagogy that guides their practice, which is influenced by their prior knowledge of classroom situations (Edwards and Simpson, 2010).

Schön (1983) argues that such reflection, while challenging, can be taught through scaffolding and this forms a key part of the PGCE course structure. As the students are developing as teachers, they learn to reflect through questioning their actions, 'on action', (Schön, 1983), and as they share their reflections, they may acknowledge how their practice develops as they are teaching, 'in action' (Schön, 1983). All of these reflections include questioning of their own actions, awareness of pedagogy that may underpin the actions, and the impact of their pedagogical understanding for their own students. Evidence of this reflection is collected through

the students' reflective diaries of their development on the course, discussions with peers, mentors and tutors prior to and following observations, as well as within the written submissions they have to complete (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2).

Russell (2005) outlined the stages for reflective practice he experimented with as a teacher educator. On receiving feedback from a former student that reflection should be taught rather than evidenced through events the students wrote about, he formed a structured approach to reflection. Students were asked to respond to specific questions during various stages of their course, and space was included for the students to reflect on their teaching practice and the tutor (Russell) to respond. Russell posits that rather than debating the theory of reflection and hoping the students will learn how to reflect through osmosis, this structured approach leads to a deeper insight into each student's thinking process of their teaching.

To counter such an approach, Edwards and Thomas (2010) assert that by the very nature of the act of teaching, teachers are always reflecting, therefore as teacher educators, we should not be concerned about teaching reflective practice. By reducing reflection to a framework with specific questions as Russell (2005) describes, Edwards and Thomas (2010) argue that we are focusing on the process of reflection, rather than the more 'value-laden one: which practices do we consider worthy of our teachers' (and thus our pupils') engagement)?' (Edwards and Thomas, 2010, p. 411). They believe that as teachers, we are part of a community that is constantly thinking about what we do, and that reducing reflection to a structured approach ignores questions around power, knowledge and the curriculum. This argument is echoed in the following section of this Chapter when I consider criticality as 'critical being'.

Thus, a critical thinking framework includes opportunities to develop reflection as defined by Schön (1983), questioning skills, as well as the components of Study Skills I have defined earlier in this section. I view critical thinking as outlined within this first definition as important, but not the focus for my study. As discussed in Edwards and Thomas' (2010) paper, reflection and criticality cannot be taught in a vacuum; context and the impact on the students we teach are vital to how we develop these skills.

Criticality and 'critical being'

I return to the second definition of criticality based on Freire and critical pedagogy, and first consider Barnett's (1997) definition of 'critical being' that I referred to earlier. Barnett's (1997) definition identified a 'critical being' as an individual who is aware of who s/he is, and is able to conceptualise new ways of thinking that may lead to transformation. Within his taxonomy, Barnett (1997) identified levels and domains of criticality that lead to students becoming 'critical beings'. He stated that all universities should be engaged in creating such an environment for their students. Dunne (2015) posits that 'criticality' includes several elements such as an individual's personal views and understanding, and broader aspects:

'... knowledge (critical reason), the self (critical reflection) and the world (critical action)' (Dunne, 2015, p.87)

Dunne continues by highlighting what he believes to be a core element in defining criticality:

'Criticality, as critical beings, challenges us not to be bystanders in our own lives. It does not merely tell us or show us what to do; it involves us in forging our own grand narratives. Here we move from being narrators of our own lives, to becoming the authors' (Dunne, 2015, p.94)

Thus, criticality moves away from being a 'mechanical' process as outlined earlier, to one that may be transformative for all students (although it may be argued that learning to be reflective may be transformative for individual students).

Many studies seem to view 'criticality' and 'critical thinking' as synonymous, and thus use the terms interchangeably. Hammersley-Fetcher and Hanley's (2016) case study of international postgraduate students' understanding of critical thinking while studying in a British HEI, refers to 'critical thinking' as 'criticality' throughout, and also makes reference to 'a critical perspective', 'critical insight'. This is because they refer to Barnett's (1997) descriptors in their study of critical thinking, and categorise criticality at different levels, suggesting a nuanced interpretation of 'critical thinking' is necessary. Despite using varied terms which are at times interchangeable, it is

clear in their study that a nuanced interpretation of 'critical thinking' is necessary and that they view criticality as a highly powerful aspect of critical thinking, perhaps bringing in aspects of 'critical being' as defined by Dunne (2005). In their study, Hammersley-Fletcher and Hanley (2016) have taken a stance which focuses on the complexities of critical thinking, linking it to Freire's (1972) analysis of power and emancipation:

'Critical thinking is that which challenges academic staff to think about the ideals that they wish to promote in the light of their role being both political and empowering' (Hammersley-Fletcher and Hanley, 2016, p.980)

Defining 'critical thinking' in this sense, using other terms as highlighted earlier indicates that Hammersley-Fletcher and Hanley (2016) view 'critical thinking' as more than a set of skills that can be taught and practised. They also stress the value of international students' contributions to debates in the classroom because the students bring differing perspectives from across the world. Hammersley-Fletcher and Hanley (2016) view 'critical thinking' as a 'social practice' as defined by Atkinson (1997, p.72) because it is part of the tradition of academic expectations at British universities, which international students may feel they cannot access (Hammersley-Fletcher and Hanley, 2016). Their definition of critical thinking as an opportunity to reflect on and evaluate what knowledge academics interact with and how the knowledge is communicated in the classroom is to encourage students to find new perceptions and ideas that challenge established thinking (Hammersley-Fletcher and Hanley, 2016). They conclude by encouraging students and academics to:

'engage in a more enlivened examination of the qualities and expectations of academic success, while at the same time recognise the potential biases built into such judgements' (Hammersley-Fletcher and Hanley, 2016, p. 991)

Even though their case study is based on a group of international students who were in the UK temporarily, the conclusion Hammersley-Fletcher and Hanley (2016) reach in the extract above may be applicable to the international PGCE students for my study in trying to encourage all to work together to synthesise what is meant by 'academic success'. Explicit debate about 'academic success' may lead to some

nuanced insight about individuals' interpretations and perceptions of criticality as well. At this point, it is necessary to highlight that I use the terms 'criticality' and 'critical analysis' interchangeably as they are synonymous in this study.

To continue this analysis of students' understanding of criticality from an alternative perspective, and which may help with the conclusion reached by Hammersley-Fletcher and Hanley (2016) above, I now consider criticality as part of a debate focusing on power and knowledge. Moore (2007) in his paper on defining criticality as part of an education studies programme, focused on knowledge, and whose knowledge was included within the discipline. He states that criticality today is more about disconnecting from the 'dominant, hegemonic discourse' (Moore, 2007, p. 26) of what knowledge is and who decides this.

How can student-teachers learn to combine knowledge, the ability to be self-aware, and awareness of the world they inhabit that may influence their actions? For the purposes of my research and context, this 'world' refers to the pedagogic environment of which the PGCE students are part. Through explicit teaching of critical thinking skills, including the ability to reflect and question, the students may learn to meet the academic demands of the qualification, but what of their 'values and assumptions' (ETF, 2014) which impact how they engage with the pedagogical knowledge as they develop to be qualified teachers? This, for me, forms part of the debate around 'critical being'.

Critical pedagogy

Being critical about knowledge cannot be considered in isolation; knowledge is about the way we interact with the world and our environment (Dunne, 2015). Therefore, the stance I adopt for my study can be linked to Freire's (1972) definition of 'critical pedagogy' through a critical theory perspective in which praxis can lead to change. I examine praxis in more depth further in this chapter.

Critical pedagogy in the classroom is the opposite of the 'banking system' of education that Freire (1972) fought against. The 'banking' system places the teacher at the heart of the classroom as s/he fills the students with knowledge and ensures they memorise the facts (Freire, 1972). There is no opportunity to question the why

or to debate the how, there is only learning the facts to be a successful student, which Freire (1972) states is an indication of the power imbalance in the classroom, and from which students need to be liberated. Critical pedagogy is about creating a more equal classroom in which the students and teachers work together to design a co-constructed curriculum or approach (Freire, 1972). In an interview, Shor (2017) describes how he implements critical pedagogy through dialogue with his students of English at a 'low-budget, working-class college' in New York:

'I model to students a way of using language to examine issues and materials which respects their idioms while integrating analytical discourse' (Shor, Matusov et al, 2017, p. S6)

Thus, he considers the students he is teaching, their backgrounds and experiences, and tries to engage in debate about the topics while encouraging the students to constantly challenge the areas of debate. He does this by questioning the students, encouraging them to question each other, and creating an environment in which the students refer to their own experiences, knowledge and understanding to formulate new understandings. At the same time, he advocates for all decisions about teaching and learning to be placed in the hands of the students, including choice in reading, topics and grading of the work (Shor, Matusov et al, 2017).

In another study of an ITE course designed using the tenets of critical pedagogy, Greenman and Dieckmann (2004) analysed the views of former students who had successfully completed such a programme. The course was designed to enable students to express themselves freely and take risks within a safe space (Greenman and Dieckmann, 2004). Students were provided with core reading material, as well as extensive, additional reading collated according to specific areas, such as community and school, language, culture and school and so on. Each student was provided with a pack of the additional reading and had the freedom to choose which articles they wanted to discuss in class, as well select between two assessment strategies of producing an essay or a research proposal. Each class began with a focus on questions that arose from the reading selected by a student, with the teacher also posing questions and participating as an equal in the discussions. This process was not smooth:

'The openness and risk-taking and discomfort with ambiguity at times contributed to pain in the process of transformation, even though safe spaces existed' (Greenman and Dieckmann, 2004, p. 249)

For Friere, criticality is about transformation, and the educators in the above cases illustrated strategies that they designed to encourage such a transformation, but it was not a smooth journey as highlighted in the above quote. Despite the challenges, the students who were asked about their experiences on the course were overwhelmingly positive about it, and felt the impact of the learning years after:

'... our data show the participants to be facile in strategically constructing change wherever they perceive or make the opportunity' (Greenman and Dieckmann, 2004, p. 252)

This may be an appropriate strategy for Shor and the teachers that Greenman and Dieckmann described (with 8 students in the class), however, for the PGCE students I taught, I had to work within a defined structure and meet the expectations as stipulated by the professional standards and the HEI. The numbers of students in my PGCE groups ranged from 15 to 25, therefore planning such sessions was not possible when I was teaching within a specific timeframe and working with students who themselves had conflicting demands on their time. Nevertheless, there are aspects of critical pedagogy that may be relevant for the international PGCE students I refer to in this study.

Education is a political act (Freire, 1972; Giroux, 2011) and in order to ensure change occurs, Giroux encourages students and teachers to see the classroom as a place for 'contestation, resistance and possibility' (Giroux, 2003, p. 6), which is all part of a critical theory perspective where we examine a situation to possibly change it (Freire, 1972). I use a critical theory lens based on the work of Freire (1972) because his definitions of criticality add insight into what it seems the international students may find 'problematic' when asked to analyse and evaluate pedagogy.

Critical theory is part of a social narrative that includes debates about power relations, and a Freirean perspective may identify an alternative approach to critical analysis. For Freire, 'culture' is embodied in all life experiences, so to understand and

value an individual's culture, it is essential to know their life experiences. Work that Freire conducted with plantation workers in Brazil in teaching them literacy led him to realise that when teaching them, it was essential that their life experiences were not simply acknowledged, but as Giroux (1985) posited, an opportunity to debate and reflect on these experiences was the beginning of their path to literacy (Freire, 1985). The plantation workers Freire worked with had to own their culture to then be able to move forward with their education and thus become empowered to be able to operate in the world of landowners and politicians.

Freire's study of engaging with plantation workers to teach literacy involved a novel approach for the time. He advocated for teaching literacy through familiar terms and concepts to ensure the plantation workers were aware of the role they had in becoming literate. Therefore, he used concepts and language that were familiar to the plantation workers' culture to approach language learning because he believed that to start with what they know can help to ensure the language is relevant for them, thus they develop a sense of agency for their own learning (Freire, 1974). Critics of critical pedagogy state that it does not lead to practical results, and is based on old-fashioned values (Miedema and Wardekker, 1999) which have little room in today's world. This may be valid, however, Miedema and Wardekker (1999) acknowledge that critical pedagogy is relevant in the way that Giroux approaches it, and that aspects of it can be applied to education.

In my study, I consider whether a similar approach to that of Giroux in which I create opportunities for the students to share their previous educational experiences and understanding of criticality may lead them to engage with criticality with increased confidence. In doing this, it may be that discussions about power and knowledge, identity and culture form part of the classroom debates, and this must be welcomed. If the PGCE students sense their previous education has little relevance to their current study, this may impact how they relate in class discussions and engage in criticality by reflecting on their development as teachers. Such an approach must be in place alongside the first definition of criticality I outlined earlier; the students need to learn how to reflect, question and discuss their pedagogical understanding and application to their practice (elements that make up Study Skills),

and also engage in reflection about the broader concepts. I now consider praxis, power and liberation/emancipation, identity and culture as part of the second definition of criticality in more depth.

Praxis and criticality

Criticality is also evidenced through Freire's (1985) notion of praxis where an action must be preceded by reflection and evaluation of the process; 'action and reflection' (Freire, 1985, p.154-155). Freire also writes of praxis as a means for individuals to 'humanize' (Freire, 1985, p. 70) their world by transforming it, which he posits they can choose to do. This is in contrast to animals who must adapt to their environment in order to survive; we, as humans, can choose to change the world (Freire, 1985). Thus, an understanding of praxis demands that the student-teachers are aware of the responsibility of their actions, particularly when the students they are teaching will experience the results. This complexity can be challenging as the PGCE students need to acknowledge their own experiences as students previously and understand how different the expectations and demands are on the PGCE. Having considered their own positioning as students previously and how this impacts on their current roles as students, they then have to reflect on their roles as teachers and professionals, which links to an understanding of their own identity and backgrounds.

Freire's view of criticality links the 'word' and the 'world', a concept that he feels is crucial when engaging in any educational experience, citing the example of reading a book for:

'... critical penetration into its basic content [and] also penetration into an acute sensibility, a permanent intellectual disquiet, a predisposition to investigate' (Freire, 1985, p. 3)

His view of reading and writing as inseparable:

'reading always involves critical perception, interpretation and *rewriting* of what is read' (Freire and Macedo, 1987, p. 36)

hints at the power that is in the reader's hands. Although not explicitly stated by Freire, it seems that the reader holds a position of self-agency through the 'critical perception [and] interpretation' which he refers to in the above quotes. The challenge is how to ensure students are aware of their self-agency, and Freire offers little guidance on this beyond citing the example of his work in teaching literacy to the plantation workers.

The PGCE students' writing must include evidence of criticality where the students consider various positions and then justify their choices by contextualising these to their own practice, referred to as praxis. Praxis in itself is extremely complex since it demands that the students are conscious of the power of action and reflection, and the ensuing effects of this:

'being critical involves being self-critical in relation to our own power ... and empathetic to diversity in those around us' (Ledwith, 2007, p.602).

Ledwith elaborates further by stressing the need for us to reflect on our own biases and also debate these within a group context to develop 'a body of knowledge that takes our collective understanding to more complex analytical levels' (Ledwith, 2007, p. 605).

This is possibly challenging for the international PGCE students when they may be accustomed to simply 'acting' by instinct from their previous experiences as students within their previous lifeworld, and where the 'banking' (Freire, 1974) concept of education may be more familiar to them.

Freire (1972) wrote of praxis as:

'...the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it'
(Freire, 1972, p. 52)

and argued for the need to liberate people from their oppressors to 'transform' the world. As he was referring to the plantation workers who were under the control of the landowners, this call for liberation was justifiable, and he achieved this through education, specifically by teaching literacy in the way I have outlined earlier in this

chapter. Latta and Kim (2012) apply this perspective to teacher education today and claim that praxis is more than reflecting on our teaching practice. They insist that praxis:

'... requires educators to think outside or beyond the rules and regulations; it demands creative thinking, care, moral judgement, compassion, critical consciousness, and agency' (Latta and Kim, 2009, p. 137)

My study is about criticality, and therefore the focus is on how the individual students 'transform' their practice in the context of working with their own students. In order to do this, the PGCE students must have pedagogical understanding, and perhaps be able to use their previous educational experiences to reflect, question and develop as teachers. Thus, students can reflect on their own intercultural identities and how they see themselves as teachers who can be 'self-critical' (Ledwith, 2007, p. 602). They must go beyond reflection 'in' and 'on' action (Schön, 1983) to examine how their actions may impact the students they are teaching, and perhaps more importantly, consider their own position as 'holders' of knowledge that may lead to transformation of the world (Freire, 1972). Praxis is about an awareness of an individual's own position, which in Freire's (1972) study, was the position of the oppressed plantation worker who becomes aware of her/his own oppression through the teaching of literacy. Thus, education plays a large part in emancipation.

Liberation/emancipation

The concept of liberation is again complex. Freire (1972) states that liberation for those who are 'oppressed' is a frightening concept because it is about changing one's reality and accepting another unfamiliar reality. As a result of this fear, the plantation worker believes him/herself to be inferior, yet may still yearn for freedom, which can lead to self-hatred (Freire, 1972). Freedom can only be achieved by the oppressed realising that their oppression is a reality, a 'limiting situation which they can transform' (Freire, 1972, p. 26) as a group rather than individually. As they own their reality and try to liberate themselves, they create new cultures that are a combination of aspects of the former oppressive culture and their own, which previously had been labelled as negative and worthless (Freire, 1985). The

'humanization' process can take time, but Freire (1985) suggests that the final stage will be a breaking point when the oppressed culture is seen as having value.

The knowledge and experience international students bring with them about British academic culture may be regarded as limited (Fell and Lukianova, 2015; Durkin, 2007; Hofstede, 1986). However we, the tutors, ignore the students' previous experiences and understandings of criticality because the students must meet the British standards, which although valid, also negates their previous experiences. This links in to Habermas' concept of 'lifeworlds' that I examine in more depth further in this chapter.

Biesta (2013) highlights the contradictions of emancipation from a philosophical standpoint. He posits that an individual seeks emancipation only when another individual, who is not under the control of the pre-existing power structures, intervenes. Therefore, an unequal relationship is created between the individual seeking emancipation and the one who is intervening, which is not emancipation (Biesta, 2013). Applying this to an educational setting, it seems that teachers have the power to tell students what they lack in knowledge and understanding so that the latter may be 'free' from ignorance, which again is not emancipation.

The tension between emancipation and a critical pedagogy stance is clear. By adopting a critical pedagogical perspective, the students may be viewed as oppressed and needing emancipation, therefore there is an unequal relationship between the teacher and the students. However, as Biesta (2013) argues, it must be questioned whether emancipation can ever occur when teachers tell students they need to be liberated. The PGCE course demands that students take ownership of their development as teachers through criticality, and perhaps challenge the teachers' and their own pedagogical understanding. If this is emancipation, how can it be encouraged when the teacher decides the students are oppressed? Thus, there are perhaps different interpretations of criticality that need to be debated, and the concept of emancipation can form part of a bigger debate about knowledge and power.

Johnston, Mitchell et al (2011) offer a critique of the concept of emancipation which may be valid for my study. They state that Freire's notion of emancipation focuses on encouraging students and teachers to challenge the status quo, however there is little definitive clarification of how this occurs. There is also a need to consider that maybe the students are aware of the status quo and like this power relationship rather than wanting to change it, and as I am using principles of critical theory, power and emancipation are key to the pedagogical debate. Therefore, for my study, as I question each student about their lives and experiences, and encourage them to self-reflect and evaluate their role in how they develop criticality, it may be that their responses indicate they were happy with the status quo. Freire (1972) does not discuss this possibility; there appears to be an innate assumption that by analysing the power teachers may have, the status quo must be challenged and the students liberated. Freire's (1972) work was relevant for the context he was working in at the time, however it may be that the students I interview may offer different responses that do not lead to an assumption they need to be liberated in any way.

Teaching critical reading and writing are part of the critical thinking framework I outlined earlier within this chapter, and which Johnston, Mitchell et al (2011) categorise into product and process. The product is engaging with a wide range of texts, and the ability to construct an appropriate academic written piece from the reading. The process includes an aspect of reflection about the critical reading and writing, as well as about their writing product (Johnston, Mitchell et al, 2011). Freire (2005) sees reading critically as a way of engaging the mind, a skill or perhaps even an art form that needs specific instruction:

'Reading is searching for, seeking to create an understanding of what is read; thus, among fundamental points, the correct teaching of reading and writing is of great importance' (Freire, 2005, p. 34-35)

He argues for an approach that is a challenge in itself when approaching reading:

'But for me, what is important, what is indispensable, is to be critical. Criticism creates the necessary intellectual discipline, asking questions to the

reading, to the writing, to the book, to the text. ... The thing is to fight with the text, even though loving it ...' (Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 11)

It is relevant at this point to consider how Freire's definition of critical reading and writing differs from that taught within Study Skills programmes as part of the critical thinking framework I discussed earlier in this chapter. Teo (2014), in his study of teaching critical literacy in Singapore highlighted a conventional view of criticality that focuses on fact-finding and reasoning which perhaps assumes a pre-determined truth that may be found in texts. This is in contrast with an alternative view of criticality that is rooted in Freire's (1972) definition above:

'One is aimed at cultivating a 'learned' mind, the other is dedicated to raising one's consciousness of social inequalities and injustices' (Teo, 2014, p. 541)

which he believes is possible if the teacher encourages the students to breakdown an argument or view, and then reconstruct and synthesise the argument. Teo (2014) believes that this does not happen in many classrooms, thus criticality stops at deconstruction of an argument. It is at the reconstruction stage where Freire's analysis may be appropriate.

For Freire, this 'fight with the text' began in teaching the plantation workers to be literate by recognising their own self-worth through acknowledgement of their experiences, but on the PGCE, the students need to be able to demonstrate evidence of a wide range of reading and develop a reasoned debate or argument. The skill or confidence in presenting such a debate or argument is perhaps evidence of their emancipation from the banking system of education they may have been used to. The international students appear to be skilled in critical reading from their own perceptions by quoting relevant sources from their reading, (Fox, 1994; Cangarajah, 1999), yet from a western perspective, is their reading 'uncritical'? Or is it that they pose questions of their reading to themselves, but are not openly vocal about their views on what they are reading?

In order to begin to understand why the students feel 'unable' to write critically, it may be that knowing their previous experiences and journeys will shed some light. Giroux (1987) emphasises the importance of knowing the students' experiences and

notions of power. He asserts that educational establishments promote the status quo by supporting the superiority of the dominant culture and ignoring the culture of those in the minority because:

'... teachers are not merely dealing with students who have individual interests, they are dealing primarily with individuals whose stories, memories, narratives, and readings of the world are inextricably related to wider social and cultural formations and categories' (Giroux, 1987, p. 177)

From these examples of critical reading and writing, there seems to be a cultural difference around notions of 'good' criticality which must be reflected within the PGCE students' writing where they are expected to question their reading and consider the implications of the materials for their own context (Freire and Shor, 1987). This is why the role of the tutor is crucial; by welcoming the students' insights and perceptions on what they have read and included in their writing, the students may feel valued and contribute to class debates more openly (Freire and Shor, 1987).

Identity and experiences

In order to try and define how the students develop criticality, I need to find out about the students' previous experiences in education. Maringe and Jenkins (2015) write of the experiences of international doctoral students in a British university who are expected to write in a foreign language (English) when their own:

'... cultural and language competences are often considered in deficit terms as not only inadequate for doctoral-level writing, but as impeding effective western writing traditions and communicative competence' (Maringe and Jenkins, 2015, p.610).

The 'deficit terms' that Maringe and Jenkins refer to above can be linked to Freire's (1985) analysis of how the culture of the oppressed is seen as inferior, and requires liberation through transformation. However, it is also important to consider that the students have chosen to study in Britain, therefore, they are required to meet the academic requirements of the institutions they are studying at. Perhaps a new

approach may be necessary in which the international students (the 'oppressed') are valued for their previous linguistic aptitudes and cultures, and also learn the academic language and requirements to succeed academically (the culture of the 'oppressor'). This is where a dual definition of criticality has relevance.

Although Maringe and Jenkins' study is based on international students at doctoral level, parallels can be seen within the PGCE when we deny the students a voice and assume they will be able to be critical as they have met the entry criteria. We value their qualifications to the extent that they are able to gain entry onto the PGCE, however, we do not value their prior understanding of criticality from a different culture.

Ngozi Adichie's (2009) talk on the 'danger of the single story' in referring to her own personal experiences as well as others' may be applicable to the PGCE students' experiences. She described the stories she wrote as a child while growing up in Nigeria. These stories were rooted in an 'English' setting, with multiple references to the weather and white characters who drank ginger beer and had adventures while camping, all unfamiliar events for a young, black Nigerian girl. It was only when she was introduced to African authors that she realised that literature can have protagonists that resemble her and who she can relate to. This realisation led to an understanding that stories do not have to only have characters that she read about in the English books she read; stories can be about children eating mangoes and hair that could not easily be tied into a ponytail. In the same way, on moving to the United States to study further, her roommate assumed she would need help because coming from an African country, she was poor and had suffered. This view held by the roommate was one she had learnt from literature and the media, which depicted the African continent as one that was suffering from poverty, starvation and endless wars and illnesses. Ngozi Adichie continues her talk by stating that we are all guilty of believing the 'single story' from what we have read and heard. Perhaps we are only aware of this fact when we are the focus of the 'single story', rather than when we view others' stories as one dimensional from our own reading:

'Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person' (Ngozi Adichie, 2009)

Thus, she is stating that by only hearing one perspective of an individual's life, we make the listener powerful as we deny the speaker the opportunity to fully relate their story. Therefore, by downplaying the students' backgrounds and previous experiences, am I, the tutor, denying each the opportunity to share these experiences and so perhaps learn from each other? I perhaps need to consider how to build in opportunities for them to share these experiences and build a 'new' understanding of criticality for the PGCE. Tensions exist as they are studying in England and need to demonstrate understanding of British academic expectations, however, is there room to consider how their lives and educational experiences can also be part of the development of criticality as teachers?

In order to move away from the 'deficit terms' that Maringe and Jenkins (2015) refer to, it may be we need to create opportunities to learn more than the 'single story' (Ngozi Adichie, 2009) of the students. At the same time, it is essential that the students understand how to meet the criteria and demonstrate criticality as required by the professional standards from the ETF.

Unearthing more than the 'single story' through my interviews with the students may reveal further insight. Guo and O'Sullivan (2012) make reference to the notion of 'collectivity' in their study of Chinese students in Canada when engaging in criticality. Within their study, they highlight the importance of harmonious relationships within Chinese society where any disagreements are resolved through 'trust, equality, respect, and mutual understanding' (Guo and O'Sullivan, 2012, p. 167) so that individuals are part of a collective society. They equally stress the contradictions evident in maintaining harmonious relationships; those who hold the power may quash any disagreements and ensure people comply with official rhetoric in their pursuit of harmony.

Joshi (2005), in her study of Asian families from India settled in the United States, outlines the importance of education for these families, and the respect accorded to teachers. Teachers are held in esteem by students and their families in India, therefore to ask questions of the teacher about the topics being studied is not encouraged, nor thought to be appropriate because the teacher is seen as the authority figure. At the same time, parents expect their children to study hard at

home as well as at school, and children are expected to adhere to familial expectations, therefore, questioning or disagreeing with a teacher or family elder is discouraged (Joshi, 2005). This again, may need to be examined following my interviews with the PGCE students as there may be parallels with other societies.

Although the above examples show that there is great value in evaluating cultural perspectives and traditions, it is important to note that within cultures, there are nuances and individual differences among the members of the cultures. Kubota (1999) in his study of the practice of ELT teaching to Japanese students warns practitioners of the dangers of stereotyping:

'... such views promote a monolithic, static, and exoticized image of culture as well as promote a deterministic thinking that regards students as rigidly bound by cultural traditions' (Kubota, 1999, p. 14)

Conducting semi-structured interviews and gathering life stories of each student may avoid this issue. Students may self-identify in ways they feel they are able to as they re-tell their stories, which is about gathering more than the single story that Ngozi Adichie (2009) warns of. I discuss this in more depth in Chapter 3.

Criticality and culture

The final element within the second definition of criticality is around culture, which may be closely linked to identity, but is distinct (Appiah, 2005). Being able to critically analyse pedagogy demands an awareness of oneself, and a level of confidence in one's own ability to be able to evaluate and rationalise, depending on the context an individual is working in. Micciche and Carr (2011) refer to the process as an opportunity where an individual can reflect and question themselves about their existence, and their 'assumption and values' (ETF, 2014).

Consequently, culture plays a large part in this study as the students' previous experiences impact on how they form relationships with their peers, mentors and tutors as they develop criticality within the academic demands of the programme. Culture has been analysed and defined in numerous ways. As far back as 1892, in the *Journal of Education*, Buckham wrote that culture was difficult to easily define,

but he linked with power to culture. He argued that an individual who is 'cultured' is one who has knowledge and intelligence, and continued to detail what makes a man knowledgeable and intelligent (since a woman was not deemed to be defined as such at the time), both of which give him power. Appiah (2005) has outlined at length the complexities of culture and how group cultures are formed. He cites the example of the arrival of Jews and Italians to USA and what they brought with them:

'They brought a language and stories and songs and sayings in it; they transplanted a religion with specific rituals, beliefs and traditions, a cuisine ... , and distinctive modes of dress; they came with particular ideas about family life' (Appiah, 2005, p. 114)

However, he also highlights that the above elements that make up culture do not necessarily hold true today as generations have made their lives in their ancestors' adopted countries; culture adapts to the surroundings, and new habits and traditions may emerge (Appiah, 2005), therefore culture is ever evolving. Hofstede has written extensively about the effects of culture for organisations and defines four aspects that make up culture; 'values, symbols, heroes and rituals' (Hofstede, 2001, p. 10). He states that the latter three aspects of culture are able to be interpreted by outsiders of a culture because they are visible, but values make themselves known through behaviour. Thus individuals who enact certain behaviours may be displaying their values that are formed within a culture. Prior to this wa Thiong'o (1986) stressed the link between values and culture, stating that culture is the embodiment of 'moral, ethical and aesthetic values' (p. 14), which are communicated through language. For my study, defining culture in this way is appropriate because criticality is the outward manifestation of one's values; if a student is able to engage and develop criticality, s/he is revealing their beliefs and thoughts.

Fox (1994) writes at length about the link between culture and criticality, highlighting the impact of the former on students' academic journeys:

'... this thing we call "critical thinking" or "analysis" has strong cultural components. It is more than just a set of writing and thinking techniques – it is a voice, a stance, a relationship with texts and authorities that is taught,

both consciously and unconsciously, by family members, friends, teachers, the media, even the history of one's country ... it is not so easily defined and is not at all simple to explain to someone who has been brought up differently' (Fox, 1994, p.145)

Welikala (2013, p. 45) reinforces this link by referencing students' engagement with criticality on their terms: 'Criticality is defined in different ways in different cultures'. Thus, when international students study in western universities, they bring with them 'cultural scripts for learning' (Welikala, 2013, p. 43) which may not be in harmony with the academic expectations within these universities. Fanon (1967) highlighted the importance of culture for individuals who are navigating between different cultures; if students are part of an academic culture that is different to one they are accustomed to, and also adopting a new academic language, this can be an alienating experience (Fanon, 1967).

Fanon's (1967) analysis of the link between language and power leads him to scrutinise the impact of language on people. He describes the reaction of white French audiences following attendance at his lectures, and his conclusions of their reactions are controversial. His scathing description of an incident when white French audience members congratulate him on his fluency in 'their' language, it is as if he is regarded as an 'honorary' white French citizen. Fanon is extremely critical of the 'immigrant' completely immersing himself in the dominant culture in order to belong, justifying yet again that power lies in the hands of the colonial rulers. The importance of language and the power it has to liberate or isolate is vital to consider in this context.

In some respects, this may be a perspective the PGCE students in my study are familiar with. Many have emigrated from former British colonies and bring with them their experiences and understanding of the world and society. The transition from one culture to another brings its own challenges, and as a result they may be negotiating their own identities, which can include identifying their roles within their social circles, as employees, as members of British society, and now as students with aspirations to be teachers. Their decision to qualify as teachers in PCE contexts

could be part of their journey in connecting to a British identity and planting firmer roots (hooks, 2009).

It could be posited that the students have culturally assimilated into British life as a result of the length of time they have been living here and the fact that the majority have married and had children and/or studied further. Nevertheless, their sense of culture and identity may be ever evolving as they adopt new roles, such as student, teacher, or volunteer-teacher. Thus, identity includes aspects of geography, ethnicity, religion, gender, class and marital status among others. Today, defining identity is more complex (Cantle, 2012) and as is evident with the students referred to in this study, it impacts on the way the students negotiate their journey on the PGCE course.

Examining Fanon's theory alongside Freire and Habermas (which I do so below), it appears that there is a link between language and power. The majority of the students that I wish to interview for my study come from former colonised countries (India, Zimbabwe, Somalia) where language was critical in colonising the people of these countries (Fanon, 1967; wa Thiong'o, 1986). Wa Thiong'o highlights the power that language has as 'a means of communication and a carrier of culture' (1986, p. 13). When students arrive with languages and cultures from other countries, it may be that the language of academia is a form of communication rather than a 'carrier of culture' (ibid). Becoming a 'critical being' (Barnett, 1997) demands students express their values and beliefs (Dunne, 2015) which are formed through their culture and how they identify themselves. Thus, language must be more than a way of communicating, and developing criticality is part of the journey students need to embark on to succeed in academia. As wa Thiong'o asserts in his research, the students that I have selected for my study may view learning as a 'cerebral activity and not an emotionally felt experience' (1986, p. 17). Freire's (1972) view is that educators need to engage in praxis to transform theirs and the students' worlds, thus to become a 'critical being', emotions and feelings are involved.

Coming from cultural traditions where a collective voice may be expected (Fox, 1994), it may be that having the confidence to write from a personal stance endangers the power relations. As teacher educators, we demand that students

conform to our western academic traditions, yet by doing so, we may be reinforcing the status quo which Freire challenges in his work. The ability to engage in criticality can lead to a power imbalance between western and other traditions of criticality. This is a challenge that we face as educators, and the students must navigate. Through the language we use in the classroom, we all express our values and cultures (wa Thiong'o, 1986) as part of a group as well as through our own individual identities.

Lifeworlds

In order to answer the questions about the concept of criticality and culture, having outlined a view of criticality using the work of Freire, I now synthesise the relevance of Habermas' view of lifeworlds.

The students I focus on are adults who have spent their formative years mostly in either Asia or Africa. Their educational experiences are varied, with some having completed Master's level qualifications in their home countries, to others who continued with their education after migrating to the west. On top of busy personal lives, their previous experiences makes for a potentially challenging situation where they are juggling many roles as students, trainee teachers, employees, as well as being active members of their own communities. It can be argued that the 'home' students are also juggling these roles, however an added dimension for the international students is the part that cultural background and expectations play within these roles. Having chosen to settle in the UK, their identity is fluid as they form new relationships through their experiences, part of their intercultural identity (Cantle, 2012; Meer and Modood, 2012) which is about how individuals learn to communicate and be themselves with others. Canagarajah (1999) summarises the link between education and identity in his account of the tensions arising from teaching English in Sri Lanka:

'Education has many implications for a student's identity and relationships'
(Canagarajah, 1999, p.12)

In examining the importance of identity, reference can be made to Habermas' (1987) view of lifeworlds. His work examines the struggles an individual faces when moving from one society to another for which he offers a 'solution' in being able to manage such a transition. He suggests that in order to be able to cope and find a place in the new society or lifeworld, the individual should discard the habits and traditions of the previous lifeworld and adopt the customs of the new lifeworld. Thus, he advocates transforming oneself to form a new identity 'made up of culture, society and personality' (McLean, 2006, p.11) that are the tenets of lifeworlds for Habermas. According to Habermas, language is the medium through which we form relationships with others and reach decisions about future actions. However, the premise for change through agreement with others depends on the ability of individuals to

'...coordinate their plans for action by coming to an understanding about something in the world' (Habermas, 1987, p. 296).

When individuals are in agreement, it is because they share similar lifeworlds, that is, they share similar views and knowledge that allow for agreement (Finlayson, 2005). However, when 'colonization' (Habermas, 1987) occurs, problems with communication arise. Colonization refers to a situation when the lifeworld is interrupted by an external force leading to a breakdown in communication, requiring the adoption of a new lifeworld to renew the communication for action (McLean, 2006). The interruption occurs because of the 'system' (Habermas, 1987), which Habermas states is governed by money and power, and within which we all have to function as members of a society. The system is reliant on the lifeworld, yet it can lead to destruction of the lifeworld (Habermas, 1987; Finlayson, 2005; McLean, 2006) because money and power are part of the governing structures of society:

'... the capitalist economy, the state, and other administrative organisations' (Finlayson, 2005, p. 91)

Maringe and Jenkins (2015) assert that forcing international students to 'fit' into an academic writing style that we expect in the west is a sign of prejudice against the international students, a view shared by Robinson-Pant (2005):

'... like institutionalised deception and selfish organisational interest in furthering academic imperialism' (Maringe and Jenkins, 2015, p. 612)

This may be harsh, however a criticism of Habermas' theory of lifeworlds is around power; if the power in the system is held by those who exert it because of their position in society as a result of race, ethnicity and/or gender, then the system will not allow for a new lifeworld (McLean, 2006) because the system is too powerful against the oppressed. Baxter (2011) is critical of Habermas' analysis of the system and the lifeworld and argues that the concept of the lifeworld is too limiting for society today. He also highlights the fact that Habermas focuses on the impact of the system on the lifeworld and does not consider the lifeworld's influence on the system.

Since we live in a society where the western traditions of education are considered to have more importance (Willinsky, 1998), consideration of Habermas' definition of lifeworlds is valid to a point. It is when race and cultural traditions of education are brought into the debate that the notion of discarding lifeworlds to find a place in another society may seem too 'simple'. I do not focus on race in depth within my study, but I do ask questions about culture and the influence of cultural traditions within education as well as among relationships at school or university/college.

In his research and work on identity, Appiah (2005) questions the ability of an individual to leave their identity to adopt a new one, asking whether it is possible to 'extricate yourself from the context that confers meaning?' (Appiah, 2005, p.78). Habermas' categories for the lifeworld include 'culture' (Habermas, 1987), and as the PGCE students are individuals with different experiences, the concept of 'culture' needs to be reviewed because as stated earlier, the students have formed 'intercultural identities' as a result of their life decisions. Consequently, is it fair or right that I as the tutor expect the international students to adopt the western academic protocols and so engage in criticality, when they may already have an existing knowledge and understanding of criticality? Evidence of criticality is also what is expected from the university through the learning outcomes and standards, therefore I am bound by these educational and academic expectations. It might be the ethical thing to do as it is a foundational element of the course. However, it is

perhaps unethical for individuals to be told to abandon their prior ways of working; I consider whether there is a way of working in the 'spaces-in-between', and even creating lifeworlds that are specifically identifiable for each individual student.

In a study that examines the communication patterns between doctors and their patients, Barry et al (2001, p.487) describe the difficulties for both parties when either 'blocking or ignoring' the lifeworld. This occurs when the doctor chooses to continue communication in medical terms while the patient is explaining their circumstances through their lifeworld. The conclusion of their study seems to be that in either situation, less valuable medical care is provided, and the patients 'experience the ignoring of their lifeworlds as a painful threat to their identity' (Barry et al, 2001, p. 491).

The question can be asked of the international PGCE students – by ignoring their lifeworld or expecting them to accommodate to the new British academic lifeworld, are we denying them a voice in how they develop and understand the power of criticality? Or do they already have a sense of agency which they were unaware of, and which occurred instinctively, that can be shared openly in order to develop their critical analytical skills at the standard required for the PGCE? In a recent interview on the teaching of literature from different cultures, wa Thiong'o (2017) stressed the importance of cultures learning from each other rather than remaining as silos:

'When you crush hierarchy, ... then the cultures held in the different languages generate oxygen. They cross-fertilize. Cultures are able to breathe life into each other' (p. 4)

Students have an awareness and understanding of the academic expectations of an HE programme, and the students that I interview for this study are no exception. As wa Thiong'o states above, in order to enable lifeworlds and cultures to 'cross-fertilize', there needs to be space for this to occur so that the two lifeworlds can merge into a lifeworld that draws on aspects of both. This may be through creating the 'spaces-in-between', for which I outline a framework below.

A conceptual model of criticality

Framing my study as part of critical theory, and defining criticality from a critical thinking and a Freirean perspective enables me to examine the inherent power structures that exist in classrooms, and how individual students manage their roles and engage in praxis as they develop to become professional teachers in the UK. The complexities that reveal themselves within this framework are varied. I am looking at issues of critical thinking, power and emancipation, identity, culture and other aspects as I question the international PGCE students on their understanding of criticality. This is juxtaposed against Habermas' analysis of lifeworlds and the system. I am trying to consider an approach to developing criticality that enables the students to synthesise their previous educational experiences to a new system that Habermas states is perhaps too powerful, and because of which they may have to discard their previous lifeworld.

However, I believe that there is scope to develop the PGCE course structure to include a Freirean perspective that creates space for the students to reflect on their previous experiences and understanding of criticality, and how this was shaped during their studies. Following such an activity or session(s), the course structure may be adapted to take into account their prior knowledge and understanding to then apply to their PGCE studies. Freire's analysis of praxis can then perhaps lead to change in how the students manage the academic requirements of the PGCE, as well as their development as critically analytical and reflective teachers

In the diagram below, I outline a framework in which the two perspectives of criticality, the first based on critical thinking and the second on critical being, may lead into a development of and engagement with criticality. The framework allows for consideration of aspects of critical pedagogy based on Freire' analysis, while also considering the 'mechanics' of criticality as part of critical thinking.

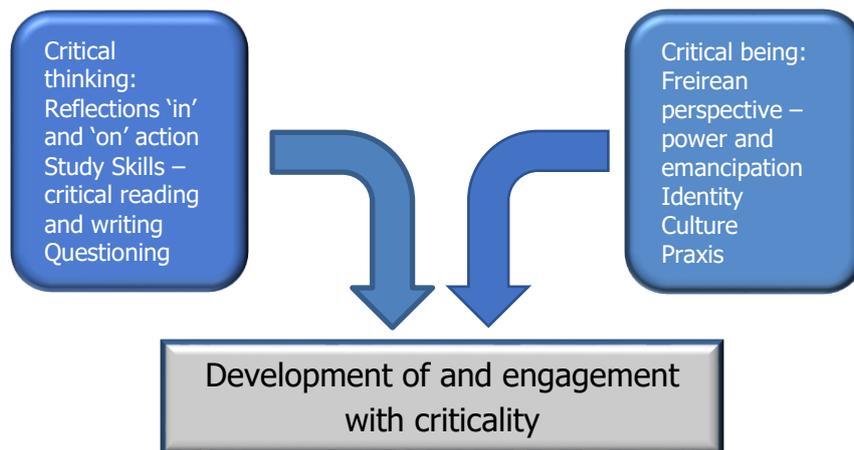


Figure 1 A framework for criticality

Starting with what may be familiar for the international students, which is outlined in the 'Critical thinking' section of Figure 1 above, they can practise their Study Skills and learn about reflection. The Study Skills aspect may be familiar to them if they have developed their language skills in their countries in preparation for further HE study in the UK. Reflection may be unfamiliar to many, but can be developed within the PGCE sessions and as part of their teaching practice and observations.

The 'Critical being' part may be unfamiliar and perhaps daunting for some students, however to develop a powerful sense of criticality (Freire, 1972), this may need to be considered within the context of the PGCE. Opportunities to include debates around 'critical being' need to be considered as highlighted within this framework.

In the next chapter, I outline my research design, focusing on the data collection method and the interpretation of the data. I use an interpretative phenomenological approach to analyse the data as this creates opportunities for me to ensure my findings are rooted in the individual student's experiences.

Chapter 3 – Research design and methodology

Introduction

Within this chapter, I outline my plan for the research design, referring to my research questions and how I attempt to answer them through my methodology and methods. After outlining my key questions, I consider the epistemological and ontological perspectives that are the foundations for my research design and various aspects of my study to consider how this all fits together. As I wish to understand the students' experiences in terms of where they saw their own positioning when asked to critically analyse pedagogy, and to fully and honestly develop a personal account, I selected a method which would enable this. Since I am not seeking generalisability and am looking in depth at individual students' educational backgrounds and life experiences, a qualitative approach was necessary.

My study – an overview and the research questions

For this study, I wished to research the process of criticality with which the international students engaged on the PGCE as a result of their varied life and educational experiences. The PGCE students are international students in terms of their educational and life experiences, however, they are British residents who made the decision to build their futures in England after having lived here for a number of years. My aim was to examine why and how the international students found criticality 'challenging', and whether their previous educational experiences could support them in their understanding of criticality. I was not seeking generalisability, rather the purpose in developing this research project was to gain insights which may be used beyond the period of research that impacted on how the course may be designed in the future. The research may also form the basis for a review of the course structure if the results deemed these actions to be necessary. Consequently, the questions that underpin this study are:

- What are the international students' educational experiences of criticality?
- What do the international students understand about notions of criticality?

- How do the international students' previous experiences and identities as students influence how they manage the academic expectations of the PGCE programme in terms of criticality?
- How do cultural differences impact on individual interpretations of criticality?

Philosophical underpinnings

In order to be able to gain insights into the research questions posed, analyse the concepts of lifeworlds (Habermas, 1987) and Freire's views around empowerment, it is essential that I, as the researcher, consider my philosophical position. Research is about generating new insights and knowledge, but what form this takes depends on my understanding of reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology).

By considering the notions of what is real (ontology) and notions of what forms of knowledge (epistemology) I hope to gain within my research, this can help me to move towards understanding the basic paradigm I follow in my study (Crotty, 1998). There are a number of ontological positions, but two of the most obvious, contrasting notions of ontology are those held through objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism understands reality as being external to humans, and contends that there is a single reality, hence it is sometimes known as realism (Gray, 2014). In contrast, a subjectivist approach, particularly within the social world, asserts that we are constantly creating our realities as they do not exist already. Therefore, there is perhaps more than one reality in the social world, and the realities in which we live are created in some way as a result of our own perceptions, desires, work, processes, experiences and so on. Within sciences and engineering, the notion that there are different types of realities does not fit because of the foci within the disciplines (Gray, 2014). Within social sciences, as subjectivists, we create the realities in which we live and there is no single immutable position, there are a whole series of positions and understandings of the social processes which we experience that create the realities (Schnelker, 2006).

Consequently, because my research is looking at people's experiences and perceptions relating to the nature of criticality, and each individual has been embedded within certain different social realities, s/he may not be coming from a

single ontological position experientially. Thus, because of the varied and complex nature of my research which centres on individual stories, perceptions and understandings of reality, my study is based on a form of subjectivism (Creswell, 2003).

Given this ontological position, my stance has to be that knowledge is provisional and contextual as reality shifts and changes as it is created through social processes. The epistemological basis of my research is one based on the notion of contextualised knowledge that is not generalisable because there are multiple realities. Therefore, within their different social environments, my participants' ontologies may be different, so the knowledge they bring with them is culturally, socially and experientially informed knowledge that may differ from each other's. Therefore, I am interested in people's lived experiences and their perceptions of these experiences, and am looking at the complexities this brings with it.

Since my study is about the participants' different perspectives and understandings of their reality, and the knowledge that their reality creates, I take an interpretivist approach to my research. The interpretivist approach I take accepts that the insights I can gain from the data that I collect is based upon experience, and does not attempt to find generalisability. Therefore, my study is not nomothetic, but rather an idiographic approach. As a consequence of this, I use an interpretivist lens to look at the experiences of a small number of people and take a phenomenological approach. Using a phenomenological approach ensures I am able to focus on research questions that focus on the students' experiences and understandings from their previous education (Willig, 2013) rather than asking directly how they made use of critical analysis during their PGCE studies.

Since I wish to examine the richness of experience that comes as a result of social action, this requires a thick description, rather than a large-scale study. I am looking at the multiple factors and complexities in which my students have lived and were now developing as they moved from one context of learning to another. My study is phenomenological and idiographic, and I consider the methodology I adopt to do this in the next section.

Methodology

My study is a small-scale phenomenological study of the long-term emergence of how the critical capacity develops. As it is a phenomenological study, I use interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to analyse the data. Because I want to capture the depth of my participants' experiences, my methodology is to use a life-story approach with semi-structured questions that enable the participants to talk as freely as possible about their educational experiences. I aim to use as few questions as possible because I want them to talk as openly and freely as possible. Within this section, I justify my choice of life stories, offer some information about the students I interviewed and outline the process of interviewing them for my study.

Life stories and life histories

My study places the individual students at the heart; I wanted a sense of their broader experiences of education which may have impacted on their development as critically analytical and reflective students and teachers. I wanted to find out how they came to crucial decisions in their lives that included evidence of criticality, such as moving to a different part of the world and starting a new life in unfamiliar surroundings. I wished to gain insight into their feelings and understandings as they navigated their roles as students and teachers, and life stories enabled me to dig deeper into their experiences:

'Stories allow us to bring together many layers of understandings about a person, about their culture, and about how they have created change in their lives' (Etherington and Don, 2008, p. 30)

It is clear from the above that stories may allow for an understanding of an individual's feelings and understandings as these interweave when they tell their life stories. Goodson's (2013) study of second-generation immigrants who returned to live in their families' countries of birth despite not being born there, noted the importance of the life story as a way of introducing how they lived their lives:

'it is how decisions made in the symbolic universe of a person's story actually feed through into actions in the real world' (Goodson, 2013, p. 7)

Thus, it seems that life stories allow individuals to reflect on their experiences and how other factors (culture, family, feelings and so on) enable them to create understandings of their lives.

Thus, life stories offer insight into an individual's experiences and how these may shape their life, as well as give the individual the opportunity to be heard (Atkinson, 1998). Alea (2018) states that life story interviews are effective in allowing participants to reflect on specific events in their lives and how they feel about these. Etherington and Don (2008) offer seven examples of life stories that highlight some of the issues former drug addicts faced when trying to overcome their habits. The stories seem to act as a form of therapy for all the participants who volunteered (in their own words), however the insight that the researchers found was illuminating in trying to understand how individuals cope with trauma and challenges in their lives.

Another well-known study using life stories is one by Wolcott (1983), an anthropologist. He wrote the life story of Brad which became controversial when Wolcott admitted to having a physical relationship with him while studying him. The life story became a broader debate about education in the wider sense as a result of the richness of the data that Wolcott uncovered when writing about Brad's life, despite the serious ethical issues that were clearly evident in his research. Thus, the life story uncovered much that is debated today among researchers about the state of education and society in general. It is also important to note that anthropologists discuss 'life history' more than 'life story'; Wolcott's (1983) final published work referred to 'life history' in the title, yet within the article he referred to Brad's 'life story' (1983, p.28) that offered insight into the role of education.

My aim in using life stories was to have some prepared semi-structured questions, but that I spoke as little as possible as I wished to hear their stories. One of the important factors about life stories I was aware of was that because people like to talk about themselves, some of the interviews I conduct may follow a meandering path because the interviews are about the individual's lived reality as they

experienced and remembered it (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). Therefore, I may hear stories from different 'identities'; the student talking of her/himself as a daughter/son, a pupil, a parent, an employee, a spouse, and it may be challenging to follow the stories from these different perspectives. This is an important aspect of IPA and consequently, I had to ensure the questions I asked, although as open-ended as possible (Atkinson, 1998), included asking about their educational experiences. Life stories can also unearth deep-seated negative feelings (Etherington and Don, 2008) as the individual recounts their experiences, which I also had to be conscious of during my preparation and conduction of the interviews. This, in turn, had ethical implications for my study and I had to consider this carefully during the planning stage, which I outline further in this chapter.

Life story and life history are used interchangeably by some researchers (Atkinson, 1998; Walker, 2005) and others state that life history moves on from a life story (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Goodson, 2013) as the life history interview offers a context for the life story. Frank (2000) highlights the fact that some research studies seeming to use a life history method are in actual fact collecting the life stories of the participants. Consequently, it is evident that a precise definition of life stories and life history is problematic.

Goodson (2013) believes that life stories are essential to gain insight into an individual's experiences, however the stories should be contextualised within a historical and cultural framework, thus becoming life histories which offer:

'an understanding of the times in which we live and the opportunity structures which allow us to story ourselves in particular ways and particular times'
(Goodson, 2013, p.6).

Within my study, I am using life stories in contrast to life histories because I want to find out how the students' experiences led to an emergence and development of criticality. Life stories allow them to talk about all aspects of their lives and how they felt at the time, including times when they may have felt uncertain. All of these are factors I consider in the development of criticality, which is why life stories may allow me to gain a deep insight into their experiences and feelings. If I focus on a

specific timeframe as Goodson (2013) suggests, I may limit their responses to their experiences of secondary education or the political situations in their countries at the time they were in school, for example. Life stories allow for a broader understanding of each individual student's many experiences and decision-making processes.

The interview process

Having made the decision to use life stories, I now outline the interview process and reasons for using semi-structured interviews. In order to gain a depth of understanding of the students' lived experiences and realities, it was clear that I had to be as flexible as possible in how I carried out the interviews, and the types of questions I asked (Smith, 1995). Semi-structured interviews are appropriate because they allow for this flexibility in how the students choose to respond. A semi-structured interview may also allow the students to have the space to follow their reflections of a particular experience or event if they wish to.

As this is a phenomenological study, I also needed to be aware of my role in the interview process. Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) refer to the qualitative interview within phenomenology as one that offers the interviewer 'a privileged access' (p. 4) into the participant's world, and that as I ask the questions, the participant and myself form a relationship in which we 'produce knowledge' (p. 17). Thus, I needed to be conscious of the power relationship between us and try to ensure the students felt open to sharing their stories with me. Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) continue by stressing that a semi-structured life story interview is one that is as similar to daily conversation as possible, while retaining a structure because there is a reason for the questions, and an approach that makes it different from daily conversation.

An additional aspect that I was also aware of was the fact that the students I interviewed were from different cultural backgrounds, therefore their responses may allude to this (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). There may be times when I ask a question that perhaps could be perceived as too direct, or they may be reluctant in responding because of the way the question is framed. However, as I am from a similar cultural background to some of the students, I was perhaps more aware of any potential cultural misunderstandings and able to frame my questions differently

if needed. Using semi-structured interviews may allow for the students to reflect and pause, and there may be silences. This is something I needed to remember as I carried out the interviews because silence in some environments may appear uncomfortable, and in this case, I may be tempted to jump in with another question. Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) emphasise the power of silence and the need to be culturally aware, stressing that active listening is vital for this process. The silence may allow time for pause and reflection, and further clarity may be offered after the silence.

Structured interviews is another possible method but I wanted the students to have the freedom to express themselves, and structured interviews may pre-empt the responses because I may have to select the themes before the interviews to direct the responses. As this a phenomenological study using IPA, researchers outline preferred methods such as diaries (written, videoed or audio-recorded) and semi-structured interviews (Willig, 2013), and case studies (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009). I chose semi-structured interviews because of the richness of the data I am able to collect, and opted for face-to-face interaction that helped with the cultural factors outlined earlier. Further in this chapter, I include examples of instances when the students felt comfortable to ask me questions about my background and culture.

As I was known to all the students as their PGCE tutor, the ethical implications were complex (which I examine in depth further in this chapter). I had to ensure that the interviews were conducted in such a way that the students had every opportunity to reflect and respond. I aimed to interview each student twice, leaving some time between each interview to allow me to transcribe their responses so that we could follow up on anything in the second interview. Transcribing the interviews and asking the students to read through these ensured each had the opportunity to verify their responses. I was able to clarify responses from the first interviews during the second interview, and email the second interview transcriptions to each student and ask for any comments. During this process, some took the opportunity to clarify their responses, but the majority were happy with what they had read and emailed me accordingly. Three students did not arrange a second interview (due to time, work and family constraints), therefore I had to rely on their email replies to the first

interviews, and use the data from these. The interviews took place at a mutually convenient time at the establishment we were based in (as students and tutor) where I was able to book a quiet room away from their usual place of study.

For the first interview, my questions were as open as possible, and also allowed for more probing if necessary. Below is a table of the questions, with some sub-questions underneath to ensure I tried to bring the focus on criticality:

<p>A. Can you tell me about your education?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back in (name of country)...? • And in England/UK?
<p>B. What was the classroom environment like in (name of country) ...?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many students in a class? • What was the teacher's role? • What did you do in class? • What was the relationship between students and teachers? • Did you have opportunities to question and clarify? • What did your parents do to help you with your achievements?
<p>C. When did you arrive in England/UK?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you study before the PGCE? • Where did you study? • What was that experience like? • How did this experience differ from that in (name of country)?
<p>D. How do you understand critical analysis?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where did you become aware of the importance of critical analysis? • How did your teachers and peers help you in understanding critical analysis?
<p>E. Do you think that critical analysis is interpreted differently in different countries/contexts?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How? • Why/why not?

Table 3.1: questions and sub-questions for the first interviews

The questions above are linked to my research questions in different ways. The questions in boxes D and E in Table 3.1 above directly link to the following research questions:

- What are the international students' educational experiences of criticality?
- What do the international students understand about notions of criticality?
- How does cultural difference impact on individual interpretations of criticality?

The questions in boxes B and C in Table 3.1 above are linked to my third research question:

- How do the international students' previous experiences and identities as students influence how they manage the academic expectations of the PGCE programme in terms of criticality?

In order to understand how the students interpret criticality on the PGCE, I needed to find out about their previous experiences in school and college or university in other countries. The questions in box A were a way of easing into the interview so the students could feel comfortable and answer easily before I posed questions that probed deeper into their experiences (see D and E in Table 3.1).

The second interviews were conducted at mutually convenient times in similar locations. There were several weeks gap between each interview because of the time to transcribe each interview, email it to each individual student and allow time for them to read the transcription and agree with or correct what I had transcribed. However, this was also potentially problematic. I was asking students to recall their experiences on the PGCE and their previous education in their other countries when time had lapsed. Their memories may have been hazy and perhaps unreliable. However, Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) recommend that I allow the students time to reflect, and if a question is potentially challenging, to include an example or context within which to frame the question, and so perhaps trigger their memories.

During this interview process, I also made use of double listening, an approach that is more familiar in counselling and therapy contexts (Lit, 2015; Guilfoyle, 2015). Double listening is a strategy where we listen for anything that is 'absent but implicit' (Freedman and Combs, 2009, p.355). To try to make sense and listen for what may be 'missing' from their responses, double listening enabled me to ask further questions and helped me to encourage the students to elaborate and open up their lives to me in order to build a form of understanding. Using some of the double

listening strategies may also lead to deeper insight. By listening to what was absent from the life story either during the interview or after, and perhaps reflecting on actions that did not seem to 'fit in' with the story as the student was telling it, there appeared to be more to uncover that warranted further questioning in subsequent interviews. This was something I noted during my pilot study which I discuss in the following sub-section. I did not know what was going to be revealed, so listening for what was 'hidden' allowed for deeper questioning. This enabled me to guide the interview to probe further or not, or to allow the student to withdraw if the feelings about the events in their lives were particularly overwhelming. I had to remain open and sensitive towards this possibility.

Reflections on changes made during the interview process

The pilot study revealed necessary changes I had to make to my own questioning style, the types of questions I asked and ensuring the student's voice was central to the process. I asked for a volunteer to participate in my pilot study and one student, Farai, readily agreed. Farai was originally from Zimbabwe and was raised in a family of teachers. To be able to meet the criteria for the PGCE, she had secured a voluntary placement within the FE college and continued to work for the NHS during her studies (for further details about her background, please see Table 3.3). It was apparent within the first few weeks of the course that Farai lacked confidence, and her written work lacked the critical depth required. During her first few observations by her mentor and myself as her tutor, she was unable to explain her approach to her teaching, and seemed to find it challenging; she believed that by planning meticulously, the students would listen and learn:

*'... And then like teaching was sort of like an option **[laughs]** I never realised how difficult it was, it's actually really difficult teaching. I thought it was just something that you know ... it's not! There's more to it It's not just about putting a colourful PowerPoint up, it's about learning something you want people to learn, it's not just show, presentation and stuff like that ...' (Farai, interview 2)*

On listening to the first interview with her, I realised that I was leading the interview, and her voice was in the background. In the second interview with her, I changed some questions and tried to let her speak more, but during the

transcription process, in my eagerness to give her a more prominent voice, the discussion centred on her children's school experiences in England, which were so different from her own in Zimbabwe. At another point during the second interview with her when I asked about the influence of her family as she developed an understanding of criticality, I sensed she became quiet, lowering her voice and leaving her answer unfinished. However, I still pushed her to reply, which I realised after the interview was an uncomfortable question for her. Double listening enabled me to understand that there may have been some emotional barrier to this question, however, my interviewing skills were also at fault; I kept trying to get a response from her. I also noted my own 'anxiety' about her silences to some of my questions and jumping in with other questions rather than giving her time to think. The pilot study taught me about my interview style, which I tried to remedy during the main study.

On listening to the first interviews with each student for my main study, I noted times when there were silences and hesitations, with the student attempting to explain a concept. This then allowed me to frame more specific questions that I hoped would enable me gain deeper insight for the second interviews:

You said in your last interview that , what did you mean by that? Could you say something more about
Can you tell me why you
What role does critical analysis play in your life today? How do you critically analyse now (having completed the course and now that you are working?)
When does critical analysis start (at what stage in our lives)?

Table 3.2: questions for the second interviews

These questions were framed to try and link criticality to the students' life decisions. If the students were able to reflect on their own personal life journeys, they may realise that they always had some knowledge and understanding of criticality. Ethically, this was challenging; I was possibly mis-interpreting what I had heard, and some of the questions needed further clarity.

However, I tried to ensure I spoke as little as possible in order to hear their voices. There were instances during the interviews where what was narrated had little relevance for my study; I was dealing with people and listening to their life stories and histories, therefore I needed to be sensitive to this. I was also aware that participants may have had views that I found contrary to my own beliefs and values, therefore I had to decide to what degree I gave latitude to these views and how I engaged with the students. In these instances, I remained quiet and listened while considering which direction to take the interview so that they were able to express themselves and also move on. It must also be stated that I did not ask all the questions in Tables 3.1 and 3.2; if the student was happy to talk, I stayed quiet. The questions in Table 3.1 were used as a guide as I conducted the interviews; I did not ask each question, neither did I follow the order of the questions. As I wanted to focus on their life stories, the questions were prompts if I needed them. The students were encouraged to speak freely, and if they did so, I let the interview flow. I tried to interject as little as possible so that I heard their stories (Atkinson, 1998). At the same time, I tried to track the questions I had asked so that I could direct the interview more if appropriate, although I also realised some of the questions merged into each other at times.

Goodson (2013, p. 125) warned of 'armchair elaborators' who retell the same events fluently but with little opportunity to move forward, as well as 'multiple describers' who retell their lives with little reflection. Finally, he warns of 'scripted describers' (p.127) who recount their stories as facts and do not see the need for breaking the routine of their lives. A few of the students may have fallen into one of these categories and I needed to probe further with my questions. Alim was an example of a 'multiple describer'; he told me of the events in his life but with little evidence of reflection on the impact (see Chapter 4).

Consequently, there was a 'saturation' point (Bowen, 2008, p. 140; Diniz-Pereira, 2008, p. 396) where no new information revealed itself, thus ending the interview, even though I tried to interview each student twice. This plan too did not go as I had wanted it to. I was only able to interview seven of the ten participants twice because the remaining three never replied to my email requests for second

interviews (see Table 3.3). Of the ten students, one moved away after graduating so the second interview had to be conducted via Skype with the recorder placed at the side. There were some connection problems so the second interview had to be shortened, but this is the reality of doing qualitative research of this kind.

Interviewing is a complex process; my pilot study revealed my lack of experience in how I framed the questions, the interview did not seem to flow as well and this was due to my inexperience as an interviewer, an error that Smith and Osborn (2015) highlight as familiar in students of IPA. There were times when I asked questions too quickly rather than giving the student time to reflect on their responses. I also found I allowed the responses to flow, thinking that I would return to a point later, and forgetting to do this. Waiting for the silences was another issue I had; I tried to cover the silences as it felt uncomfortable. I had to learn to accept the length of the silences even if they became awkward.

Nevertheless, I believe semi-structured interviews was the most appropriate format for me to enter the students' worlds, despite the fact I had too much data to manage at the end of the interview cycles. I was also reliant on the students' commitment to the process (Smith and Osborn, 2015), which may not have been as focused as mine. However, in order to gain access to their lives, this format allowed the students more opportunity to go into different experiences of their own lives beyond the scope of the questions.

The students

The students I chose to interview were selected from the PGCE groups I was teaching at the time of the interviews, or those who had recently completed the programme and were subsequently successfully employed as teachers in England. Each student shared similar life experiences as s/he had emigrated to the UK when adults with their families and so their educational experiences were from a broad geographical area. In addition, the majority of the students interviewed initially 'struggled' with aspects of critical analysis as demanded on the PGCE which is the focus of my study, and I wanted to find out why, particularly as all of them had studied at HE level previously either in their home countries or in the UK. The evidence of the 'struggle' came from their submitted written work and following

tutorials in which each had the lack of criticality highlighted as an aspect to develop. The structure of this PGCE course has always offered opportunities to those with 'vocational' expertise as well as 'academic' qualifications, therefore each cohort I have taught included a diverse range of students in terms of backgrounds, qualifications, experiences, skills, ages and so on. I am aware of the potential difficulties of dividing 'vocational' and 'academic' in this way, however as this was an ITE programme, students had to evidence a minimum level of 'academic' qualifications to be accepted onto the programme (see Chapter 1), and their vocational qualifications formed part of their entry qualifications.

I wanted to focus on the international students who had 'academic' qualifications (some also had vocational qualifications – see Table 3.3) yet felt unsure about their own abilities on the PGCE despite the fact that they had experience of studying at HE level either from their countries of birth or in the UK. I decided to ask students who fulfilled the criteria below to volunteer, and proceeded with those that agreed to participate:

- had moved to the UK as adults
- had been educated in other countries before embarking on the ITE programme in the UK
- had initially 'struggled' with the concept of critical analysis as was evidenced in their written work and during class discussions and tutorials (see Chapter 1 for further detail of course structure)

Opportunity sampling in this way is useful as it allows for quick and relatively easy access to interviewees who meet the criteria (Gray, 2018). However, it may also lead to bias because I am only focussing on the criteria, and so I am in danger of surmising that all international students find criticality to be challenging. It also does not give the depth of insight required; instead of examining the lived experiences of the students, I focus on the fact the students found criticality challenging which leads to inconclusive and biased results (Richards, 2015). I realised this after I had conducted interviews with five students, the responses seemed to be similar and this was not the premise of IPA. Smith, Flowers et al (2009, p. 55) remind the IPA researcher to show 'willingness to enter into, and respond to, the participant's

world', and I reflected that I was not finding the layers within the student's experiences. Richards (2015) states that as a study develops, the data that the researcher seeks may also change, and this is why I chose to broaden my selection of students to interview and used purposive sampling to interview Dorina from Bulgaria (see Table 3.3).

I gained a deeper and perhaps more nuanced understanding of the impact of individuals' previous educational experiences in an 'unfamiliar' context by purposively selecting Dorina as she had been able to manage the demands of the programme outcomes with confidence and incisiveness. Her work was always critically reflective and analytical, she continuously questioned her own teaching approaches and was unafraid to voice her opinions to add to the pedagogical debate in class. The other students were less vocal and their written work initially lacked the depth of criticality required. I wanted to compare Dorina's views with those of the other students who may have been emotional in their responses as they saw the fact they 'struggled' as a sign that they were 'failures' academically (Willig, 2013). I was aware that my own positionality as their tutor also played a part in the way the students responded to my questions, and the way I interpreted their responses. I examine this further in the 'positionality' section further in this chapter.

For practical reasons, selecting students from the students I was teaching at the time was useful as they had had time to reflect on their submitted work and feedback from observations as part of the course requirements, but this was not part of the selection criteria. All students were asked to complete consent forms to ensure they knew what the study was about (an example of a partially completed form is in Appendix A). The table below offers some information about the students who agreed to be interviewed. All names have been changed to ensure anonymity:

Name	Age range	Gender	Personal details	Previous education	Previous academic qualifications	Teaching context	No. of times interviewed
Farai (<i>pilot study</i>)	25-30	F	Married, 2 children	Zimbabwe, England	Degree	FE college; travel and tourism	2
Priya	35-40	F	Widow, 1 child	India	Degree	Charity enterprise; IT	2
Ling	25-30	F	Married, 1 child	China, England	Master's degree (<i>PhD candidate at time of interviews</i>)	Private classes; Mandarin	2
Daniel	35-40	M	Married, 2 children	Zimbabwe, England	Degree	Private college; Business	2
Daisy	40-45	F	Married, 2 children	Zimbabwe, England	Master's degree	FE college; ESOL	1
Meenakshi	35-40	F	Married, 2 children	India	Master's degree	FE college; Maths	2
Alim	45-50	M	Married, 3 children	Bangladesh Cyprus	Degree	FE college; Maths	2
Isra	25-30	F	Married, 1 child	Somalia, Netherlands, England, Egypt	Degree	VI form college; business and economics	1
Dorina	35-40	F	Married, 1 child	Bulgaria	Degree	FE college; English	2
George	40-45	M	Married, 3 children	Zimbabwe, England	Master's degree	FE college; ESOL	2
Raabiya	35-40	F	Married, 2 children	Tanzania, Wales, England	Master's degree (<i>PhD candidate at time of interview</i>)	After school classes; English and Maths	1

Table 3.3: student-participant information

All of the students were working in a variety of sectors while studying for the PGCE, such as care workers in the NHS to administrative roles in financial or private sectors, and each had ambitions to teach in the UK which was the reason they had enrolled onto the programme. As outlined in Chapter 1, this was common for all of the PGCE students since this was a part-time course that enabled the students to continue earning while studying. Each student I interviewed was committed to their

own professional development, juggling many personal and professional roles to complete the course. They taught a range of subjects and were active in gaining experience of teaching in different sectors to fully understand the education system in England. As the majority were parents, they were familiar with early years and primary, and some had completed undergraduate or postgraduate degrees, thus they were familiar with HE structures. Some were familiar with FE having enrolled onto English language courses for a brief period of time on first arriving in the UK, but for the majority, FE was an unfamiliar sector. From this sample, it was evident that each student had diverse experiences, but each had spent some years studying in other countries and was trying to navigate their personal UK HE journey to realise their ambitions.

Following my pilot study, I decided to select ten students as this would give me sufficient data to gain insight into how students' previous educational experiences may have impacted their progress on the PGCE in terms of criticality. All of the students were new to teaching in the UK but some had had experience of teaching in other countries (see Table 3.3). Smith, Flowers et al (2009, p.51) recommend a number between 'three and six' because there is opportunity to consider the participants' experiences in depth without feeling there is too much data to work with. However, I decided to interview more because the students had volunteered and I wanted to hear their stories, and because I felt my inexperience with IPA led to a need to include students such as Dorina.

Below, I have constructed vignettes to describe the students and offer some insight into their personalities and life experiences briefly. I wanted to capture a sense of their personalities because it allowed me to really know the students' motivations and ambitions. I wanted their voices to be heard, and this seemed to be the most appropriate way to give background to their experiences and perhaps 'hear' them.

Vignettes

Meenakshi

Meenakshi is married with two children at primary school. She moved to England in 2008 with her husband and both children were born here. She qualified in India with a BSc followed by an MSc in

Engineering and taught at a University before leaving to settle in England. After unsuccessfully applying for numerous roles within education, she finally found employment in an insurance company. Her ambition was always to return to teaching so after five years doing administrative roles, she enrolled on the PGCE and secured some voluntary teaching at the FE college teaching Maths to adults in the evening.

She was forced to defer in the first year for health reasons and returned the following year to successfully complete the programme, and found part-time paid teaching in the institution's Engineering department, which ultimately led to a full-time post a year after qualifying. At the time of the interviews, she had been in post as a full-time Engineering lecturer for three years.

Priya

Priya is a widow with one child at secondary school. After qualifying in India in Civil Engineering, she decided she wanted to work with computers and found work as a programmer/network engineer. While working, she did her Master's level qualification in Computer Science (MCSC) and continued working in this field till marriage and her subsequent move to England. She found work in England as a programmer.

The death of her husband led to some life changes for her. She found voluntary teaching hours at a local charity for the elderly, teaching them basic Computing skills and enrolled on the PGCE. The charity took her on as a part-time tutor while still on the PGCE as her mentor was impressed with her commitment. On completion of the programme, she searched for opportunities in FE with no success. She decided to do supply teaching and was happy to do this at the time of the interviews as it suited her parental responsibilities.

Raabiya

Raabiya is married with two children at secondary school. She graduated from Tanzania with a BA in Sociology and moved to the UK in 2001 with her family. She settled in Wales for a few years to do her Master's in Law as her mother attended the same University.

The family moved to Leicester and she continued to work in casual employment while studying and then found a full-time post with a bank, moving up the ranks to become a research analyst. While working there, she completed another Master's in Youth and Community Development. Her supervisor suggested she study for a PhD, so while she was on the PGCE, she was also a PhD student at another HEI.

Her interest in teaching came about through some voluntary work she did with the bank. To enrol on the PGCE, she secured some voluntary teaching hours at an after-school charity for young adult asylum-seekers and refugees. During the time of my interview with her, she had successfully completed the PGCE and was preparing for her viva while working as a researcher at the HEI she was a PhD student in.

George

George is married with three children. He came from Zimbabwe as a refugee and continued with his undergraduate degree as a long-distance student through a religious ministry based in London. Due to the civil war in Zimbabwe and financial difficulties, his education was interrupted and he completed his BA in stages. He worked as a teacher in Zimbabwe and had ambitions to do so in England, and tried to enrol onto the PGCE several times before succeeding. He took on casual, temporary work while studying and after graduating with an MA in ELT, he started the PGCE on securing voluntary teaching hours at the college teaching ESOL to adults. Within a few months, the department employed him as a part-time tutor, and by the end of the PGCE, he was also working at a local University as a student support tutor.

Daniel

Daniel arrived from Zimbabwe as a refugee. Despite the challenges of living through a civil war, he succeeded in qualifying as a teacher and knew he wanted to work in education in England. He was taken on as a volunteer teacher by a small, private college to teach Business to international students. This helped to ensure he had a place on the PGCE. Married with two children, he worked in casual, temporary roles while studying, and had also volunteered at a secondary school to understand the education system in England. At the time of the second interview, he was employed as a part-time tutor at the private college while studying, doing casual, temping work, and was thinking about enrolling on a full-time ITE course to teach in the secondary sector.

Ling

Ling arrived in England from China as an international MA student. Following this, she worked at a Chinese publishing company and after marriage, she moved to be with her husband and used this opportunity to change the direction of her career. During the PGCE, she was teaching Mandarin at a college in London commuting twice a week, and gave private 1:1 lessons to young Chinese students. Because of the PGCE requirements, she set up small group classes for adults wanting to learn Mandarin at a local community centre. At the time of the second interview, she was in the process of completing her corrections following her PhD viva, and was teaching Mandarin part-time at a school having recently given birth to her first child.

Daisy

Daisy arrived in England from Zimbabwe with her husband and two sons as a refugee. She had qualified as a teacher in Zimbabwe, and knew she wanted to teach in England. She volunteered at a primary school and decided against teaching in the compulsory sector because of the behavioural challenges she saw. When she started on the PGCE, she was in the final year of her MA in ELT, and was teaching part-time at the HEI. She applied for and was successful in securing a part-time teaching role at the college, teaching ESOL to young adults.

Alim

Alim is married with three children. Originally from Bangladesh, he arrived in England from Cyprus with a degree and some teaching experience. He began a Master's in Engineering, but had to leave

the course due to financial difficulties. He was then offered a fully funded PhD place at the same HEI on the strength of his previous qualifications, and during this time, he got married. Due to the changes in his personal life he found a permanent, full-time job as an engineer in another city. The family moved back following the birth of their second child, and Alim decided to set up a private international college. Due to government restrictions, he was forced to close the college after a number of years, and went into supply teaching. He enrolled on the PGCE and taught Maths at the college. At the time of the second interview, he was employed as a part-time Maths tutor at the college and an HEI, and was thinking about the possibility of setting up his own business again.

Isra

Born in Somalia, Isra moved with her mother and siblings from Holland as a young teenager. She successfully completed her undergraduate degree from a local HEI and moved to Egypt where her sister lived to start her MA. After 3 months, she returned to England and started work as a trainee accountant at a small firm before deciding to go into teaching after marriage and the birth of her child. She worked at a small enterprise teaching young, disadvantaged adults before the company lost its funding and was forced to close. To do the PGCE, she contacted her tutor at her VI form college, who offered her some voluntary teaching hours. After volunteering for a few months, the college employed her as a part-time tutor, and at the time of the interview, she had been offered a permanent part-time position at the college.

Dorina

Dorina arrived in England from Bulgaria following her first marriage. She was a fully qualified teacher in Bulgaria, and also managed a holiday resort during the summers. On arriving in England, she continued to work at the resort and found a position at a national utilities company, where she was promoted to manage a team and train new staff. She knew she wanted to continue teaching so found voluntary teaching hours at a charity while studying for the PGCE. At the time of the second interview, she had moved south due to her husband's promotion, and was working as a supply teacher while taking care of her young child.

I now explain IPA as a process for data analysis before detailing the way I analysed the data using the principles of IPA.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

IPA allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences as part of a qualitative study of a phenomenon. Primarily used within the study of psychology, particularly within the field of medical psychology, (Finlay, 2011; Smith, Jarman et al, 1999) because of its focus on an individual participant's insight into an episode rather than the act itself, IPA is slowly gaining traction among qualitative researchers

from other disciplines who are looking for an approach that offers a reflective analysis of a participant's experiences following detailed interviews that result in rich data. Some examples of these include Patel, Tarrant et al (2015) who use IPA in their study of medical students' perceptions of failure, and Cope (2011) who examines failure within the field of entrepreneurship.

The fact that IPA is gaining some followers across the wider field of education is also noteworthy (Pipere and Micule, 2014; Symeonides and Childs, 2015; Wang, Li et al, 2016). This is partly because IPA allows the participant to express how they make sense of the world around them, and consequently, the phenomenon as they experienced it at the time. Smith, Flowers et al (2009) welcome the fact that IPA as a methodological and analytical approach is crossing into non-psychology disciplines because as they state, IPA 'takes us to a focus on people engaging with the world' (p. 5). They view psychology as having a role to play across disciplines, and so it seems that IPA can be used within education. My study was about the lived experiences of students and how they navigated their PGCE journeys, therefore psychological aspects of their experiences were important.

Rooted in phenomenology, IPA is also idiographic and findings are interpreted through double hermeneutics which I outline further. The phenomenon that I focused on, understanding what criticality meant for students who have been educated in other countries revealed layers of complexity the more I interviewed the students. The 'lived experience' that I asked them about was much more than a descriptive account of their lives and educational experiences; it was about

'an unfurling of perspectives and meanings, which are unique to the person's embodied and situated relationship to the world' (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009, p,21).

Husserl defined phenomenology as the study of the lived experience in its truest sense (Willig, 2013). He suggests the researcher leaves their own experiences to one side, "**bracket**' past/theoretical knowledge' (Finlay, 2011, p.45) because:

'their personal intellectual baggage might distort the description of the phenomenon' (Finlay, 2011, p. 45).

Husserl stated that understanding a phenomenon involves introspection that allows the participant to reflect on their own perceptions of the phenomenon as well as the object of the perception, which he referred to as 'intentionality' (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009). By examining this challenge, Husserl argues that we are being true to the 'essence' and the participants' real experiences (Finlay, 2011). Researchers who follow Husserl's view contend that the lived experience is how we can describe the world; the actions of an individual are of paramount importance and must not be impeded by prior views and theoretical observations from the researcher (van Manen, 1990). The researcher should also not be concerned with interpretation (van Manen, 1990) but focus on the lived experience of the participant as it is through consciousness of the participant's actions that we can learn about others' experiences (Hopkins, Regehr et al, 2017; Finlay, 2011; van Manen, 1990). Husserl referred to the 'intentionality' (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009, p.13) in the consciousness of the individual and the object that participants have experienced:

'... we are concerned with examining subjective experience, but that is always the subjective experience of 'something'' (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009, p.33).

In my study, the 'intentionality' was my students' perceptions of their experiences of understanding criticality as part of the PGCE, and the act of critical understanding is the object.

Finlay (2011) warns against a simplistic notion of 'bracketing' that infers objectivity; she states that Husserl's view is one of being aware of our own subjectivity and putting this aside so that we can focus solely on the participant's actual experiences. Thus, we are aware of our subjectivity but we put this in brackets as a mathematician does with formulae, which enables us to examine in depth the participants' experiences. Giorgi (1997, p.244) strongly advocates the need to put to one side our own knowledge and theory of a phenomenon in order to describe it and:

'...to be fully present to the concrete instance of the phenomenon as presented by the subject's description'.

However, Heidegger, a controversial figure and contemporary of Husserl's, takes this view further. Heidegger posits that it is essential that the researcher is aware of her/his own experiences as part of the hermeneutic cycle (Hopkins, Regehr et al, 2017; Finlay, 2011). Therefore, rather than bracket our experiences, we should be fully aware that:

'our perspectives are constructed by the world we live in; and at the same time, we shape and transform these perspectives' (Hopkins, Regehr et al, 2017, p. 22).

Consequently, we should view our understanding of the experience as advantageous as it allows for deeper layers of understanding. When analysing a participant's experiences, we may question our initial understanding and form a different understanding during the reflexive process of the hermeneutic cycle (Finlay, 2011).

In Heidegger's definition of phenomenology, our existence and relationships with others and the world around leads to meaning, which he termed as 'Dasein' (Davis, 2014). Description and interpretation are core to Heidegger (Davis, 2014), and so for him, bracketing experiences to get to the 'core' omits the 'pre-existing world of people and objects, language and culture' (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009, p.17). An ontological perspective which includes the researcher's own experiences takes into account their relationship with others in the world, and was perhaps the most appropriate definition I used in my study.

My interviews focussed on questioning of the students' prior experiences of education, beginning at any stage they wished to (primary, secondary, as adults). This open questioning was so that I could encourage a 'detailed exploration of personal meaning and lived experience' (Smith and Osborn, 2015, p.25) as an attempt to enable the students to start to think about their education and learning from a familiar context. This included questioning their relationship with their peers and teachers, as well as familial connections.

Critics of IPA state that the small sample size is contentious as we are focussing on the experiences of a select few. However, IPA is about the lived experiences of individuals and I was not seeking generalisability, which Smith, Flowers et al (2009)

argue can be reached but in a different way. They contend that by examining others' experiences which are potentially so different from our own, we can reach some kind of 'universal' (p.31) because we are trying to reach an understanding of their experiences by using our own experiences in how we may deal with a situation. Thus, another's experience can help us to understand how we reach certain decisions, bridging the differences that seem to exist.

Willig (2013) also argues that IPA may be limited because of the notion that language brings the experience to life; we must be aware that in IPA, the language used by the participants is just a perception of that experience and another time, the experience may be described using different language. Willig's argument that 'language can never really give expression to experience' (2013, p. 94) is valid, however, because of the double hermeneutics aspect of IPA, the lived experienced of the individual is analysed through the language as we focus on how the individual makes sense of their lives.

Idiography

Using IPA to analyse an individual's lived experiences, it is idiographic in that generalisability is not the prime focus; rather it is the study of the individual's words as they interpret their experiences within their context. In depth analysis of each individual interview can lead to a linking of the main themes that may emerge, and a conclusion may be reached as I develop on the analysis from each interview. I am not starting with specific insights; rather I may gather insights through analysis of the themes that may be common across the interviews. As Smith, Flowers et al (2009, p.38) state:

'In a good IPA study, it should be possible to parse the account both for shared themes, and for the distinctive voices and variations on those themes'.

This is what makes IPA distinctive; each individual participant's voice may be heard among the themes that can emerge in my analysis. Using a small sample of 10 students, I analysed each interview in turn and then attempted to find some commonalities across the interviews, whilst also retaining the richness of the individual stories and unique insights. The individual human experiences were the

starting point of my analysis rather than a group experience, which is not what IPA is about. Finlay (2011) refers to the 'layers' of interpretations IPA allows as a result of following such an iterative process.

It may be argued that taking each individual participant's experiences and analysing these is lengthy and perhaps time-consuming, however as I am interested in the individual stories, I am adopting an ontological perspective that there are multiple realities; the students' realities are contextual and located within cultures of different scales and within social interactions. When referring to cultures of different scales, I refer to the fact that the students' educational experiences held different values dependent on the context; studying in China and studying in England required a different mindset as the requirements to be a successful student in each of these countries were distinctly different. It is these complexities that enabled me to gain some understanding of their lived experiences. Thus, the idiographic approach I adopted infers that:

'the world is a complex place where ... common patterns of experience or behaviour are never expressed in predictable or uniform ways' (Willig, 2013, p.110)

As my questions focussed on the students' interpretations of criticality:

- What do the students understand about notions of criticality?

were I to have adopted a nomothetic approach, it may be that I would have not have had any insight into the individual participant's thinking processes. My study was examining the individual lived experiences of each student that agreed to participate, and the complexities of these that Willig (2013) refers to above.

Smith, Jarman et al (1999) remind us that IPA is dependent on the researcher's interpretation of the participant's life as they tell it, and that we should start with one interview before looking for themes across all the interviews. This is an extension of Husserl's view of phenomenology as the study of 'universal, unchanging and absolute features' (Hopkins, Regehr et al, 2017). Husserl advocates searching

for the similarities in phenomena that can be applied to individuals across different circumstances (Hopkins, Regehr et al, 2017), thus making the study nomothetic. IPA focuses on the individual experiences of specific participants within a given context (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009); in my study, each student had diverse experiences of education that have impacted their learning as their lives took new directions; these 'layers' offer much for me to reflect on.

As with other forms of qualitative research, this is time-consuming, however the individual participant is the focus in IPA, rather than the common themes (although there is a search for commonality in themes in IPA). Smith, Jarman et al (1999) cite the examples of two patients who describe the same illness each suffers from in very different ways. This makes it an idiographic study, and it was why I chose to use IPA; the students I interviewed had all been through education systems but their experiences were different, and this then impacted their PGCE studies in their understanding and development of criticality in a British HE context. The epistemological and ontological understanding emerged from their life stories and their experiences.

Hermeneutics

The final aspect of IPA is hermeneutics, the interpretation of the participants' response. Since I aimed to go beyond a descriptive account, hermeneutics, which is rooted in the study and interpretation of theological manuscripts (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009) played a crucial part. I asked each student to recall past experiences of their education, and their interactions with others in this. Such a recall is part of an interpretative cycle where the student is involved in interpreting their own experiences as 'they present themselves' (Smith and Osborn, 2015, p.25). Based on the work of Heidegger (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009), as the participant recounts and interprets their own experiences, other interpretations may be reached which are initially hidden. Thus, through the act of focussing on the phenomenon (in my case, the way the students interpreted criticality), I was attempting to 'uncover' the phenomenon as it revealed itself.

In addition to the students interpreting their own experiences (surface and hidden) within their own environment (Finlay, 2011), the researcher is bringing their own interpretation to the study. Thus, as I was analysing the interviews with each student, I had to be conscious of the fact that I was part of the analysis as I was interpreting the data through my own experiences and perspective. I was listening to the student interpreting their own experiences and in turn, making some sense of this through my own interpretation of what I heard, a 'double hermeneutics' (Smith, Flowers et al, 2011, p. 36), which was based on my own experiences. When analysing the interviews, Smith, Flowers et al (2009) stress the importance of returning to the data, that is, the actual words spoken by each student, while I as the researcher attempted to gain a sense of understanding of the student's lived experiences. Smith, Flowers et al (2009, p.36) state that a study using IPA effectively is 'empathic *and* questioning'. Thus, I may attempt to see things from the student's perspective to be 'empathic', and refer to my own experiences to do this, yet I also must attempt to remain external in the process in order to be 'questioning'.

An aspect of hermeneutics that has helped and was equally challenging in my analysis was focussing on the parts and the whole at the same time. The hermeneutic cycle examines the relationship between the exact words and how they are used, and moving between the two as described in Smith, Flowers et al (2009, p. 28):

<i>The part</i>	<i>The whole</i>
The single word	The sentence in which the word is embedded
The single extract	The complete text
The particular text	The complete oeuvre
The interview	The research project
The single episode	The complete life

Using IPA has allowed me to analyse each interview at a word level, and also at text level so that I was able to not only focus on the choice of words, but how the word fitted into the whole. This iterative approach is in line with Heidegger's definition of Dasein that I have defined earlier.

Smith (2007) made reference to the relationship between the interviewer (myself) and the participant (the students I interviewed), reminding us that the whole process is also cyclical, but also needs to take into account how I as the interviewer have changed as a result. The student has told me of her/his experiences, and I listened to these while remaining open to the fact that I had my own experiences and knowledge that I tried to put to the side. At the end of the interview, I read the text while being aware of my own experiences (which I had tried to put to the side while conducting the interview), but with a different lens as I have received new knowledge about the student as s/he has told me her/his story (Smith, 2007).

Analysing the data – step by step

As with much qualitative analysis, IPA has steps that are recommended when analysing the data, however there is room for some flexibility in how this occurs (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009). The crucial factor is that the participant's experiences are the focus and there is an interpretative process that allows for a new understanding to emerge. As a student of IPA, and new to this form of analysis, I found Smith, Flowers et al's (2009) suggested steps useful.

I transcribed each interview, highlighting lengthier pauses and expressions/words that were stressed when I believed it may have revealed something about the student's experiences. Initially, I read and re-read the transcripts and each interview was analysed line by line. On each re-reading, I looked at a different focus from one of the exploratory themes below, adapted from Smith, Flowers et al (2009):

- descriptive – what was the participant describing about their experiences?
- linguistic – how has the participant used language (tone, tenses, phrases)?
- conceptual - what was s/he trying to say or what was missing from their retelling?

As I was making the notes using different colours for each exploratory theme outlined above, I listened to the recordings to hear the voices of the individuals which helped with my annotations and ensured that I was immersed in the individual's accounts. Hearing the voices particularly helped with the linguistic

theme, although this theme was perhaps not as revelatory as the other themes. The initial notes I made were broad, particularly when I focused on the descriptive as the students were vocal in how they described events in their lives. Of particular significance was the conceptual theme, which included a form of interpretation (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009) and involved my own pre-conceptions and knowledge that were in turn shaped by the participant's lived experience through their interviews. Smith, Flowers et al recommend that:

'it may be helpful to draw upon your own perceptions and understandings, in order to sound out the meaning of key events and processes for your participants' (2009, p. 89).

The next step was to look for emergent themes from the coding that I had created as above, using my notes to do this rather than returning to the original transcript. This step involved further interpretation from me, a 'synergistic process of description and interpretation' (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009, p. 92). This step was challenging for me because I was unsure whether I was interpreting what the students wanted to express, that is, was I reading too much into the notes I had made? In order to try and overcome this, I returned to the original transcripts to ensure I was able to hear the participant's words. Willig (2013) reminds us that at this stage, the IPA researcher must highlight the experience of the participant, rather than merely describing an event. For examples of this, please see Appendix B.

Following this, the emergent themes needed to be grouped together to create a structure of sorts (Willig, 2013) and form a 'super-ordinate theme' (Smith, Flowers et al, 2013, p. 96). I looked for similarities in the themes, which Smith, Flowers et al (2009, p. 96) refer to as 'abstraction'. I did this by highlighting in a different colour the themes that were similar either in the feelings expressed, or in the actual description of the experiences.

I also noted there were differences in the emergent themes, which I highlighted within the super-ordinate themes as 'polarization' (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009, p.97). An example of this was clear under the super-ordinate theme of 'Relationships' in which I identified 'teachers' as a sub-theme. Several students talked about the negative

impact of their teachers in primary and secondary school, but a small number spoke with great fondness about their teachers. In addition, I noted how many times certain aspects were stressed, 'numeration' (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009, p. 98), because this inferred the importance the participants placed on particular aspects that I had coded during the exploratory stage. However, as Willig (2013) reminds us, the frequency of a theme may not necessarily be a sign of its importance as sometimes, something uttered once may hold great significance. For an example, please see Appendix C.

I did this with each transcript in turn, which took time, but allowed me to really focus on the experiences of the participants. Smith, Flowers et al (2009) reiterate that at this stage, it is important to be open to new themes that may emerge from each transcript, rather than being influenced completely by the previous transcript analysis. I then made use of post-its to write each super-ordinate theme and look for patterns across each of the coding of super-ordinate themes across the transcripts. At this stage, some of the themes merged and some were removed, and this is part of the process of analysis. Smith, Flowers et al (2009, p. 101) state that an indication of a good IPA study is one that:

'has this dual quality – pointing to ways in which participants represent unique idiosyncratic instances but also shared higher order qualities'.

These super-ordinate themes were placed within a large table with the sub-themes that emerged under each, and extracts from the interviews to illustrate the themes (as an example, please see appendix D). Again, at this stage, I was cautious as I did not want to dismiss the experiences of the individual students and I was perhaps more focussed on the descriptive themes, which Smith, Flowers et al (2009) state is something that students of IPA are guilty of. However, because I had a large amount of data as I had interviewed ten students, I wanted to ensure their experiences were part of the super-ordinate and sub-themes. Smith, Flowers et al (2009) recommend highlighting how often the super-ordinate themes occur across the interviews, and also state that there are no guidelines as to how often a theme must recur; it is essential to be practical and meet the objectives of the study, which in my case is part of my thesis.

In an attempt to avoid being too descriptive, Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) recommend focusing on identifying a smaller number of themes because this tends to 'represent a more thorough and synthesised analysis' (p. 757). I tried to keep the super-ordinate themes to three but this was a challenge. This may have been because I was focusing on the descriptive rather than reflecting on the lived experiences of the students.

Below I list the steps I took for this analysis using IPA as suggested by Smith, Flowers et al (2009):

Steps for data analysis:

1. transcribe each interview
2. read each transcript and highlight first exploratory theme (descriptive) in one colour. My choice was **purple**
3. read each transcript and highlight second exploratory theme (linguistic) in a second colour. My choice was **pink**
4. read each transcript and highlight third exploratory theme (conceptual) in a third colour. My choice was **green**. At this stage I am interpreting the data

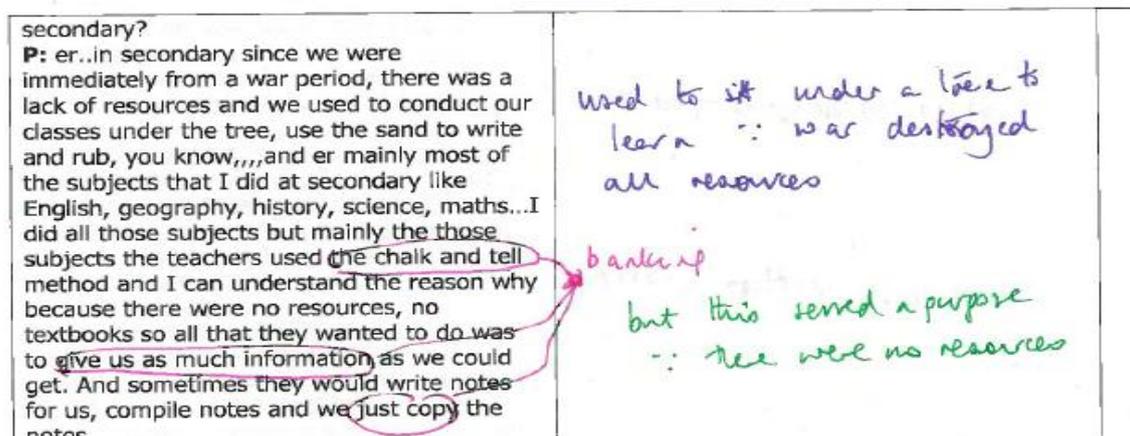


Figure 2 showing steps 2-4 of IPA

5. start to group the exploratory themes into emergent themes for each interview. At this stage, I continue to interpret the data and exploratory themes I identify
6. group emergent themes that connect together to form super-ordinate themes for each transcript. Create a table with the super-ordinate theme and sub-themes under

each super-ordinate theme. Include line numbers and some key words from the transcript as a reminder. Repeat this step for each transcript

7. place the tables with super-ordinate themes from step 6 onto a large surface and highlight themes that cross all the transcripts. I used post-its to write each super-ordinate theme for each transcript, and looked for connections
8. merge or remove some super-ordinate themes
9. identify 3 super-ordinate themes across all the transcripts
10. final step – identify 3 sub-themes under each super-ordinate theme with extracts from the interviews that may be used when writing the analysis

As a result of this clearly defined process, the researcher is able to firmly place the analysis in each individual life experience, thus giving each participant a voice.

Positionality

A potentially conflicting aspect of my study was that of my position in the study. The students who agreed to participate in this study were known to me; I was either their tutor on the PGCE programme or I had interacted with them in some form as they studied on the programme (one was the student rep and attended meetings where I was also present).

Initially, I chose students I had taught who seemed to hesitate when asked to participate in group discussions, and whose written work included a series of references to pedagogy with little evidence of analysis. Following one to one tutorials with each student after their first PGCE submissions, it was apparent their understanding of the reading they had selected was clear and detailed, yet this was not reflected in their writing. They demonstrated their ability to critically analyse during these 1:1 discussions, thus it was evident they had an understanding of the expectations around criticality. However, this was not transferred into their writing as expected through the course criteria. As the PGCE was a two-year programme, I was able to sit with each student regularly and question their understanding. This gradually led to an increase in confidence which could be observed in their teaching and interactions with their peers in class, as well as in their written work.

Questioning students who had a range of understanding of criticality enabled me to gain rich data of diverse lived experiences to examine. Personally knowing the students was perhaps ethically 'risky', especially as a few of the students and I shared a common cultural background. It may be that I was too close to the students' own experiences and therefore biased in my findings. The students also may have been careful in how they responded to my questions by wanting to tell me what they thought I wanted to hear, or perhaps leaving out some pertinent aspects of their experiences. However, I also knew that they were willing to participate because of the relationship we had, they wanted to volunteer. This gave me some confidence that they were open and honest with me. IPA is potentially problematic because of the double hermeneutics aspect, and this was something I was conscious of in my analysis.

Giorgi believes that IPA lacks the objectivity required to ensure the analysis is valid and reliable because of the double hermeneutics aspect when the researcher's prior knowledge and experience are key to analyse the rich data provided by the participant (Smith and Osborn, 2015). This means that the results from an IPA study can never be replicated because of the hermeneutic approach it advocates (Giorgi, 2011). However, Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) believe that IPA is valuable because it moves beyond the descriptive that Giorgi (2011) writes about, into the interpretative, and so in some way, IPA may be more honest. They believe that as human beings, we are trying to bring some form of meaning through interpretation into aspects of our lives, thus moving beyond description and isolating our pre-conceptions of the phenomenon as advocated by Husserl.

Consequently, we should view our understanding of the experience as advantageous as it allows for deeper layers of understanding. When analysing a participant's experiences, we may question our initial understanding and form a different understanding during the reflexive process of the hermeneutic cycle (Finlay, 2011). It is essential that during this process, I return to the hermeneutic cycle and the words of the participants.

The possible concern for any researcher of phenomenology is how to be 'objective' and also reflexive (Hopkins, Regehr et al, 2017), which Finlay (2008, p.3) refers to

as a 'dialectical dance'. Finlay (2008) recommends distancing myself from my 'pre-understandings' in order to be critically reflexive, and then to form 'new' or revised understandings as I interpret the students' interviews. This was a challenge when I immersed myself in the data because I knew the students and some of their past histories that led to their arrival in the UK.

As I was not seeking generalisability, I was fully aware of the 'dialectical dance' (Finlay, 2008, p.3); I wished to find out about each student's lived experience and their interpretation of this to understand how each negotiated the academic demands of the PGCE. Osler (1997) argues that sharing similarities can be advantageous in the interview process, despite the 'dangers' of bias and assumption. As she states in her own research of black teachers:

'... I cannot disregard shared experiences or meanings, or adopt a neutral position' (Osler, 1997, p. 69)

Taylor (2011) writes extensively on insider research focusing on queer identities and culture, and consequently highlights many of the advantages of insider research. These include the ability to quickly form a close relationship based on mutual trust between the participant and the researcher, as well as ease of communication. She contrasts data collected from participants who are not aware of her personal views and identity as:

'sketchy ..., leaving out much of the detail, often talking in the third person, and making reference to the activities of others ... rather than their own experiences' (Taylor, 2011, p. 12)

whereas those participants who know her and her politics offer her more insight and depth (Taylor, 2011). She values insider research for these reasons and because it offers her insight into a community and culture that she is a part of, with participants more willing to offer their views more openly.

Nevertheless, there are issues with insider research that need to be examined. Some of these include the power relationship between the participant and researcher, which is complex in qualitative research, potential confusion over the role switch

(from being a member of the community to researching it) and perhaps even personality conflicts due to mistrust (Taylor, 2011). Bennett (2003) also highlights that participants may take specific incidents in their lives as part of 'the norm', so may not elaborate on the details. To counter this, he stresses the need for the researcher to be open and communicate clearly their role in the research process. Merton (1972) highlights the dangers of ascribing researcher characteristics/ identities to participants' characteristics/ identities: 'you have to be one in order to understand one' (p. 15). He posits that insider research can be limiting as the belief that a researcher has special insight into a participant's experiences through their shared characteristics, identities or backgrounds, which is the premise of Taylor's (2011) paper, is highly contestable. His conclusion asks insider and outsider researchers to unite in their search for insight and/or knowledge about their fields of study because there is much each can learn from the other. Wilson's (1974) study of race and sociology reaches a similar conclusion; when examining research into race relations, there is much to debate and discover, and focusing on insider/outsider arguments can divert attention away from the study itself.

However, there are multiple studies that highlight the benefits of insider research particularly within the study of race. Beoku-Betts (1994), Keval (2009) which I outline in some depth further in this chapter, and Zinn (1979) highlight some of the advantages of insider research. These include access to specific communities (Beoku-Betts, 1994; Keval, 2009), a shared understanding of particular behaviours (Zinn, 1979) which may be open to misinterpretation by an outsider researcher, and perhaps more importantly, a sense that participants may be open to exploitation by some outsider researchers (Beoku-Betts, 1994; Zinn, 1979).

Within my study, as I was not focusing only on race, my position and background offered me access to the students' experiences. As I was still working as a teacher educator during the time of the interviews, I was aware of the demands of the PGCE and had an understanding of the pressures students felt to complete the programme successfully. However, this is not to state that I had an understanding of their intimate worlds; my knowledge was focused on their experiences as emigrants who

ad vastly different home lives and educational experiences, some of which I was familiar with having experienced similar.

My own experiences were similar to that of my students'; I was born in and spent my formative years in another country before moving to England, although I was a child when my parents decided to move. I had to learn how to study and form connections with teachers and peers at school and then in higher education, and manage my home life which was quite different to that of my white friends. I could therefore relate to my students' experiences and understand their sense of 'fear' in participating in class discussions, despite their evident understanding of pedagogy and criticality; I knew that sense of not belonging and therefore remaining quiet, and looking to the teacher for direction. I had to navigate my experiences and attempt to step back as a researcher when interviewing the students, although I also had to factor in my role as their former tutor. At times, they tried to bring me into the interview by asking me how I dealt with speaking a different language at home, and meeting the academic demands of a HE programme. I tried to answer as briefly as possible, while returning the focus back to their experiences and acknowledging the potential challenges they spoke of. However, there were a few occasions where some of the students and I shared our experiences because we come from similar cultures and/or countries. This did enable a more open conversation about our upbringing and values around pedagogy which added an insight to their experiences that may have taken longer to unearth (Taylor, 2011).

Despite this, I also needed to ensure I stepped back into the text of the students' interviews and used their own words to reach meanings. Being familiar with some background factors allowed me some flexibility in the questions I asked, yet it was the student's experience and idiographic aspect that ensured I remained rooted in the IPA process. In order to avoid bias, I had to ensure I was reflexive, and also conscious of my own subjectivity. Finlay (2011, p. 23) values the subjective nature of analysis because 'the researcher ... [is] fully engaged, involved, interested in and open to what may appear'.

Hopkins, Regehr et al (2017, p.23) refer to this self-awareness on the researcher's part as 'pre-understandings' and encourage the need to be aware of the

'influence of one's pre-understandings to foster an attitude of openness to learning about participants' experiences'

Through double listening, I was conscious of this, particularly as some of the students tried to draw me into reflecting on my own experiences as a student learning within a different culture and trying to find my place in a new country. At times, it seemed appropriate to share these, but ensuring the focus was back on the students' stories. It may be that some of the students were able to share with me stories because of our previous student-tutor relationship; they trusted me to know I would listen and maintain confidentiality as a professional and as their former tutor.

Brocki and Wearden (2006) warn that because of the double hermeneutics aspect of IPA, different researchers may reach findings from the data analysis that vary. In addition, as my data set was comparatively small, it may have been that finding common themes was subject to my own interpretations, which were subjective due to my own position as a tutor and researcher. In order to try and avoid this, I had to ensure I returned to the interview transcripts and to the students themselves if necessary. It was their experiences that I was interested in, thus clarification was sought from their own words through the transcripts.

IPA seemed to be the most appropriate for my study because of my search for the students' 'truths'. This formed part of the Freirean perspective of criticality because of the need to stress the students' sense of agency; to begin with the students' experiences in the way they approach criticality, which has been analysed in depth within the Literature Review chapter.

Reflexivity and ethical stance

Having gained ethical approval from the University following their guidelines (see Appendix E), I needed to consider ethics from a different stance; as the former tutor of the students who agreed to participate in my study.

As all the participants were adults, they chose to participate if they wished to; one former student refused due to lack of time. All of the participants were promised anonymity and confidentiality, and assured that if they wished to withdraw consent

at any point during the process, this would not be an issue. Smith, Flowers et al (2009) remind us that confidentiality cannot be fully guaranteed within IPA because the participants' comments are cited within the analysis, however, all references to names and places are anonymised in my study to try and ensure confidentiality.

My intention was to interview each participant twice, however, in reality this did not happen with all. Three of the participants did not reply to my requests for a second interview and I had to work with their responses from the first interview. Another participant moved away between the first and second interviews so the second interview was conducted over Skype, and recorded at the same time. I ensured I emailed all the transcripts to the participants and requested they correct anything in the transcripts that they felt was a misrepresentation on my part. All of the recordings have been kept securely and I have sole access to them.

In addition, I considered how I dealt with issues of a potentially sensitive nature since I was immersed in the participants' life stories. This was a complex position for me; I was their tutor and I had knowledge of certain incidents in their lives that had impacted their progress on the PGCE at some point, yet these incidents were not mentioned during the course of the interviews I carried out. I had to respect the students' wishes and choices, and I ensured I made no mention of these during the interviews. The added complexity was my relationship with the students as their former tutor or their tutor at the time of interview. Power came into play; I was aware that perhaps the students agreed to participate because of a sense of loyalty they felt towards me, and subsequently I questioned whether they were honest in their responses. Consequently, reflexivity is essential to ensure that I remained 'accountable' for my study (King and Horrocks, 2010, p. 133). I had to follow the students' lead in my interactions with them; if they expressed something, this was their lived experience so I tried to frame the questions to elicit an honest a response as possible.

Finlay (2011) reminds us that we must be aware of the power we as researchers have in the interview process, especially in my case when I was the former tutor of

the students who I interviewed. However, she also states that the participants equally hold power in the way the interview moves forward:

'Participants control the agenda too and they can claim power, for instance, acting in a passive aggressive way' (Finlay, 2011, p.222).

Although I did not experience this, I was in the hands of the students in terms of timings and responses; three of them did not offer me the opportunity for a second interview so I had to work with the data I had already collected.

Many researchers have stated that the relationship between themselves and their study is one that is 'intimate' in many ways (Ladson-Billings, 2014; hooks, 2013) as they are writing about areas of significance for themselves, thus adopting a specific stance. It followed, therefore, that as I was familiar with my participants' backgrounds and held a position of power as their tutor, I remained continuously reflexive.

In his study of type 2 diabetics from the Hindu Gujarati community in the UK, Keval (2009) termed the relationship with his participants as a process of 'cultural validations' (p. 216), in which language, culture, identity, age, gender, migratory experiences all play a part:

'... instead of a polarised view of identity or status, it is through tensions in dialogue, communication and contexts that relationships exist. The tensions ... can be called cultural validations for they are representative of neither complete acceptance or complete rejection' (Keval, 2009, p. 217)

Being familiar with some of his participants through familial connections, history and/or language gained him further access and perhaps enabled the participants to open up more because of this familiarity. In this case, reflexivity was clearly essential to ensure that he remained as 'objective' as possible.

Within my study, a few of the participants also made attempts to 'connect' with me; asking how I learnt English after moving to the UK and referring to similar cultural experiences such as the position of power that grandparents, parents and teachers

held when in school. If I had not responded to these questions, I may have interrupted the 'flow' of the interview and perhaps the student may not have responded in the depth s/he did. King and Horrocks (2010) warn of the dangers of sharing too much of myself as the interviewer, while also emphasising the need to be continually reflexive; my contributions should add to the interview rather than be a detailed account of my personal experiences. The researcher needs to be aware that they are co-constructing experiences with the participants, which is essential for IPA (King and Horrocks, 2010; Smith, Flowers et al, 2009). Therefore, it was essential that at each point I returned to the students' experiences and their words and was continually reflecting and reflexive during the process and the analysis.

Campillo, Sáez et al (2014) write about the importance of ethics in education and refer to the work of Foucault. They differentiate between an 'ethic of the professions' and an 'ethic of educational practice' (p. 6). In the former, they refer to the ethical position that is the norm within the educational profession in terms of conduct and following codes of practice. With the latter, they use Foucault's work on ethics, which he stated must be specific to the situation and context:

'This meant inquiring into the practices of the self – the means by which individuals achieve self-understanding' (Campillo, Sáez et al, 2014, p. 6)

Therefore, ethically, Foucault states it is essential to consider our interactions with others as worthy of reflection and understanding (Campillo, Sáez et al, 2014).

Fletcher's (1966) study of situational ethics places the individual at the heart of any situation, and although his work is based on Christianity and religious contexts, his main argument that actions may be justified if love was the reason may be applied to my study. This is not to say that the relationship between my students is based on love. Rather, it follows that instead of viewing ethics as fixed and determined, I take my relationship with the students, and my understanding of their experiences to maintain an ethical position. My relationship with the students could not be ignored or put to the side, rather, I considered what was important for them and how they told their stories.

Validity and trustworthiness

Validity is a further criticism for qualitative research, and Yardley (2015) stresses the importance of trying to ensure qualitative research is sound and holds value, while allowing for creativity in the process. She highlights various aspects that may ensure validity, including triangulation and asking several researchers to compare the coding. This was not possible for me as I carried out semi-structured interviews with my students, and I was the only one to code the data.

Yardley (2015) does highlight other ways to ensure validity that are applicable to IPA. These include 'sensitivity to context' (p.265), which at the analysis stage is about being open to:

'alternative interpretations and recognised complexities and inconsistencies in the participants' talk' (p. 266)

As the PGCE tutor, I had in depth understanding of the teaching context, as well as the contexts the students were teaching in. I also had an awareness of some of their background contexts, such as the cultural contexts they were raised in, and the educational expectations within these cultures. IPA encourages consideration of context in the individual life stories, and also locating the stories within wider literature, which I have tried to do in the Literature Review.

Yardley (2015) also writes about:

'commitment and rigour' (p.266)

'coherence and transparency' (p.267) and

'impact and importance' (p.268)

I demonstrate commitment to the process through the interviews I conducted with the students following the IPA steps, and continuously reflecting on and developing my interview skills throughout this process. The data that has been generated is rich and offers insight into themes highlighted as part of the IPA process, thus rigour is evidenced, not through the number of students I interviewed, but through the

quality of the data collected from the carefully conducted interviews (Yardley, 2015; Smith, Flowers et al, 2009).

Coherence and transparency refers to the links between the philosophical underpinnings, my research questions and the way the study takes shape, including the use of IPA as a way to analyse the data. This leads into the clarity of my study and ensuring a reader can follow the methods I have used and why (Yardley, 2015). I have tried to be clear about the students I have chosen to interview, and the way data was collected, all of which is essential to be transparent (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009).

The final aspect Yardley (2015) highlights is about the importance of the study in building on what is already known to perhaps change practice, policy or theoretical understanding. Smith, Flowers et al (2009) suggest that for all qualitative researchers, this is the case, and also an ambition that those using IPA should aim for. IPA researchers focus on rich, nuanced data from a small number of individuals' life stories, and this can leave an impact on communities and the wider society, as can be evidenced through the examples cited at the beginning of the section on IPA within this chapter.

King and Horrocks (2010) suggest that qualitative research that includes 'thick description' of the phenomenon and the research process offers the study validity. By outlining in depth the participants' experiences and being transparent about how the study has been co-constructed (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009), the researcher is able to include details of how the analysis and coding were carried out which they state is an 'audit trail' (King and Horrocks, 2010, p. 165) to evidence validity.

Returning to Giorgi's (1997) study of phenomenology, he posits that validity is rooted in the presumption that it exists, which he argues is debatable when phenomenology is based on subjectivity. Thus, he maintains that we should be focused on determining the validity of the description of an experience, and not the interpretation. Within my study, I shared the interview transcripts with all the participants, and offered to share my analysis and findings with them. Thus, I tried

to evidence validity of their lived experiences by being open and clear, ensuring authenticity and accuracy.

All of these factors include a commitment to analyse the data thoughtfully, an ability to follow clearly how the data was collected and analysed with appropriate extracts from the interviews included, and an indication how the data may be applied to a context to reveal deeper understanding (Yardley, 2015). It may also be argued that as I tried to interview each student twice, I was able to clarify my analysis if necessary.

Vicary, Young et al (2017) argue for the use of a reflective journal to ensure validity, which is perhaps supported by Smith (2011), who stresses the importance of transparency in the analysis so that every step is clearly detailed. Although I did not keep a 'formal' journal, I kept detailed notes and comments as I went through each transcript. In addition, as I was not seeking generalisability, I tried to remain close to the students' stories, and considered the above factors during the whole process.

In the following chapter, I offer some insight into the students' responses through the findings and the subsequent analysis of these findings to form a discussion of my data. I refer back to the Literature Review to frame my analysis within the definitions of criticality that I have outlined in that chapter to reach some form of conclusion. The conclusion is based on my original research questions that I have outlined in this study.

Chapter 4 – Findings and Discussion

Introduction

Having outlined the principles of IPA and why I selected this approach to explore the students' lived experiences, I now examine their contributions to this study in an attempt to consider how the PGCE structure may be adapted to enable students to reflect on their previous experiences and apply their understanding of criticality to a new context (that of the PGCE course). I begin with an overview of the students' definitions of criticality that they offered during the interviews which allowed me to probe further. The question I posed links to the questions in box D of Table 3.1 in Chapter 3. Asking these questions enabled me to gain an insight into how the students interpreted criticality during their PGCE studies, and then continue by asking them how they developed this understanding of criticality. This helped to lead to an identification of the students' lived experiences and views into three super-ordinate themes, and within each of these, I ascribed sub-themes. As I read the transcripts repeatedly, highlighting and bracketing themes, I discovered new aspects in individual stories which gave me a deeper insight into the complexities of criticality. The super-ordinate themes I highlight focus on how the students viewed themselves, their relationships with others in their educational journeys, and the influence of cultural traditions as they developed criticality.

Following identification and analysis of themes, I consider what this infers for students on the PGCE. I also refer back to my original research questions to consider whether the themes that have been highlighted has led to some degree of clarity on how individual students interpret criticality and whether I have other questions that need to be considered further beyond the scope of this study. This may then lead me to consider whether the current design of the PGCE allows for students' understanding and interpretations of criticality to be shared and further developed.

The students' understanding of criticality

Before I start to analyse the themes, I highlight some students' responses to my question about how they understand criticality. Some of these responses are from the first interview with the student, and some from the second. This is because if

students were explaining their educational journeys and incidents, I did not wish to interrupt them, particularly as I had selected life stories as part of my methodology.

As is evident from the responses, there were some similarities among the students. There were clear links made to the importance of reading for Daniel, Priya, Meenakshi and Ling, with Alim referring to the writing process as evidence of criticality:

'critical analysis...my understanding is whereby not just like maybe if I'm reading a book, I've got to actually analyse and maybe not just accept what someone's opinions are ... maybe try and examine what it is they are saying before accepting everything. ... So make up your point of view by taking ideas from different textbooks' (Daniel, interview 1)

'you know, like given a topic, you have to think about that on how ... what are your thoughts about it? Not like if you've just read something and you just put down those things, but you have to think about it thoroughly and you have to ... you have to have your own thoughts about it ...' (Priya, interview 1)

Lengthy silence following the question, then *'I think reading a topic and reading through different people's opinion you know from their mind, what they are thi.. thought about it is' (Meenakshi, interview 2)*

'critical analysis ... without everything. You need to develop your own thoughts. ... read more material, read more books and see other people's different opinions, yeah, and also you need to have your own opinion' (Ling, interview 1)

'.. the first time I encountered critical analysis of course when I was err when I was running my own college I had to do a lot of writing, but the proper one I guess in the PGCE. ... it's weighing in you know, you do a bit of research on a certain topic and basically you know try and stay as neutral as possible ...' (Alim, interview 1)

Meenakshi's lengthy silence above suggests she may have found it challenging to actually define criticality, therefore I tried to ask her different questions. From the above, it seems that the students' focus on reading, writing and research skills enabled them to gain different views before reaching their own conclusions. This led to identification of aspects in their personalities and lives which I have grouped into super-ordinate and sub-themes.

Alim's initial response hinted at a subject divide of some sort, which he did not elaborate on, and then referred to evidence of criticality rather than trying to define it, which perhaps indicated whether he understood the process, or whether he was trying to make light of the question:

'to be honest I'm not sure if I still understand that because err my degree is in mathematics, we didn't have to do any critical analysis' [laughs] (Alim, interview 1)

Isra and George stressed the impact of developing criticality for their own lives in everything they do, with Isra referring to the changes in how she saw herself, and George citing an example from cooking:

'... I always had to critically analyse assignments but I never really gave it much thought. ... now ...I sort of see it differently. I see it as being more beneficial for ME personally It's helped me to basically really emmm I don't know, see my weaknesses sort of or my strength with a different lens. I'm able to judge myself' (Isra)

'I think errr ... you cannot escape from being critical ... but what I can say is probably the levels of being critical differ. ... You need to be critical .. and when you're cooking, you are reasoning, you are thinking about what you're doing, your ingredients and you are also trying new things, you have got to be innovative' (George, interview 2)

Daniel and Daisy focus on the thinking aspect of criticality, in which they suggest that the process of thinking through a question or theory allows for further insight. This seems to suggest a 'forensic investigation' in which all the facts are gathered, and then considered from all angles:

'I think when one is critical, they begin to sort of you know ... it forces them to think a little bit rather than just taking things just as they are. They think dee ... any information they get, they want to think deeply about it ...' (Daniel, interview 2)

'Critical analysis is, it means you take something, you question it and say, well, what about this way, what about that way in order to come up with maybe your own understanding of what you think about that' (Daisy)

In all the responses, there were pauses and some repetitions which may suggest the students were reflecting on the question and trying to reach some sort of clarity for themselves. The struggle in defining criticality revealed the interconnectivity between experiences and feelings; as the students told me their life stories, they recounted the events and their feelings which left an impact in their lives. When developing criticality, or attempting to understand the role it had in the students' development as teachers, there were numerous affective reactions that may have impacted how the students engaged in criticality. Thus, the super-ordinate themes I have highlighted refer to their stories and how they felt, which then impacted how they developed criticality. As I examine the super-ordinate and sub-themes in more

depth below, I have attempted to consider their life events and feelings, and how these have impacted their understanding and development of criticality.

The themes

Below is a table that highlights the super-ordinate themes and sub-themes that I have identified following my analysis of all the transcripts:

Super-ordinate themes	Sub-themes
Perceptions of the self	Confidence, self-determination, motivation Personal circumstances, experiences Agency, lack of opportunity
Relationships	Teachers Family, peers Context
Culture/tradition	Educational practices and 'norms' Resources and environment Expectations from self and others

Table 4.1: super-ordinate and sub-themes

Although the themes have been grouped together to try and understand the similarity in concepts among the participants, it was also essential I remained open to each participant's individual contributions of their lived experiences (Smith and Osborn 2015). As the students developed an understanding of criticality, some shared similar experiences in their life stories that impacted this understanding. At the same time, there were nuances in their stories that needed consideration, and I attempted to capture these individual experiences in the analysis. Such a dual approach was important as I listened to their life stories.

Super-ordinate theme 1 – 'Perceptions of the self'

Each individual made reference to aspects of their personalities when I asked them to reflect on how they reached certain decisions in their lives. For the majority, this came in response to my questions about their move to the UK and their experiences of education when asked to compare between the different systems they had been through. Some reflections also came in response to my questions about their

understanding of criticality. Their perceptions of themselves added insight into how each managed their progress on the PGCE when faced with the academic demands as outlined in the Introduction (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2 for course details). I now examine the sub-themes highlighted within the super-ordinate theme.

Confidence, self-determination, motivation

I had selected the majority of the participants based on their apparent lack of understanding of criticality as conceptualised on the PGCE. When I questioned them about their educational experiences and how they interpreted criticality as a result of these experiences, each made reference to aspects of their personalities that ensured they did not give up despite the challenges each believed they faced in developing criticality.

During the interviews, students made reference to events in their lives that had impacted their confidence, self-determination and motivation, and how they felt at the time. These narratives were either about the students' lack of confidence, or their determination to develop confidence to succeed in their lives. Some of these incidents occurred in the distant past, and some made reference to the PGCE:

'I had a lot of problems like in class because in primary school I was given a nickname like 'masarira' which means 'he who lags behind'. So you see the teacher would make fun of me, and all that, and my confidence was being knocked down, but somehow I would say to myself that despite all this, I wanted to prove myself and I want to have a good future and I want to really be somebody in life, you know' (George, interview 1)

'...Sometimes whereby you're really thinking oh god, if I ask a question, he's going to ridicule me or the other students will laugh at me. So those fears were like really ...like teachers did not address and they were playing on me as a student' (Daniel, interview 1)

'... we really asked questions but you had to think carefully and you know it's like something playing on your mind saying oh god, is this a clever question or am I gonna get myself embarrassed!' (Daniel, interview 1)

'Look at me, I still got some stress which I can't really shake off ... I mean just like addressing authority' (Daniel, interview 1)

These extracts recount George and Daniel's experiences of growing up and attending school in Zimbabwe where questioning was not encouraged by teachers. Both George and Daniel had aspirations to teach in England as they had qualified as

teachers in Zimbabwe and wished to pursue their careers in this profession. Despite all the challenges they faced having lived through a civil war, arriving as asylum seekers in England, lack of finances and working long shifts in factories, each continued their education in England through part-time, distance learning courses and had registered on the PGCE with Master's degrees. Yet, despite their successes, George still remembered how he felt in school on being labelled 'slow', and Daniel believed the anxiety he felt in school, particularly when he wanted to ask questions in class to clarify any misunderstanding, had left him feeling unable to address his tutors or mentors by their first names (as is the norm in England).

George too remembered how his former colleagues in Zimbabwe laughed at him when he studied independently for his A levels:

'my fellow teachers would come and stand by the windows and say I'm crazy, I'm going nuts' (George, interview 1)

This incident occurred after he succeeded in securing a teaching assistant position in Zimbabwe on passing his O levels after the civil war. He recorded material from A level textbooks to listen to on his two-hour commute to and from school, and stayed behind after class, teaching what he had learnt to an empty room. Thus, it was clear that his feelings of being labelled were in his memory, and had left an impression many years later.

An additional aspect that is notable in the first extract from George is his use of tenses. He began in the past tense describing his schooldays, but by the end he switched to the present tense. This suggests that perhaps George believes he still has something to achieve and will continue on this path. His varied experiences have led him to develop a strong will and self-determination to realise his ambitions, which he hopes to do by achieving a PhD.

Priya and Meenakshi, like George and Daniel, began the PGCE with a high levels of discipline expertise, however, both appeared to lack confidence in their own abilities:

'oh, my first assignment as you know...I really struggled because I didn't know where to start, how to write, what to write (laughs). Yeah I really struggled but then you know...' (Priya, interview 1)

'yeah but after I got referral then I thought you know something is not right. In my

whole academic career I haven't got anything referred back to me and it was like a shock to me that I'm completely doing something wrong' (Priya, interview 1)

At this stage on the PGCE, she felt extremely low about her progress:

'I was really shocked, depressed, I was thinking whether I can do this or not because I started doing this ... learning after how many years' (Priya, interview 1)

Meenakshi lacked the confidence to participate in class:

'When we used to have group discussion, and when I had to do my assignments that's where I really struggled. When we had group discussions, I wouldn't you know put my thinking forward. ... And even if somebody would just put me on the spot, I would just go blank because I didn't know what to talk. And then always that hesitation feeling ... whether what you're talking is right or wrong or ... are you talking it in the right manner' (Meenakshi, interview 1)

'... But when you're in a PGCE class, you are amongst a group of different people, coming from different cultural background. I think as a group the ... you know the learners probably weigh you in terms of how your behaviour and involvement is in the class as well and they probably can't make their own judgement about you, isn't it, and they can stop you from talking' (Meenakshi, interview 2)

'and another thing is the difficulty there is in understanding what is expected from you, you know, in that discussion' (Meenakshi, interview 2)

Priya's affective reactions left an impact on her and it took time to adjust to a new way of studying, but for Meenakshi, the lack of confidence she experienced seemed to stem from others' responses to her as can be seen on the above extracts. In the second extract above, she refers to terms that highlight that she felt she was being measured, and even lacking in certain qualities: *'weigh you; make their own judgement; stop you'* and she seemed to infer that her progress on the PGCE was impeded because she felt she was being judged.

This was different from George; he knew teachers and colleagues mocked him, and yet he continued to follow his own path and like Daniel, succeeded in gaining two degrees in England before enrolling on the PGCE:

'So I was so much fired and I was so much encouraged and enthused, I told myself that I've got a dream' (George, interview 1)

Despite some of the students feeling they had little confidence in their ability to contribute to the PGCE, they remained on the programme and successfully completed it to then secure employment as teachers in the sector. All of the

students commented on the changes they experienced either after studying in England or after completing the PGCE. During the interviews, it seemed they had had some time to reflect on their journeys, they expressed a new perspective:

'... it made me confident. Anything I didn't understand I never actually you know spent time restructuring my questions' (Daniel, interview 1)

'oh no, all those fears have gone now! Now I ... now anytime I can, anything I don't understand, confidently I ask and I don't even think about it!' (Daniel, interview 2)

'...I believe that you know a fool for the moment is better than a fool forever because you can be a fool while you're asking for the moment, but then you'll be wiser because you get the answers ... that's the kind of thing that motivated me anyway' (George, interview 2)

Even though Priya talked about her lack of confidence in the first interview, it appeared she had reflected on her journey and attributed this to a 'mental blockage' of some sort:

'...if I do my PGCE now, I'll do it totally different way than when I did it ... you know like before it used to be like I was ... err ... my mind was blocked. I was thinking it's blocked and whatever is inside is right, yeah, but now I'm thinking no, I need ... whatever is outside, I have to be really open and I have to accept what is coming from outside and I have learnt from that' (Priya, interview 2)

Her determination to succeed led her to seek the advice of peers and family members, as well as myself as her tutor to help her with her PGCE work. It could be argued that her levels of confidence increased at various stages but from the extracts, she believed she did not have anything to contribute in class. However, she did not give up; she continued on the PGCE and successfully completed with clear evidence of her ability to critically analyse in her work and practice. As Priya stated in her second interview, her approach to the PGCE would be quite different as her confidence had increased. Her 'mental blockage' at the time she was on the PGCE was a result of her personal circumstances, and which impacted her progress and understanding of criticality as required on the PGCE.

It was clear in the interviews with George and Priya the motivation each had; Priya mentioned her daughter frequently during the interviews and it may be that she had learnt to be critical from her as well. She spoke of her daughter's incessant questions about events in their life that demanded justification (I examine this

further within the second super-ordinate theme '**relationships**'). George's motivation was his own need to succeed, and he was quietly reflective throughout his interviews about his need to question and clarify (see earlier extract). He questioned to seek clarity, he took risks in the classroom and he listened and reflected. His initial written work on the PGCE lacked analytical depth and his teaching followed a pattern he had been used to from Zimbabwe; read or write notes on the board from a book, ask the students to copy and test them the following lesson. On the PGCE, during tutorials and in class, he listened, asked questions and reflected on his learning. He observed other, more experienced teachers, and was willing to try new approaches and be self-critical in his reflections. He remained determined and quietly confident that he would succeed in developing into a critically reflective teacher.

Meenakshi's confidence had increased since she had been working as an Engineering lecturer:

'... but since I'm working now so that err... assurance is becoming more and more now' (Meenakshi, interview 1)

however, she still seemed to lack confidence in contributing to discussions because of how she came across to others, something that George thought about but dismissed and Priya did not mention at all:

'I would personally keep quiet when I think that I've got nothing to give for that discussion. But yes, if I have got something in my mind, probably I'll wait you know and when I get my turn and then talk about it' (Meenakshi, interview 2)

For Meenakshi, how she was perceived was crucial to her own development, which from George's last extract, was something he considered as well. However, it seems that George's self-determination to achieve his 'dream' overrode any lack of confidence he may have felt.

An interesting aspect was revealed in my interviews with Daniel and his education in Zimbabwe. He demonstrated an awareness of the Zimbabwean school curriculum when he talked of his schooldays. The curriculum was based on the British curriculum, including the history and geography of Britain:

'... the history of Zimbabwe, they only ... it was written by the British and it was only their version so basically so many things were distorted' (Daniel, interview 2)

'... all the history books were written by the British so basically it was just you know portraying the freedom fighters as very evil and everyone else as primitive. ... It's just a one-sided view!' (Daniel, interview 2)

This suggests a level of critical understanding which he did not dare to voice and challenge in class because of the same fear he referred to earlier. He was able to judge that the curriculum was not appropriate for a Zimbabwean context which was discussed among his peers rather than in class. He talked of reading and analysing Shona literature in Zimbabwe which students and teachers both enjoyed because it was based on familiar concepts and which motivated him to engage with the subject more. This perhaps suggests that for him, his ability to critically analyse was linked to how much he related to the subject matter; the more he could relate, the more motivated and perhaps more confident he was to engage in criticality and debate. When asked about his ability to engage in criticality in other subjects in Zimbabwe and England he continued to talk about the 'fear' of asking questions and contributing to discussions, while recognising the importance of doing so as a part of the learning process.

Confidence in speaking was an issue that arose in Ling and Meenakshi:

'critical ... oh you know ... err just about English. In Master's degree in the class I didn't question a lot and I didn't say a lot because in English I'm not confident, we are not confident. So when we feel confident about the English, we can to be more critical and question more in class so critical analysis is also about the confidence' (Ling, interview 2)

'... Initially I used to hesitate because of you know my speaking, even though I knew but obviously I had lost ... lost my confidence by then' (Meenakshi, interview 2)

From this extract, Ling reflects on her progress and believes that her linguistic abilities may have been a barrier to her development. Interestingly, she switches from the first person singular 'I' to the third person plural 'we' within this extract. This may be because she wanted to express that this is common among Chinese students who need to feel confident in using the English language in class and in their written work. Despite this apparent lack of confidence, when I interviewed her, she had completed her PhD and was working on her revisions following the viva.

Meenakshi keenly felt the apparent lack of success in her career from events that had occurred in the past, as was clear in the extract above. On moving to England, she had hoped to achieve a similar level of success as she had in India where she had successfully completed a Master's and was a lecturer at a University. In England, she was forced to 'dumb down' her qualifications to apply for jobs after being told teaching was not an option for her as she did not have the appropriate qualifications. This resulted in working in administrative roles for an insurance company and the local council, which led to the lack of confidence she referred to in the above extract.

In contrast, Daisy and Dorina were both confident from the start of the PGCE course although Daisy also referred to a sense of fear when she studied in Zimbabwe because of the expectations from teachers. They had both studied to be teachers in their own countries and achieved academic success in their education which continued when they moved to England:

'you know what really surprises me to be honest is when I come here in the UK and I find native speakers failing English! And we were in the country where we didn't speak English in day to day life, we spoke in our own language' (Daisy)

This confidence she had in her linguistic abilities continued into her postgraduate course where she believed she further developed her understanding of criticality. However, she was unable to remember exactly when she learnt to critically analyse, she just knew she could do it.

She shared this ability with Dorina who knew she wanted to teach in England. Her determination to be successful in anything she took on began at a young age:

'... unless you have it installed in you from a very early age, no-one is going to come and invite you to do something, you have to push yourself to do something, like the saying goes no-one is gonna give you anything, ... but yeah if you want to achieve, you have to work hard' (Dorina, interview 1)

Despite their confidence, Daisy and Dorina differed in how they managed the academic expectations on the PGCE; Daisy took time to fully understand the academic requirements and Dorina was fully aware of the expectations from the beginning. Daisy's written work and ability to engage in criticality took time to develop, however her teaching practice showed her ability to reflect on and evaluate the context she was teaching in, the students she taught and the aims of the course

she was teaching. The 'disconnect' between her written work and her practice may have been as a result of her experience in Zimbabwe where she feared the teachers and copied material from sources as she was taught to in her essays, but she believed she succeeded in learning more about how to be critically analytical in her writing during the two years of the PGCE.

Dorina had no difficulties; she wrote with insight and her teaching was equally intuitive and pedagogically evidenced, with her reflections showing that she was able to consider the complexities of the teaching context she was working in. Dorina spoke with enthusiasm about every venture she embarked on, yet was also aware of how she came across to others:

'... I'm a bit strong-headed [laughing] and I guess I'm a bit more vocal than other people' (Dorina, interview 2)

but she appeared undaunted by others' views. If she believed she had something of value to say, she did so with confidence. The laughter in the above extract suggests she is conscious of her '*strong-headed personality*' but does not see this as a reason to change.

Reflections on sub-theme of confidence, self-determination and motivation

Feeling confident, self-determined and motivated impacted on how the students developed an understanding of criticality. Meenakshi's awareness of how others saw her still impacted her ability to engage with others, yet George, who seemed to be fully aware of how he was perceived, did not allow this to be a barrier to his learning. Developing into a reflective teacher who engages in criticality needs self-confidence as well determination, which Dorina had from the beginning as was evident in her interviews.

Being 'confident, determined and motivated' are aspects that can support individual students in learning to be critically analytical as mentioned in the literature review. What was clear in these interviews was the degrees and levels of emotions all the students faced. All of them successfully passed the PGCE so it may be concluded that levels of determination remained high, and the majority spoke of their

motivation to do well as a driving factor. However, confidence dipped in some and remained constant in others. The affective reactions to the experiences each student had left an impression in how they developed criticality. These nuances in individual experiences also meant that their ability to be engaged with criticality needed time and space for reflection and expression, which I explore further in this chapter.

Personal circumstances, experiences

An aspect that was closely linked to the previous sub-theme was that of personal circumstances and experiences each student had faced. Opportunities to question, reflect, clarify and engage in debate depended on their personal circumstances; if the opportunities existed, it seemed from the interviews that their levels of confidence increased. However, it appeared that for many of the students, their personal circumstances disrupted their learning due to no fault of their own, which in turn may have played a part in how they engaged in criticality.

When examining this sub-theme, it appeared that each individual's personal circumstances had an impact on their motivation and confidence and ultimately, how they achieved their ambitions. Daisy, Daniel and George all experienced a civil war during their education, which was interrupted either directly because of the war or the consequences of it. They all had to stop their education for a number of years due to financial problems, however each remained determined to continue with their studies both in Zimbabwe and in England. When they began on the PGCE, each had qualified to post-graduate level and all were experienced teachers who had taught in Zimbabwe. Daisy and Priya spoke about their own personal circumstances which impacted their education, either in their countries of birth or in England:

'I didn't get all my qualifications because of the my background I would say (Daisy)

'because of the background, I didn't have time to study I was living outside if I would say. So I didn't get time to read and ... and ... I would miss school as well as because of lack of finances to go to school' (Daisy)

'I was working here as a programmer and then the things changed' (Priya, interview 1)

'I don't know, I was really you know, shocked, depressed. ...

and because of my personal circumstances as well, I was really down at that time'
(Priya, interview 1)

In the above extract, it seemed Daisy was struggling to express herself as was evident from the longer pauses during this part of the interview. As I stated in the previous sub-theme, Daisy was a confident and motivated student who became a friend after she completed the PGCE as we worked for the same institution. Prior to this, in my capacity as her tutor, she had told me about her traumatic personal circumstances but was careful not to say too much during this interview. This may have been because she knew I was recording it and she did not want her personal information to be stored in this way.

The experiences Priya went through had impacted her ability to focus and also her self-confidence as explained in the previous section. She referred to her circumstances vaguely as can be seen above: *'the things changed'*, but she was honest about the consequences of her situation on her emotional wellbeing *'shocked; depressed; really down'*. She also repeatedly made references to her *'personal circumstances'* throughout the two interviews which left a deep impact on her emotions. As she spoke, she expressed these emotions in different ways, however, the impact of her personal circumstances was keenly felt in emotional terms similar to those highlighted above. She talked of her mind being *'blocked'* (interview 2) as a consequence of what she was going through at the time.

Daisy and Priya took some time to engage in criticality, although Daisy remained more confident throughout. Priya believed her personal circumstances were a mental barrier to her development on the PGCE because she did not feel she had anything of value to contribute. Both needed constant reassurance, and both sought peer advice when on the PGCE. They also did not reveal too much about their personal lives during these interviews so I had to be careful about probing too much. The vague references to their circumstances made me aware that they did not want the interviews to focus too much on their personal lives; each wanted to ensure the focus remained on the impact of these events on their education, and ultimately, their development on the PGCE.

Daniel and George, who had also felt the impact of the war, had a disrupted education when they could not afford to continue with their education. However, both managed their situations differently:

'... they would think if you try and change what's written in the textbooks, you are encouraging people to rebel and maybe to start failing to believe the propaganda which comes from the radio, from the textbooks and all those things' (Daniel, interview 2)

'it was not easy but I enjoyed every bit because I was self-reliant, I had nobody to compare myself with and no wonder why I used to get very high marks because I would always be looking at myself and thinking that I am operating perhaps below par and I would work very hard' (George, interview 1)

Daniel spoke with a quiet confidence and as explored in the previous sub-theme, he and his friends knew that the books they were taught from were based on material that was questionable as a direct result of colonisation, as can be seen in the above extract.

At one level, this extract suggests that Daniel was able to critically analyse the political climate in the country at the time as he talked about the political situation impacting education; it was *'a way of controlling people'* (interview 2). He recounted the approaches the teachers adapted in the classroom and he seemed to be aware that it was challenging as the teachers expected full attention from the students, offering little opportunity for questioning. However, he did not feel confident to challenge his teachers or what he read in the books (as outlined in the previous sub-theme).

At another level, his selection of words in describing the situation: *'rebel; propaganda; controlling'* is perhaps evidence of the oppression he felt in the circumstances he was living in at the time, and his lack of ability in confronting the situation (linked to the third sub-theme I have identified within the super-ordinate theme of **'perceptions of the self'**, that of agency in Table 4.1). Thus, it seemed that his personal circumstances, which were heavily impacted by the political situation in the country at that time, influenced how he developed as a student. He was aware of what was happening during the colonial period when he was at school, but felt disempowered to voice his views openly in class.

George, on the other hand, stood firm in his determination to continue with his education and did not hesitate in questioning and developing as a student. He did not allow his personal circumstances, including lack of finances, stop him and the extract above refers to his time during his undergraduate degree in England, which he completed as a long-distance student. The extract below from George was about his A level studies in Zimbabwe, when he adopted a different way of studying:

'I would step out of myself, become somebody, and then I listen critically to say ok, is this all right, what is missing, what questions do I have from this?' (George, interview 2)

The ability to question his own development as a student was important to him and his success, which he achieved by adopting a different identity, as can be seen in the above extracts, using himself as a comparator. Reflecting on his journey at the time of the interviews, he appears to believe his success was inevitable because he was his own competition, despite the labels that had been assigned to him throughout his early schooldays and among his peers when he got his first job as a teacher. He did not let the challenging circumstances he went through, including the war, the negative views of teachers and colleagues and the lack of resources deter him from developing as a student and engaging in criticality. Thus, his approach was different from Daniel's. Daniel remained afraid to voice his opinion in the circumstances he was in, but George remained determined despite his circumstances.

Meenakshi's and Raabiya's circumstances were similar in that they came to England after marriage, however their situations differed. Meenakshi struggled to find employment that she believed matched her qualifications, whereas Raabiya studied and worked as soon as she arrived in England:

'... and I think my first job what I got, I got it with my A levels, just with my A levels' [longer silence] (Meenakshi, interview 2)

'you know if you have always worked in that particular place and you have a certain level ... It was not accepted my ME whatever I was doing and it just put me down' (Meenakshi, interview 2)

'... I've been working since 2001, I've never stopped working and I've never stopped studying. So I've been doing different jobs. When I was a student, I worked in a bakery as a casual worker for about 2 or 3 years, then I got a job with a housing

association ... then I worked about 8 years with [national bank], started with customer service, then ... credit analysis, then I finished as a research analyst ...'
(Raabiya)

The slightly longer silence and softer tone in Meenakshi's statements above perhaps hints at the disappointment she felt in her situation at the time, and the need to do well as a result of her education, which she emphasised in the second extract above '*not accepted by ME*'. For Raabiya, there were no such anxieties about having to take on any work, and climbing up the career ladder. Her circumstances did not act as a barrier to her ambitions and at the time of the second interview, she had recently submitted her PhD thesis.

Further in the second interview with Meenakshi, she spoke of the need to do well, comparing herself to her peers from India who she believed were more successful in their lives than she was:

'... and I ended up over here and then I'm seeing my friends are just doing you know ...how they have planned and my friend, now she's almost finishing off her PhD actually, and I'm still here and I was working in an office and I was thinking to myself what am I doing?!' (Meenakshi, interview 2)

The above extract hints at her frustration with her circumstances which prevented her from achieving her ambitions, as well as the lack of personal agency which I explore in more depth in the following section. As with George, this extract reveals she wanted to change her situation and was ambitious but unlike George, she compared her circumstances with her friends', and she believed she was lacking. There seemed to be pressure to secure a job that she believed was at a level that was 'appropriate' for her qualifications and previous experiences as a University lecturer in India. The combination of not being able to find a similar job after moving to England, feeling disappointed, and having to adjust to a new educational environment as a result of her personal circumstances impacted her progress on the PGCE because she initially struggled with her written work mainly due to a lack of evidence of criticality.

For Meenakshi and George, their personal circumstances and how others viewed them affected each in a different way. Meenakshi always believed she lacked success when comparing herself to others, and George followed his own path.

Raabiya spoke of growing up and being educated in Tanzania where she believes the schools and Universities lacked relevant resources:

'Most of the authors we read they're not African-based, we read the western culture' (Raabiya)

'the education here [in England] is very dynamic, it's reflecting the authors, teachers are teaching up to the ... to the ... not up to the standard, they do up to the standard there [in Tanzania] but it's up to the emmm ... current situation' (Raabiya)

The latter extract shows the confusion she felt when she was trying to explain the differences in Tanzanian and English education traditions; the pauses and hesitations in her interview illustrate this to an extent, and the lack of clarity in her explanations. On questioning her further, she believed that the theories she was introduced to in Tanzania were challenging because they were based on '*western culture*'; therefore her circumstances affected her understanding of criticality because she was learning about theory that had little relevance to her life in Tanzania. Arriving in the UK and on starting her studies here, she had '*abundant of knowledge*' which she did not know how to apply because her circumstances in Tanzania had been so different:

'... being in the two worlds then I can see the difference, I can see the huge difference especially in the academic discipline and I was like ok, 'this is not how I used to do things, this is not how I used to look at things' ...' (Raabiya)

From this section, it seems she had a period of adjustment and then realised how she perhaps needed to change in order to meet the academic requirements of the course. She continued the above section by illustrating with examples from the PGCE sessions. When asked about her understanding of critical analysis for the PGCE, her response was fairly lengthy:

'So in terms of critical analysing, when I critically analyse things here in the UK, I normally look in a very broad context because I can relate purely to what is happening in the society, it's a real situation, while there I can say this is what is happening in the human behaviour for example, but it doesn't really reflect the Tanzanian society, it's happened in the other side of the world' (Raabiya)

This suggests that Raabiya believed if the theory she read in books reflected the society she lived in, criticality was perhaps more 'straightforward'. She emphasised this point throughout the interview and I was unable to ask for further clarification in a second interview as she did not respond to my requests. Raabiya's view of her

circumstances mirroring her reading is quite different from all the other interviews I conducted; the responses from the other participants were reflections on their personal situations, whereas Raabiya spoke about her educational experiences and how she managed her journey as a student in two different countries. She compared her circumstances as a student in Tanzania and England, and reflected on the dominance of 'western' material she had access to. Her conclusion to this was a little confusing, but this could be because she needed time to reflect on her views. It was also evident during the interview that she was speaking of her experiences as a PhD as well as a PGCE student. At the time of the interview, she was in the final year of her doctoral studies, therefore it may be that she was reflecting more on the reading for this than her reading for the PGCE, but I did not have the opportunity to ask her any more in a further interview.

Daniel and Raabiya acknowledged their experiences as students in their own countries, and both demonstrated an understanding of criticality in evaluating the material they had access to at school. However, the challenge each felt was in transferring this understanding to the PGCE; for Daniel, it meant being able to ask questions freely, yet still being respectful of the teachers and for Raabiya, there was a more analytical approach.

Reflections on sub-theme of personal circumstances/ experiences

It was clear on reading the transcripts that all the participants above reflected on their personal circumstances and linked this to their levels of confidence in engaging in criticality on the PGCE programme. Their revelations about their personal circumstances and the feelings these brought up impacted how they managed their educational journeys. These feelings as a result of their personal circumstances played a part in how each engaged in criticality. Some needed constant reassurance and guidance, and others quietly developed an understanding of criticality as required on the PGCE. This also tied in with a sense of agency and opportunity which I now examine.

Agency, lack of opportunity

During the interviews, references were made to agency when the students reflected on whether they felt they could question, challenge or debate what they were taught in the classroom. If students believed they had a clear vision of the direction they wanted to go in in terms of their education (linked to determination and motivation from the first sub-theme), they took responsibility for their learning. This was linked to opportunities; were there opportunities created in the classroom to question, challenge and debate? In addition to levels of confidence which may have been affected by their personal circumstances, the students spoke about taking ownership of the potential opportunities to develop criticality when in class, or reflecting that they did not. This is not to say that students only developed an understanding of criticality in the classroom. As I am focusing on criticality for the PGCE, I am interested in finding out how the students engaged in criticality in their educational journeys and the role their teachers may have had in this.

In examining this sub-theme, the students in some way also linked agency and opportunity to cultural traditions which I examine in more depth further in this chapter as a super-ordinate theme.

For some of the students, the lack of opportunity to question and clarify were clear in their minds:

'Maybe I could do it but no chance to develop that part' (Ling, interview 2)

'Yeah so we used to have essays in school but err... not like proper assignment where you have to you know like critically think, do research' (Priya, interview)

'And you know when we were in schools, we never had that culture of researching about something, we were always given. ... the element of research wasn't there at all, so obviously the element of critical analysis' (Meenakshi, interview 2)

In the above extracts, the students seem to have varied experiences of criticality when in school. Ling seems to suggest that criticality may have been something she 'could do', but she believed the opportunity to 'develop' it was not available. Does this infer that criticality is reliant on being offered the opportunity to do so by teachers, and if so, what does she consider her role to be? She described her experiences in China as being very structured; teachers copied material from books

onto the board and students copied this into their own books. There were set textbooks for subjects and students had to read their notes and the textbooks to memorise the contents to pass exams. However, she qualified her experiences by stating this was the most appropriate strategy in the classroom when teachers had more than fifty students in the class.

Priya and Meenakshi believed they no opportunities to develop criticality in school as they had to follow the instructions provided by their teachers. Meenakshi's use of the word '*given*' is particularly interesting because it infers she had no responsibility in the classroom. This may have been as a result of cultural traditions which I examine in the third super-ordinate theme.

Daniel's experiences seem to be more focused on fear, but the extract below appears to suggest that he had the opportunities to engage in criticality, he just did not participate because he was afraid:

'... but you start thinking twice before you try to criticise they say ok we are now trying to criticise what the teacher is saying. What do you think makes you more intelligent than the teacher, that sort of thing, you know. And the fear factor would stop people to criticise someone ...' (Daniel, interview 1)

This sense of fear was common amongst other students:

'...if you didn't understand anything, you don't even ask. ... We're afraid to ask questions, they didn't ask, they didn't give us the opportunity to understand the concepts ...' (Daisy)

'back home ... sometimes you are scared to ask' (Priya, interview 1)

The above extracts refer to 'fear' of the environment they were in, and the lack of opportunity to debate what was taught in class. However, in subsequent interviews, Priya and Daniel made reference to a sense of being free to question and clarify as they continued with their education, particularly when they studied in England:

'here you know you had the freedom you know to sort of express, maybe challenge ...' (Daniel, interview 2)

'... but here I wasn't scared to ask you anything. I was feeling that .. that barrier wasn't there' Priya, interview 1)

It must be noted that in the extract above, Priya may have been conscious of how she expressed herself because of our relationship as I was her PGCE tutor when she was on the programme, an ethical issue that I have discussed in the previous chapter. However, in both the above extracts, the choice of words Daniel and Priya used '*freedom*'; '*barrier*' suggest that they may have felt they had little agency in their previous environments, and perhaps felt disempowered. However, as I continued to analyse the interviews, developing criticality was more complex than a differentiation between environments and I explore this further in my findings. In contrast to feelings of fear, Isra, Dorina and George were more vocal in how they developed criticality and appeared to demonstrate a sense of agency that pushed them to thrive in their studies:

'... critical analysis ... I've always known it. Has this year built it? Definitely! I've learnt to enhance it a tad more, maybe able to see things a little bit deeper now, but it's something I've always done' (Isra)

'I see it as being more beneficial for ME personally, you know actually this is something that's gonna benefit me and it's not just so that I can get a good grade ...' (Isra)

It appears from the above extracts that Isra had an understanding of criticality from her previous studies, but perhaps deepened her understanding of it while on the PGCE. During this part of the interview, she referred to what I discuss as the 'mechanics' of writing critically which included the structure of her work:

'... I never really gave it much thought. My assignments were give two views, two good points, bad points at the end or give a conclusion' (Isra)

however, from the earlier extract, she believed she had taken ownership of her understanding of criticality and realised that it meant something personal to her, rather than a means to achieve a higher grade. This was evident from the stress she placed on 'ME' when she also pointed to herself during the interview. At one stage during the interview, she reflected on the feedback and grade she had received in her first PGCE essay, she realised after reflecting on her work that being able to critically analyse at that level was her responsibility:

'I wasn't able to critically analyse certain parts so I thought you know what, this is actually my fault. If I maybe read wider sources, I would have been able to get more views and then maybe compared the etc ... I don't know ...' (Isra)

Dorina too knew that she was responsible for her own success:

'So there is that critical aspect again. So they will show you a path but not lead you down the path. You who decides how far to go, how high to jump' (Dorina, interview 1)

She emphasised her own agency, citing an example about her choices in subjects at school and then university and who helped her decide:

'I did, I did! ... my mum didn't want me to go because that meant leaving home and everything, ... but I put my foot down' (Dorina, interview 1)

Throughout her interviews, Dorina continuously referred to the decision-making process as something she owned as can be seen by the repeated stress on 'I' in the latter extract. Even in subjects such as Dance, Dorina believed this was a way of developing as an individual and in this she had agency, with guidance from her teachers.

In a similar way, George talked about his own sense of agency in his educational journey:

'I always engage my mind in anything that I do, I always engage my mind first ... to say what I am doing, why' (George, interview 1)

'I ... I ... I would probably say I ... I ... had the skill though I didn't have a name for it by then' (George, interview 2)

It seems that on reflection, George was able to critically analyse but did not know the term as he stated in the above extract. He reflected on this a few times in the second interview, and seemed to gain in confidence as was clear in his non-verbal communication when I was interviewing him (sitting up straighter, speaking more loudly).

Both Dorina and George remembered teachers who had helped them in their journeys to develop criticality:

'I still remember my aesthetics teacher, she was actually .. she had studied sociology and philosophy at university, ... she would bring lots of pictures you know from artists, so we will be critically looking at artists, listening to symphony operas ALL aspects of culture will be brought into the classroom and that's what, ... I would say that developed the ability ... (Dorina, interview 1)

'... when I went to teacher training, there is one guy who really inspired me. He was actually a lecturer in religious and moral studies. So this guy taught how to write critical essays ... ' (George, interview 1)

All the above extracts demonstrate a willingness to take charge of their education, and this was translated into their PGCE studies. Isra and George did initially find the programme challenging in terms of the expectations around criticality, however, their natural instinct to take charge of their own learning helped them to ask questions and really understand what was expected of them. Dorina, as stated earlier, had a clear sense of who she was, and her own agency in her journey to be a qualified teacher, yet it was interesting to consider that she felt she had begun this journey at an early age.

Reflections on sub-theme of agency/ lack of opportunity

Having a sense of agency to question, challenge and debate in the classroom is important in developing criticality as students learn to listen to differing perspectives, and access more information through further reading, thus formulating their own views based on their findings and reflections. The students above seemed to have developed agency through opportunities offered to them by teachers, however, it seemed there were agentic factors that helped them in their journeys. The students that spoke of fear allowed this to dominate their ability to question, and for some, their motivation to succeed superseded any fear they may have experienced. It must be stated however, that criticality is also developed throughout life, and yet none of the students made reference to this. The opportunities to move to another country, work and study all required a process of engaging with criticality as far as the choices each student made, yet not one mentioned this in their interviews.

Conclusion for the super-ordinate theme '**perceptions of the self**'

On analysing this super-ordinate theme, it was evident that all the sub-themes were interrelated; being motivated led to an increased sense of agency which was linked to the personal experiences each student had, and vice versa. Consequently, it was challenging to distinguish between the sub-themes. Nevertheless, through analysis of the interviews, I was able to question and reflect on how the students felt about

themselves and how they interpreted criticality, particularly when most had initially found this to be a challenging part of their PGCE journey.

Super-ordinate theme 2 – 'Relationships'

Throughout the numerous interviews, all the students made continuous reference to relationships with others during their educational journeys in developing an understanding of criticality. Much of this was framed in their experiences of how they were educated in other countries, but it was evident that their connections with others left an impact. I have considered this super-ordinate theme in terms of their relationships with their teachers, family and peers and within the context of their learning which I clarify more in this section.

Teachers

A majority of the students interviewed made reference to their relationships with their teachers in the diverse countries each had been educated and how this had impacted their educational journeys, either positively or adversely.

Daisy, Daniel, George, Meenakshi, Priya and Ling all talked about a formal relationship with their teachers at school where there was either little opportunity or time to ask questions of their teachers, nor were they encouraged to:

'In Zimbabwe it was sort of like you were forced to learn ... because if you didn't get get what the teachers expected you to you know achieve, you'd be beaten' (Daisy)

Interestingly, following the above statement, Daisy laughed as she continued to narrate how students were physically beaten by teachers if they made mistakes. In the west, such punishment is illegal, so laughing about this experience seemed somewhat misplaced, yet it may have been that she was attempting to disguise her memories of this time when she had hinted at the troubled childhood she had endured. As I was aware of her childhood struggles, I did not continue to question her, and I had no opportunity to follow up on the reasons in a further interview as she did not have time for a second interview.

She continued to describe the relationship with teachers as distant:

'... the teacher is authoritative, the teacher is in charge, you are afraid of the

teacher. If you didn't understand anything, you don't even ask, and the teachers didn't even ask us questions to say do you have any questions or ask us any questions!' (Daisy)

The use of terms to describe the fear of teachers she had in the above statement is evidence that the teachers held the power: '*authoritative; in charge*', and throughout the interview, she made reference to the feelings of fear she felt with teachers in school.

Daniel continued with this theme of fear. He explained that there were opportunities to ask questions of the teachers, but that most students did not do this because the teachers used to belittle the students:

'... most of the teachers would say can someone answer this question because I can't waste my time answering' (Daniel, interview 1)

He described an incident when he asked a teacher to slow down as he had fallen behind in taking notes in class:

'... then she said, everybody am I going too fast? Then you know people, just to please the teacher, they would say no, no you are ok ... then you know, since then you then you just think oh god, I've got to conform' (Daniel, interview 1)

'basically, you get sort of conditioned and then you are saying to yourself oh is this the right question, is it a stupid question, so that fear will always be there' (Daniel, interview 2)

The formal relationship students and teachers had in Zimbabwe resonated with Daniel when he continued with his studies in England; he refused to refer to the tutors on courses he enrolled on by their first names which is the norm in colleges and universities here:

'It's like I'm not showing respect, I don't know why. It's just something like which is planted which is difficult to get rid of' (Daniel, interview 1)

The terms he used to describe the teacher-student relationship highlighted the formality and sense of power the teachers had: '*conform; conditioned; planted*', implying that he felt he had little ownership over his learning in the classroom. At one stage, he spoke about the teachers in Zimbabwe having a '*superiority complex*' (interview 1) and actively discouraging any type of interaction with students. George and Isra too spoke of their teachers as those with the power:

'... some of them really they were kind of authoritarian ... you're marked wrong, sometimes you don't even know why. ... You try to ask, sometimes, it would appear like you are challenging, something like that' (George, interview 2)

'... teachers as far as you're concerned, they're god, you can't ... in that classroom, yeah. ... you have to be so well behaved!' (Isra)

Despite this sense that teachers had the power, George felt that things had changed after the war:

'... to be honest, I think the relationship actually differed. It depended on who is teaching because you know ... but the majority of the teachers you know, they were those kind of people where you have got to feel that you are a student and they are you know ... but there's some who really, they were very nice and they would actually identify themselves with you, come down to your level and you could talk and chat. You know some of them really, they were kind of authoritarian, kind of ... But not everybody' (George, interview 2)

In the above extract, there is still reference to a sense of power the teachers held: *'come down to your level'*; however George downplayed it by stating there were a mix of different types of teachers. It may be that the self-determination and motivation George has, and the constant references to this in his interviews overrode the potentially negative impact of the teachers.

Meenakshi's, Priya's and Ling's references to teachers included some consideration of the power teachers held:

'... so I could see sometimes teachers the way they humiliate these learners who are not, ...who are not excelling themselves when in their studies' (Meenakshi, interview 1)

'We never question because nobody gave us an opportunity to question why is it like that, you know can it be like this instead of that or that. No, we never had that choice' (Meenakshi, interview 1)

'... it's always that barrier between the teacher and the student' (Meenakshi, interview 2)

'There was always like you know ... you see your teacher as a very high authority' (Priya, interview 1)

'like in China, teachers they gave you the knowledge, you noted it down, you read the books and you passed the exam' (Ling, interview 1)

In all of these extracts, there was emphasis on the pressures students were under to pass exams, therefore the relationship between students and teachers was focused

on this goal. Ling did state that she was able to ask questions of her teachers either before or after class, however when the classes were made up of between fifty and sixty students, the time-frame to do this was limited. Meenakshi differentiated between the students who the teachers had identified as *'toppers'* (interview 1) academically as they did well in exams, and those who *'were outspoken'* (interview 1) and did not do as well in exams. The former were the focus of the teachers' time and attention, and the latter were reprimanded more regularly.

Alim had experience of compulsory education in Bangladesh and HE experience in Cyprus before settling in England. He spoke of the student-teacher relationship in Bangladesh in similar terms to Meenakshi and Priya from India, and Ling from China:

'They talk and we take notes and they'll, you know, then you go and sit for the exam' (Alim, interview 1)

Further in the interview, he recounted how he became a teacher after having been a businessman and opened a private college for international students to prepare them for HE study in the UK. To be accepted onto the PGCE, he secured voluntary teaching hours at the same FE college teaching maths to students who had previously failed it at GCSE. He expressed his dissatisfaction with this role:

'... I realised I was doing Functional Skills [a Level 2 qualification equivalent to GCSE grade C] and to my horror, I have to use the word not horror, shock I would say, if I hadn't taught Functional Skills I would never have known actually that there is this divide in the UK. ... I was so disappointed because I was hoping I would teach Maths A level. I was so disappointed initially and I thought what have I done, let myself into but then I think I got sucked into it, that how can I make these people understand more. And one of the things that I realised because I was giving, you know, I was teaching them, but lot of the time they did not appreciate what I was teaching them ...' (Alim, interview 1)

This extract seems to reveal Alim's perception of a teacher-student relationship, perhaps based on his own experiences. He believed there was some status in teaching A levels rather than Functional Skills, which hints at the notion that there is a hierarchy in the levels and subjects teachers are in charge of; perhaps the higher the level, the more respect owed to the teacher. He then talks about *'giving'* students his expertise and feeling aggrieved because they did not *'appreciate'* him. This suggests that he thinks students should accept what he tells them without questioning anything. If this was his experience in school, he may be following the

same patterns and not allowing students to question and debate in class. However, within Alim's interviews there are other aspects of his life experiences that reveal more which I discuss further in this chapter.

For some of the students, the impact a teacher had on their education was great. Meenakshi and George spoke about specific teachers who helped them to do this:

'There was one tutor when I was doing my electronics, she would give us that sense of responsibility to you know choose what we want to do ... and then she would allow us to talk in the class. That was exciting even for us because we never got that chance' (Meenakshi, interview 1)

'... we had a special connection with her. ... So for us she was like a friend so the classes with her were not formal classes as well. ... We just used to attend and discuss certain things, talk about things ...' (Meenakshi, interview 1)

'So that's the thing and when I went to the teacher training, there is one guy who really inspired me. ... So that guy really, really gave me a lot ... ' (George, interview 1)

'... the contribution that this lecturer made is like especially in terms of structuring my work, like writing an essay, studying on how to brainstorm and collect ideas of which I did that anyways, and then in terms of introduction, if you've got like, first analysing the question itself ... ' (George, interview 2)

The above extracts suggest the teacher-student relationship is important in opening up opportunities for students to question, debate and reflect to develop criticality. Meenakshi differentiated between the teacher whose classes she enjoyed as described above, and the other teachers. In doing so, seemed to infer that the classes she enjoyed were 'casual', perhaps because there was not a set format. However, the teacher may have had an aim for these classes which she did not make explicit to the students. Meenakshi did not elaborate whether she learnt to be critical in these classes, or if she enjoyed them because they were different, but it was clear that the classes were important in creating an environment where her voice was heard and she perhaps felt valued. George spoke about his tutor with warmth; the students learnt about structuring their work, but more than that, George described how the tutor created an environment where students' contributions and responses were encouraged. Both Meenakshi and George remembered their tutors for these reasons.

Reflections on sub-theme of relationships with teachers

When teachers seem to hold the power, they may build a classroom culture where students' views seem to hold little value, and are even actively discouraged. This then impacts on the students who may feel they have nothing of value to contribute, leading to perhaps a lack of self-confidence in their ability to question and articulate views shared in class. However, it is important to consider the context as well; at the time of the Zimbabwean students' formative years in school, the country was recovering from a civil war and had recently gained independence. Resources, including teachers, were limited, therefore dictating from books that were available may have been the only way to teach large numbers of students.

However, it seems that other countries that were not war-torn also followed this teaching approach and when asked why, the students' responses linked to tradition; this was how it was done in the past, and there seemed to be no willingness or perhaps need to change. In terms of success in exams, the students did well, so perhaps a pedagogical change was not deemed to be necessary. In fact, if the students became teachers themselves, they too followed the same tradition. When the students compared their school and college/HE educational experiences, it seemed they valued the relationships that some teachers and lecturers in college/HE built with them, and they felt able to contribute their views. Consequently, it seems that if a teacher included space for questions and debate, the students appreciated this and perhaps learnt more about the process of criticality.

Family, peers

My initial questions included the part that family and peers played in developing criticality either as part of the students' education, or away from school/college/university. Many of the students spoke enthusiastically about family instilling a willingness to question and consider alternate views in all aspects of their lives which helped to increase confidence in being able to critically analyse their choices. However, some hinted at underlying issues that perhaps did not make them feel confident about engaging in debate and questioning.

The support that Dorina, Isra and Daniel received from their parents was essential in creating an environment in which they could question anything, which in turn made them more confident to consider all aspects of a topic:

'My dad was very philosophical if I can say that. He would never just accept one side. He will always say 'well what about the other person? What do they think? You know there's always two sides to a coin, to a story' (Dorina, interview 1)

'I count myself very lucky in that respect, yes, and in some respects, it was my mum who was pushing me at a very early age ... ' (Dorina, interview 1)

'... in terms of critically analysing or seeing the world the way I do, I think a lot of .. a lot .. my mum sort of said it's not my responsibility to tell you what you can and can't do ... I can introduce you to what is good and what is bad and at the end of it it's YOU that needs to make a judgement of how you wanna take it' (Isra)

'ok, yeah, yeah, my parents actually ... my father, my mother, they used to encourage me you know because they say it's best you ask rather than just do things you know carelessly and recklessly' (Daniel, interview 1)

In the above extracts, it seems the students have forged a link between how they understand criticality and how they lead their lives, and the choices they have made and will make. The way they were raised was not the only way they learnt to question and reflect, but growing up in an environment where questioning and reflection were modelled, instilled a sense of self-confidence in being able to do so. In her interview, Isra listed life decisions she had made following periods of reflection and analysis which she had learnt from her mother:

'... I've ALWAYS been critical of myself ... the types of friends I hang out with, always weighing the options, ... the course I've taken, marrying my husband it DEFINITELY has come from a young age, from my mum telling us always think things through, don't jump into situations, always weigh up the options ...'

The stress she placed on the adverbs of time and degree in the above extract indicates that she saw this as important, and she spoke with great energy at this point. She then applied this 'criticality' to the PGCE and critically analysing the pedagogy, but applying the same skills she had developed from her mother:

'... critical analysis in terms of essays etc, I do have to say that has ... from this course, I've learnt to go a little bit deeper but I've always known how to do it anyway. If you mean have I just learnt it, definitely not! I've always known it. Has this year built it? Definitely!' (Isra)

For Meenakshi and Priya, the relationship with their parents was a part of their cultural upbringing and yet the interaction between them was quite different to how

Dorina and Isra described theirs above in which the latter were encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and encouraged to question by their parents:

'... And I come from, you know my father especially he was a person like that. He would always say that you have to do what I have just told you to. ... That's why sometimes, you know in certain areas when I have to make decisions, that personality kicks in because you are not sure whether you are supposed to talk, to discuss that decision' (Meenakshi, interview 1)

From the above extract, it seems her upbringing has left an impression on her even in her education, and being unwilling to contribute to class debates, which I noticed during the PGCE:

'When we used to have group discussion ... I wouldn't you know put my thinking forward. I couldn't win over the others in the group so it was always me being the last person. And even if somebody put me on the spot, I would just go blank because I didn't know what to talk (Meenakshi, interview 1)

In the above extract, the use of 'win' suggests that Meenakshi was perhaps focussed on how she came across to her peers in class. Throughout the interviews, she continuously compared herself with her peers from India, and believed she was not progressing as well as they were.

Priya too talked about how her parents' input was significant:

'I never questioned my mum why I have to do certain ways' (Priya, interview 1)

and how she never felt she could question any decisions at home:

'you know, like we thought ok whatever parents are saying, there is some reason for it, we just accepted it, we never questioned (Priya, interview 1)

These reasons for accepting their parents' views are based on cultural norms, however as Meenakshi and Priya both explained, the belief that their own views were of little importance to their parents resonated in their own lives and studies. As Meenakshi explained in the earlier extract, when it came to making certain decisions, she did not know whether to discuss the matter with others first, and for Priya, questioning anything, including her teachers, was an unfamiliar concept. Part of the reason for this was cultural, which I explain in more depth in the final super-ordinate theme, but at one point, Priya talked about her reluctance to participate in discussions:

'... your upbringing as well maybe. Because I think .. some people I have seen the way that they are brought up, they are, you know ... more ... I won't say disrespectful, but they can you know bluntly say whatever they feel ... and some

people, they will like ... not express their views if it is, ... I mean to say that if it ... if somebody doesn't like it, then they will hesitate to express their views' (Priya, interview 2)

As is clear from the pauses in the above extract, Priya was trying to express herself clearly, without meaning to perhaps name anyone specifically, or infer that they may be rude. This may have been another reason that Priya stayed quiet in PGCE discussions.

Priya did however talk about how she had changed since her daughter started school in England; her daughter asked her a lot of questions, and she had to respond. She concluded that:

'You know if you're surrounded with people who are questioning all the time, then you think, hang on, yeah, they're right, why I'm not questioning?' (Priya, interview 1)

The PGCE offered students an opportunity to reflect on their own and others' views by participating in group discussions and debates, and Priya took time to become used to this process. Initially, both Meenakshi and Priya may have felt they had little to contribute, particularly when learning within a different academic culture. However, in terms of their peers, both students turned to each other and others in the PGCE class for guidance, and as Priya explained in the above extract, being in an environment where questioning was encouraged, they learnt to offer their views in class, albeit perhaps reluctantly.

Peers played a significant part in how the students assimilated into the PGCE academic culture. After struggling with her written submission at the beginning of the course, Priya sought help:

'... I went to the library and there was help there, then I discussed with my friends, yeah, I discussed with [Pooja], and she said ok I'm going to send my assignment so you can have an idea of how to start, what to write. Obviously, it will be different but it will give you a start, and then ... I was discussing with Meenakshi, and then finally I was ... I asked my sister-in-law as well. ... she said that you know I'm not the right person but I can just read and I can check whether it flows or not (Priya, interview 1)

Rather than his parents, Daniel made reference to discussions with his friends in Zimbabwe outside of the class when they questioned facts presented to them:

'... I think it was environmental sciences ... whereby they were saying oh the first man to discover Victoria Falls was David Livingstone. Then because of fear, you

know like we were talking with other students and they said where were we? Was no-one else around at that time? Is it really David Livingstone who actually discovered the Victoria Falls when people were living in that area? What about them?' (Daniel, interview 1)

The group joked about this, but no-one questioned this 'fact' about Livingstone in class because of the fear of being ridiculed by the teachers.

However, Daisy spoke about secrecy because of the pressure students had to do well in exams:

'... It was difficult to transfer it outside the classroom so we didn't talk about what we didn't understand in class, we just ... were so .. you know, it was so secretive as well because we all wanted to do very well, we didn't share information' (Daisy)

Despite this experience, during her time on the PGCE, Daisy set up a peer study group with others to support their own development and progress on the PGCE. The group used to meet in the library once a month and share reading material, write together, offer peer feedback and discuss their teaching. Thus, it was clear that Daisy's experiences of learning with peers in Zimbabwe had perhaps taught her the importance of it, hence the peer study group she set up.

Dorina too spoke with enthusiasm about working with her peers:

'I had lots of opportunities to discuss with my peers and what I did like about the PGCE lessons, [tutor] also gave us the opportunity to work in different groups, ... so I knew what were the strong aspects and the weaker aspects of my peers, and where you know we can complement each other ...' (Dorina, interview 1)

She clearly valued the whole process of working with peers, and it seems there was a collaborative environment where students were encouraged to share and learn, in contrast to Daisy's extract earlier. Another student in her group set up a WhatsApp group in which they shared links to reading material, discussed assignment criteria and generally offered each other a space to clarify any confusions. Thus, it was clear from the extracts above, and the groups students set up themselves, peers played a role in how they developed as critically reflective teachers.

Reflections on sub-theme of relationships with family/ peers

Parental upbringing left an impression on the students that may have influenced how they developed criticality. For some students, growing up in an environment where parents questioned their children, asked for their views and encouraged

discussion of broader perspectives instilled the students with confidence. This confidence then enabled the students to actively engage in the PGCE and look for ways to develop criticality (as Isra and Dorina described earlier). However, this is not to state that other students who did not experience a similar environment were unable to develop criticality. The notion of criticality is far more complex and there are other reasons that need to be considered as well, such as culture.

Upbringing was important for the students, and even though some felt they did not question or contribute their views with their parents, they were aware of the importance of doing so, and were willing to learn from their peers and other family members. Others were perhaps more autonomous in their learning because of the circumstances they had experienced, yet they still questioned material they were introduced to in school, albeit among their peers. Nevertheless, there was an awareness of respect that each student referred to at some point during their interviews, which linked to cultural aspects that I analyse further, and context played a part.

Context

Context is a broad sub-theme which I have considered as a result of the interviews I conducted. On reading the transcripts, there were aspects that the students referred to which affected their relationships with others and how they developed criticality. As idiography is a vital aspect of an IPA study, I have identified context as a sub-theme within the '**relationships**' super-ordinate theme because it seemed that students made reference to factors that affected how they related to others as they developed criticality. Each of them stressed the importance of the political circumstances and the settings they were educated in that influenced their relationships which I now clarify.

As stated earlier, Daniel, Daisy and George experienced the effects of a civil war in Zimbabwe that affected their education. Daniel shared how going to school when Zimbabwe was still colonised by Britain led to anxiety in how he related to his teachers. In teacher training college in Zimbabwe, they were introduced to theorists

such as Vygotsky, Piaget and Bruner, yet they were discouraged from analysing the theory by their teachers:

'... they would say look this guy has done research and is known worldwide. What gives you, you are nobody, to challenge what he is saying' (Daniel, interview 1)

After class, he discussed this with his peers and despite some misgivings, they all accepted what they were told, all of which had a lifelong impact in how he engaged with others:

'... we were just discussing as a group ... but it still lingers up to now when we become adults' (Daniel, interview 1)

Having gone to school where his teachers were a mix of local Zimbabweans and expats, he experienced similar teaching approaches until he was in a Shona literature class:

'... The teachers actually they really enjoyed because I think it was something like you know, the local literature, talking about things we really experience in real life. So it actually you know motivated, everyone was like engaging' (Daniel, interview 2)

Framing the above extracts within the political situation at the time may offer some insight into how Daniel related to others as he learnt to be critically analytical. When on the PGCE, he admitted he was unable to refer to tutors by their first name as is the norm in colleges and universities in England, and he deferred to their 'expertise'. Within the super-ordinate theme of '**perceptions of the self**' which I outlined earlier in this chapter, he spoke of fear of his teachers, and learning material that he had no experience of but this may have been a result of colonial rule, such as learning the longest river in England and France.

Similarly, Daisy described every subject being taught through the English language with some concepts explained in Ndebele. This was not an issue for her, but it meant that she learnt subjects with little understanding and opportunity to discuss or question because the subjects taught were part of an English context:

'We didn't understand, we didn't know the like background information or any other, we didn't have that. We just memorised the story and understood it from our own perspective because the teachers didn't have much input' (Daisy)

From the above extracts, it seems Daniel and Daisy had learnt strategies to manage their own learning, but learning with and from others was more challenging. Memorising material was an approach they were familiar with, but learning to be critically analytical was a process they developed over time in different contexts.

Daisy expressed her joy at buying her own copy of Macbeth on arriving in England, and then her shock at realising English people failed at English:

'... you know what really surprises me to be honest is when I came here in the UK and I find native English speakers failing English! And we were in the country where we didn't speak English in day to day life, we spoke in our own language. ... Buuut we passed English! We passed English and our English was through Cambridge University! We passed English! ...' (Daisy)

This realisation may have encouraged Daisy to succeed in her education in England; at the time of her first year on the PGCE, she was completing her Master's dissertation and teaching part-time at the university where she was studying.

George, as already described, was motivated and determined, but his experiences of returning to education after the war meant large, makeshift schools under a tree, using the sand as a notebook. He learnt to be independent, but when studying for his MA in England, he did not know how to collaborate with his peers:

'I didn't like it because people, they don't do the work and sometimes again, you know when you ask a question, you become the fool in the room ... you know what I mean?' (George, interview 2)

The above extract suggests George had to learn how to interact with others, and the context he was familiar with did not provide him with these skills. It may be that he developed criticality independently because of the circumstances he had grown up in. The frustration he refers to above is familiar within many colleges and universities in England; students assigned a group task which only a few members of the group engage in. George had not experienced this before as a result of the challenging situation in Zimbabwe after the war and his own personal difficulties, therefore he needed time to learn how to debate with others.

Raabiya's experience of having grown up in Tanzania and completing her first degree there led to an awareness of how different she believed education was in England on moving here. She spoke of her frustration at learning from a curriculum that had little relevance to her own experiences:

'... so the level of analysis for example, ... because it's a commonwealth country, we reflecting the English curriculum kind of thing, but the way of analysing or the way the subject will be delivered, the way of understanding, it could be very much different because this is what is happening here ...' (Raabiya)

Raabiya continued with this perspective throughout her interview, and at the time, she had recently submitted her thesis in Human Geography after having successfully gained two Master's degrees in the UK. The contexts she had been educated in had led to an awareness of her experiences of education and the link to political circumstances that then affected how she related to others:

'... I don't know for some reason or if it's true that the theorists are from the west but that's how the world is, that's what the world system is. ... The world is taking the westerners' .. mirroring kind of thing as a result if we learn maybe the theory of feminism or social dynamics or ... something in psychology ... then we look at what the western theorists said' (Raabiya)

She continued by listing subjects she had studied at school, with history particularly highlighted as one in which they learnt African history from a 'western' perspective. When I questioned how she had become aware of this as it evidenced her ability to critically analyse the relevance of the curriculum, she replied:

'... but being in the two worlds, then I can see the difference. I can see huge difference especially in the academic discipline and I was like ok, this is not how I used to do things, this is not how I used to look at things' (Raabiya)

The above infers that as she had been through two education systems, one in Tanzania and another in the UK, she was able to discern the difference between the two, and realise what was familiar to her from Tanzania was not appropriate for British academia. She did not elaborate about her relationships with teachers or her peers, but knowing that expectations were different for both educational environments, it may have impacted how she engaged in the class.

I have considered this in part when I discussed Raabiya's interview within the '**perceptions of the self**' super-ordinate theme earlier in this chapter, but I believe it is important to consider how she feels the context influences how she defines criticality. The extracts above reveal that even though Tanzania shares links with England as a member of the commonwealth, the approaches to teaching and learning are quite different. This may be as a result of the range of resources available for students to refer to in Tanzania and I explore this in more detail in the final super-ordinate theme of '**culture/tradition**' further in this chapter.

Priya referred to an environment in which she is surrounded by people who do not question, which did not encourage her to do so either (see previous family/peers sub-theme):

'...it comes with err... you know your surrounding as well. You know if you're surrounded with people who are questioning all the time, then you think, hang on, yeah, they are right, why I'm not questioning. So yeah it is ... if you just ... I'm just giving you an example, if you're just surrounded with old people, you'll never question, but if you're surrounded with youngsters, you'll start questioning yeah, they are right, they have got valid reason' (Priya, interview 1).

At the time, she was teaching IT voluntarily to the local retired community for a charity, and may have been referring to this experience. At one point, she expressed some frustration at the lack of challenge she felt in teaching basic IT skills to a group of senior citizens.

Later in the interviews, she shared her daughter's incessant need to question everything, yet when she attended a parents' evening for her daughter, the teacher told Priya that her daughter never questioned anything in class. Thus, the context was an important factor for Priya in understanding and developing criticality; it seems from the above, she is encouraged to question and clarify through her interactions with others, and if she felt comfortable in the setting, she would engage more. An added layer from this example of her teaching is reference to the age of the people she interacts with, as well as their contributions to a debate.

Reflections on sub-theme of context

This sub-theme is complex as the students have referred to different ways of reflecting on their understanding of criticality and how others play a part in developing it. The political landscape played a part in how some of the students interacted with their teachers and with each other (although culture also plays a large part which I consider in depth as a super-ordinate theme below), which then left an impact in how they understood criticality. For others, the setting was important because if they felt comfortable with what they were introduced to in class, they interacted more with others and engaged in critical debate. The political

landscape and context seemed to play a part in how the students related with others, as can be seen in the examples given by Daniel and Raabiya.

Conclusion to the super-ordinate theme '**relationships**'

Being able to develop criticality includes having the ability to debate with others and question. To form the relationships, context plays a major role, as does the students' upbringing and backgrounds. There are parallels with the sub-themes highlighted within the super-ordinate theme of '**perceptions of the self**' that I have considered earlier in this chapter; if the students are not confident or if they feel fear, they will not engage with others. However, from their contributions for this super-ordinate theme, the students seemed to find ways of overcoming the challenges they spoke about. It also seems that they learnt to evolve into active, critical students who learnt to question how their relationships with others may help them to engage in criticality.

Super-ordinate theme 3 – '**Culture/tradition**'

The final super-ordinate theme that I have identified from the interviews is that of '**culture and tradition**' and the role this plays in how students understand and develop criticality. All the students identified culture as having an impact in how they navigated their educational journeys, in both the countries they migrated from and to. Within this super-ordinate theme, I have grouped sub-themes which focus on educational practices and norms, the environment and resources, and expectations from the self and others. These sub-themes were referred to in multiple ways by the students and I now examine each sub-theme in turn.

Educational practices and norms

All the students came from backgrounds where education played a vital role in their lives; not one student made reference to leaving education early (with the exception of being forced to due to war or personal circumstances). Financial pressures did slow the progress of some of the students, but even in such challenging circumstances, being educated was essential:

'Without education, that's it, you don't have anything' (Isra)

In the above extract, Isra was talking about her mother who insisted that she and all her siblings went to university before embarking on their own professional journeys. Consequently, being educated was a priority, and this then impacted on the position teachers held among their extended families, as well as society in general.

The majority of the students talked about a culture in schools where the teacher was the one with the power, with parents supporting the teachers:

'... an African child has to be seen, not heard so ... from their own mindset, you become over familiar with the teacher, then the discipline is lost. ... Well actually discipline it was our daily bread because you mess up at school, the report would go home ... and you are in trouble at home' (George, interview 2)

'It's that cultural thing that teacher is your, you know, 'guru' and you have to always respect ...' (Priya, interview 1)

Priya's reference to her teacher as a '*guru*' is interesting; the original word from the Sanskrit may be interpreted as 'spiritual guide' or 'counsellor', which infers the '*guru*' is entrusted to teach more than a subject or skill. This interpretation has been diluted in English to mean a 'specialist' or 'expert'. Thus, it seems Priya is used to a culture in which teachers may command respect through their profession rather than through their personal characteristics. Meenakshi referred to this when she talked about her education in India:

'... our culture says we need to listen to and respect our elders, do exactly what they say. ... Elders, parents, teachers. ... teachers, they themselves, I think they think they are gurus ...' (Meenakshi, interview 2)

In a similar way, Daniel was unable to refer to teachers by their first names because he was brought up in a culture where teachers were respected, and addressing them by their first name was a mark of disrespect. However, Daisy was critical of this:

'I think the culture was sort of like a negative influence' (Daisy)

She believed that the power teachers held was a negative influence on students because in a classroom environment, students were forced to recite facts or risk a beating. However, perhaps contradicting herself, further in the interview, Daisy also stated that being forced to memorise material meant that she had access to information that others did not. As an example, she spoke about learning Macbeth by heart:

'We just memorised the story and understood it from our own perspective if I would say because the teachers didn't have much input, like you know to say the plot ... I didn't know anything about the plot until I came here!' (Daisy)

This suggests that memorising facts and passing exams were important aspects of education in Zimbabwe, as in India, which Priya also hinted at when she talked about her daughter's education in England:

'... when I compare my daughter with other kids in India, they are very smart, Indian kids are very smart. They are ..err .. they have got the broad knowledge. ... Indian kids are really smart, they are like all-rounder' (Priya, interview 1)

Memorising was part of the routine at school and when Priya suggests that *'Indian kids are very smart'*, she was referring to the fact they have to memorise information as part of their daily school routine. This leads onto another aspect of educational practice as part of the super-ordinate theme of culture/tradition. Many of the students talked about the similar ways they were taught. Memorising to pass exams was common throughout school, which the students referred to as learning knowledge. Ling was clear that having a *'solid knowledge base'* was essential to succeed in education, and the routine in China helped her to learn lots of facts that she was then tested on:

'you know I heard some students say that if in secondary school they want to learn more knowledge, better choosing China because teachers just full lessons teach, teach, teach. You take notes, you get solid base, solid knowledge base, you can learn lots of knowledge' (Ling, interview 1)

Raabiya's main issue with the *'knowledge'* she had was that she was not able to apply it in the Tanzanian context because it was based on western concepts and theories:

'people like myself and those from Africa, we have got abundant of knowledge but we don't know how to apply it' (Raabiya)

However, in order to show that they had learnt the *'knowledge'*, exams and tests were common:

'it was just about passing exams, yes, and about you know whether you get your merit, distinctions and that's all it was' (Meenakshi, interview 1)

'...it was you have to pass ok ...get good grades you know because you know a stick' (Daisy)

'... just you know teacher-centric, teacher-centric ... they talk, we take notes and then you go and sit for the exams' (Alim, interview 1)

Within the above extracts, both Daisy and Alim continued by talking about being beaten by teachers if they did not do well in the exams as this was an indication that they had not worked hard. The incentive to do well in the exams seemed to be about not being beaten. For Ling, the exam was important because it tested whether she had learnt the knowledge, and she then made a distinction between exams and coursework:

'exam ... is to test you, test your understanding. But coursework ... maybe can test how deep you learn it, ...how deep you learn it and your analysis ability and how strong your mind' (Ling, interview 2)

In both her interviews, she seemed to define exams as testing her ability to memorise knowledge, and coursework, which she referred to as writing essays and researching, as evidence of how deeply she had understood the knowledge. In the above extract, she links this process to her '*analysis ability*' and it seems she believes this ability to go '*deep*' needs confidence '*how strong your mind is*', which links to the first super-ordinate theme about '**perceptions of the self**'.

I asked the students how they knew what they had to learn for the exams, and here again, there was a set pattern that the students described to me about their daily routine:

'we would have a set of questions ... So the teachers will write down all the answers for those questions ... and they would write it or they would give it to the students to write it on the board and we would copy' (Meenakshi, interview 1)

'... they wrote stuff on the board like if they were teaching geography, they would copy from the book and write on the board, we would copy that' (Daisy)

As is clear from the above extracts, this was a system which was based on traditions which may have been as a consequence of events from the past. Both Meenakshi and Daisy came from countries which had suffered from wars in the past, therefore copying from books may have been the '*simpler*' option as a result of lack of resources due to the wars. George even spoke about this when he talked about starting school again after everything stopped during the war; they were forced to

set up makeshift classes under the shade of trees with no other resources available to them.

Reflections on sub-theme of educational practices and 'norms'

Within this sub-theme, it is clear that teachers held a power over the students that influenced the teaching approaches in the classroom. In India, the notion of the teacher as a 'guru' meant teachers were to be accorded respect, and in Zimbabwe, the threat of physical violence either from the teachers themselves or the students' families meant the teachers were in control. Ling's reference to Chinese education focussed on knowledge is interesting, however I reflect on this more within the last sub-theme of this section. When traditional 'norms' and expectations come into play, the students may find it challenging to engage in criticality and offer their own views. Thus, it may be that time and space to reflect and consider alternative perspectives is needed on the PGCE.

The divide between knowledge to pass exams and reflecting on their own understanding may be unfamiliar to the students, yet it seems many of them were already reflecting on the ways they were taught in the different contexts they had studied in.

Resources and environment

As part of this super-ordinate theme around '**culture and tradition**', the students talked about where they had access to information or 'knowledge', and the general environments they studied in. This seemed to influence how they developed a sense of agency in how they learnt to be critically analytical that I considered within the first super-ordinate theme.

Following on from the earlier sub-theme when students talked about learning 'knowledge' from their teachers, many talked about access to 'knowledge' from books that were provided by the teachers. Exams were a way of checking students' ability to memorise material introduced by teachers, and much of this material came from books that teachers distributed or had access to:

'... And also read books, the subject books and the teachers' information. ... in

China, we also need to pay the tuition, and also they give you the books. ... in China every term they give you lots of new books, every subject ... Yeah, as long as you understand the subject books, you definitely pass the exams' (Ling, interview 1)

'... standard textbooks were written by people who have excelled themselves in that particular area. And there is an educational board as well, they used to write the textbooks. ... Whatever the content was in there, ... we had to just read that and accept the facts from there. ... The textbook was the main part for us' (Meenakshi, interview 1)

As is clear from the above extracts, the textbooks were essential for the students, and it seemed these were the only textbooks students used to ensure they passed their exams. George, who had educated himself to pass his A levels, recalled recording material from books, which he then listened to repeatedly to memorise the material in preparation for the exams. However, he also recalled extending his reading:

'So I managed to internalise all the information and the bulk of the time I would spend looking for, doing some further research' (George, interview 1)

As he did more than read the recommended books which Ling and Meenakshi described earlier, this suggests that he sensed he should read beyond the set reading to perhaps grasp a wider understanding of the topics. George was an extremely determined and independent student (outlined in the first super-ordinate theme '**perceptions of the self**'), therefore reading more extensively seemed to be a logical thing to do. During the second interview, I asked him if he believed he had been engaged in criticality when he was on the PGCE because of his actions; he questioned, he read widely and he reflected. His response was full of self-doubt because he either hesitated to say he understood what was meant by criticality, or he did not know how to describe it:

'I .. I .. I .. probably I would say I .. I .. I had the skill though I didn't have a name for it then' (George, interview 2)

From the above, it seems that the terms 'critical analysis' or 'criticality' were unfamiliar to him, yet there was evidence he was able to be critical from his days in Zimbabwe when he read more widely and looked for '*further research*'. The pauses and hesitation in his voice in the above extract suggests that he was not confident about expressing his understanding of criticality. Reading itself does not infer that he

engaged in criticality, but from both his interviews, he reflected on his journey so far, and was able to try and define criticality in the impact it had for his life.

In comparison, Raabiya was critical of the textbooks she was recommended when studying for her undergraduate degree in Sociology in Tanzania:

'Most of the authors we read, they're not African-based, we read the western culture ... the educators as well they don't relate much to what is outside the classroom, what's outside the book, what the book is saying because that is not what is around us ... because the knowledge is brought from far, it's mirroring some other communities or societies, then there's a lot of issues there in terms of critical analysis' (Raabiya)

The above suggests that Raabiya was aware that there was a disconnect between the course books she read and the society she lived in. However, this leads to a debate about the validity of books recommended as indicative reading for courses; should they always reflect the context or can they be used as a vehicle to engage in criticality? Raabiya did not refer to this factor, which may suggest she did not fully grasp the concept of criticality. I was unable to question Raabiya about this as she did not respond to my requests for a second interview, but it was clear from the above that Raabiya had some understanding of criticality, but could not be clear about how she learnt this, and to what extent. She mentioned that she may have grasped this as a result of being educated in two different countries (Tanzania and UK) which perhaps suggests that criticality has different interpretations in the two contexts, however, again, she did not elaborate or clarify what the difference may have been. When I asked her about this, she referred to the fact that 'knowledge' was more important in Tanzania, as was the case in China and India. Therefore, students learnt the 'knowledge' to pass their exams.

The environment also impacted how the students interacted in the classrooms. Some of the students referred to lack of access to technology as they attended school in the period before internet, therefore, using technology to source information was not an option. For a few students, technology, or the lack of it was of particular importance because it limited access to wider sources:

'I remember in China I didn't use lots of internet, didn't use lots, no. Here, I use lots' (Ling, interview 1)

The repetition of how little she used the internet suggests she considered this to be important, and she continued the interview by explaining how she used the internet much more during her MA in England, as well as her doctoral studies that she was completing at the time. When asked about her experiences of postgraduate study in England and how she developed criticality, Ling also said she developed 'a logic mind' (interview 1) because she had the opportunity to read beyond the material introduced in class. When asked to clarify what she meant, she distinguished between 'coursework' (interview 1) which she was asked to submit for her Master's in England, and 'learn the knowledge' (interview 1) which she did in China as explored previously.

Raabiya had a perspective on the use of technology that added clarity to the wider educational experience she went through in Tanzania. She explained that during her undergraduate studies, there were up to 3,000 students in the first year who were split into groups of 200 per tutor group. Each tutor had to mark submitted work from each student which was handwritten as there was no access to computing facilities:

'That impacted ... I'm sure all the lecturers who've taught me, they've never gone through my work and say this is ... in detail. They give grades because there's no way they can do that. They have their time scales, they have to prepare the lessons, they have to do that. So the number of students in the classroom is one issue, the number of resources, there's no way they can produce the resources for 1,000 students each week, it's not possible ... and they have to do it manually' (Raabiya)

The above extract refers to two areas which impacted on the way teachers approached their classes; the numbers of students and lack of time and resources to plan sessions and provide constructive, detailed feedback to each student. She remembered tutors assigning grades because they were not able to read the writing on each submission in detail, and also not having the time to do so.

Raabiya also recalled having limited resources throughout her education in Tanzania:

'... they still use the chalk and blackboard and things like that. Emm .. it's a minor thing but it makes a huge difference in education, in the learners, and the outcomes of the education as well, the product, what kind of people there are in society, the educated people, what environment they've learnt from, the type of library we have, the type of resources' (Raabiya)

This extract was interesting as it seemed to suggest that being '*educated*' required an investment in the environment that people studied in, with access to more up to date resources and facilities. It was also interesting that she referred to education as '*the product*' as this suggested there was an end goal after years of study, which for her may be her reference to '*the educated people*'. To add further background to this extract, at the time of this interview, Raabiya had recently completed a five-week module on the PGCE about the curriculum in which we had debated curriculum as process and product, therefore, she may have been referring to this when talking about '*the product*'.

In comparison to Raabiya's views on the necessity to have access to more modern technology, George managed without and relied on his own ability to use whatever was available at the time to ensure he was able to study and achieve his ambitions. The only reference he made to using technology was when he described his own teaching approach at the college in England:

'... Like for example, now we are looking at things like e-learning, I already did it with my students in getting them to use their mobile phones ... I'm ahead of time because by then I didn't know anything about mobile learning whatsoever, but that's what I was doing. I was reflecting, I said oh mobile learning, that's what I've been doing!' (George, interview 2)

The above suggests that George was able to reflect and evaluate his teaching approach and consider how to interact with his students in ways that were appropriate for them, but that he was unaware this was part of the process of being a critically analytical and reflective teacher.

Some of the students also referred to the traditional topography in classrooms where they studied:

'... Just one line, one line, one line, like this. Maybe .. yes, in the middle there's four tables, two tables each is one line' (Ling, interview 1)

'... it was all rows. ... we would have a set of questions and answers So the teachers will write down all the answers for those questions on the board.. so either they would write it or they would give it to the students to write it. ... The teachers wouldn't be there in the class' (Meenakshi, interview 1)

Both Ling and Meenakshi described sitting in rows, copying answers into their own books, and in Meenakshi's case, a student would be assigned the task of writing the answers on the board by the teacher, who would not be in the classroom.

Daniel described an approach in teacher training college in Zimbabwe when students had to present a lecture to all the students and lecturers after researching a topic:

'... it was nerve-wracking really because you weren't quite sure ... when you do a presentation and if you get it all wrong, then it would destroy you ... because I remember the lecture theatre is about 150 students ... And you had to present it in front of all those eyes' (Daniel, interview 1)

This approach was common in the college, yet prior to this, he talked about sitting, listening to his teachers and taking notes. He described how daunting it was presenting to his peers and tutors *'in front of all those eyes'*, and doing this in a lecture theatre made it even more so because he still remembered the lecture theatre setting as one that filled him with anxiety.

Reflections on sub-theme of resources and environment

It was clear during the interviews that resources and the environment impacted how the students engaged in the classroom and developed criticality, although to what extent is not well-defined. It must be stated, however, that access to resources whether this is access to books and/or technology, does not mean that students will learn to be critical, rather it is how they use these resources. Reading widely can offer different perspectives, but it is up to each individual student to engage with the reading and tease out the writer's words to then compare with others'. For some of these students, the issue may have been that the reading material was pre-selected by the teachers/heads of the schools they attended. The textbooks were also pre-selected, and the message given to the students was that they had to learn from these books to pass the exams. Thus, it may be that students need to have time to learn how to read critically, and also compare the approaches they are familiar with to the expectations for the PGCE.

With limited access to technology for varied reasons, some students felt at a disadvantage, but it is important to consider that they may have been at school, college or university at a time when technology was just developing throughout the world. In addition, the traditional layout of classrooms meant students had fewer

opportunities to interact with each other, and for some, the focal point in the classroom was the teacher and the board as they copied notes.

Expectations from self and others

The final sub-theme within this super-ordinate theme around '**culture/tradition**' centres around expectations. Within this sub-theme, there are links to aspects of determination and fear which I have discussed as a sub-theme in the first super-ordinate theme of '**perceptions of the self**'. However, this sub-theme has been identified as a result of the cultural or traditional expectations some of the students referred to which impacted on they developed as students and succeeded in education.

As stated earlier, none of the students talked about dropping out or leaving education because things were too difficult; being educated was highly valued and was expected of all. However, there were expectations that students placed on themselves that impacted their educational journeys. Meenakshi talked about her experiences of participating in group discussions in the PGCE class and the pressure she felt:

'the difficulty there is in understanding what is expected from you, you know, in that discussion' (Meenakshi, interview 2)

'... sometimes you know, people know you as a person and they think that oh this person probably can't pose any opinion or be part of that discussion' (Meenakshi, interview 2)

This suggests that she felt under pressure to participate according to 'norms' that she did not know. When I asked her why, she referred back to her own education in India, and the fact that she could have completed her doctorate if she had stayed there. This cultural expectation about the value of education affected how she interacted with her peers in the PGCE class; she only contributed to group discussions if she believed they saw her as educated and knowledgeable. This may have impacted her understanding of criticality, or the ability to act critically. Other students talked about the expectations they placed on themselves as a result of being critically analytical in their education and in their life decisions:

'Yes, yes, yeah you don't question your teachers but to me, it's not about questioning your guru, but it's about challenging yourself' (Priya, interview 2)

'I've always been critical of myself, I've always been critical of the types of friends I hang out with, always weighing the options ... the course I've taken, marrying my husband, you know I've always been thinking it through, you know, from all angles' (Isra)

'... just going to a normal school to become a textile worker or going to a restaurant and being a waitress, that was not me, I knew that was not me. I was more academic and I proved to be' (Dorina, interview 1)

Dorina, by contrast, had self-expectations but knew she would achieve her goals as can be seen in the above extract, and for George, the interviews enabled him to reflect on the impact of criticality for his studies, and life in general:

'... being critical ... it's a lifestyle, something that you need , not only just for academic purposes, but generally in life' (George, interview 2)

In all the above extracts, the students made reference to their own personal expectations and explored how criticality played a large part in how they reached crucial life decisions. For Priya and Isra, asking them about the role criticality had in their lives made them reflect on their own expectations, yet during the PGCE, they initially found the course challenging because of the level of criticality demanded. The above personal reflections are evidence that even though students may come from similar cultural backgrounds, their life journeys may take them in different directions. Priya, Isra, Dorina and George all come from different countries, yet each had a similar view of the role criticality had for their lives, and the impact it had in the decisions they made. Each made decisions based on their individual experiences, rather than as expected from their cultural backgrounds or upbringing.

However, for other students, expectations from others also played a part in how they developed criticality, which they linked to cultural expectations:

'teachers have got some expectations, you know if they ask a question, they know what the set answer has to be ...' (Meenakshi, interview 2)

'In our culture, we don't question authority like the parents, like the teacher, like the politicians. ... So maybe unconsciously that side of our faculty is not developed maybe? Because we have been taught or trained we could say, not to question authority' (Alim, interview 2)

Daniel, on the other hand, suggests he knew how to be critical, but he could not engage in it because of the pressure from family and teachers to pass exams.

'... you were expected to pass your exams ... yeah, definitely, actually that was one thing that was really important, every family, there's so much pressure!' (Daniel, interview 1)

The above extracts suggest that teachers' and parents' expectations were familiar to all, and from Meenakshi's comments, it seems that teachers expected the students to provide the answers as the teachers had noted them. Alim's response above infers that as he is used to accepting the words of those in authority, he does not have the capacity to question because he has no experience of it, nor has he been taught it. Students seemed to have little opportunity to provide alternative responses, and along with the kind of parental pressure that Daniel describes, this may have been a challenge for the students to manage.

However, comparing the above responses to those from Priya, Isra, Dorina and George, it seems that the latter four had an awareness of the importance of criticality despite the cultural expectations they may have also faced. Therefore, it may be that personal motivation (within the first super-ordinate theme) may have a bigger impact.

Reflections on this sub-theme of expectations from self and others

Criticality is multifaceted, as can be seen from the extracts in the final super-ordinate theme, and expectations from others seem to have played a part in how the students developed criticality. Exams seemed to be a measure of educational success and achievement, therefore if the students had pressure to perform well in the exams, it may be that there was little opportunity to engage in wider debate and reading. Teachers and parents may have ensured the students focussed on doing well, and the students accepted this, or perhaps felt they had to.

However, it is also important to consider individual personalities as some of the students seemed to be motivated to consider factors beyond doing well in exams. Their responses indicated that within the cultural boundaries they grew up in, they

could personalise what they had learnt so that they could meet their own goals because of their motivations.

Conclusion to the super-ordinate theme 'culture/tradition'

Culture and tradition play a large part in how the students form relationships with others, and how they fulfil expectations from themselves and others. Moving from one cultural tradition of learning to another as these students have done has involved building an understanding of a new academic culture that expects them to be autonomous and ask questions if they wish for further clarification. This also includes an ability to source further support or information, and not seeing this as a potential 'weakness' as a result of feeling pressured to pass exams to demonstrate success. Evidencing criticality may have required an adjustment, or the need to balance their previous educational traditions with those on the PGCE.

Conclusion to the analysis of the findings

From the above analysis, the students' development of criticality is influenced by their own perceptions of themselves, the relationships they form with others in the contexts they experienced, and cultural or traditional factors. Each of these have differing levels of impact depending on the individual circumstances of each student, and I look at how these interact in the next section as I discuss the analysis and refer back to my research questions.

Identifying super-ordinate and sub-themes across the interviews was challenging because many of the students' contributions came under several sub-themes, and there were clear links between the sub-themes. However, I have had the opportunity to study the interviews in depth, and really considered each student's contributions to get a sense of their life stories. There were times when they spoke more about their experiences and critical events in their lives, but this is common when conducting life story interviews. Nevertheless, this gave me insight into their life experiences which shaped their educational journeys, and their development of criticality during this journey.

Discussion

The super-ordinate themes (**'perceptions of the self'**, **'relationships'** and **'culture/tradition'**) provide some insight into the life stories of the ten students I interviewed, and reveal a level of understanding of criticality in how each arrived at making certain life decisions. In questioning the students about their previous educational experiences, I wanted to gain an understanding of the role of criticality in their education, and their experiences of it. The themes portray a range of lived experiences that are complex and multi-layered, and also the determination of each individual student in realising their ambitions of being qualified to teach in the UK. Of particular significance is the fact that for each student, teaching was regarded as a professional choice that s/he wanted to succeed in, even if the end result of their PGCE studies did not result in the ideal employment opportunities. Within the interviews, I wanted to find out whether the process of criticality that each student engaged in was perhaps transferrable across different educational contexts. In order to synthesise my findings from the super-ordinate themes, I consider my research questions in an attempt to evaluate the data. I then return to the definitions of criticality I outlined in the Literature Review chapter; critical thinking and critical being.

A majority of the students stated that their experiences of criticality was limited, and that rote learning was the norm. During the interviews, it seemed the students believed they had had little exposure to criticality, and were expected to follow teachers' instructions to achieve academic success in their studies previously. This reflects Freire's (1974) concept of the banking system of education in which the teacher imparts the knowledge to the students, who accept it without question. However, their responses lead to questions about the students' own cognisance of criticality, as well as their own sense of agency. Having never been questioned about their understanding of criticality, they reflected on their previous educational journeys and compared how criticality was interpreted between the countries they had studied in (where they spent their formative years in education and the UK). From these reflections, they posited that there were expectations based on cultural traditions, as well as aspects of their own personal attributes from their experiences

that may have led to certain behaviours when engaging in criticality. For some, criticality was a concept they engaged in but they either did not know the language to express it as criticality, or they stated it was something that impacted their whole life without really realising it. Thus, it was evident that they were not cognisant of criticality and how it manifested itself in their choices and decisions in their education, as well as throughout their lives. It was clear in all the interviews that each student had an understanding of criticality. S/he was able to clarify their views and reflect on their practice when in tutorials. A few participants explained how they developed an understanding of academic writing conventions required for this level of study during their previous studies:

'... I never really gave it much thought. My assignments were give two views, two good points, bad points at the end or give a conclusion' (Isra)

Those students who had completed some form of ITE programme previously spoke about their experiences of criticality during these courses, inferring that as with ITE programmes across the world, critical analysis is core to a teacher's development (Myers and Simpson, 1997; Cheng, Tang et al, 2012; Kaplan and Lewis, 2013). However, there were also differences in how they expressed their understanding of criticality; Daisy and George remained determined they could evidence it, Daniel had an understanding but had underlying anxieties from his time in school. This unwillingness to question or clarify points in class was perhaps linked to a sense of a lack of agency he believed he had in expressing his views openly due to teachers' retorts to his questions. This reluctance may also have been as a result of his own lack of confidence.

For others, in line with theories around critical thinking which may be tested (Hyytinen, Nissinen et al, 2015; O'Hare and McGuinness, 2015; Hatcher, 2011), learning to write critically was perhaps 'mechanical', which links in to the concepts of critical thinking skills (Kilmova, 2013) I outlined in chapter 2. It seems that by having the opportunity to reflect on criticality, they were able to evaluate their previous educational contexts and how criticality developed within these.

Understanding criticality varied across the participants, with some stating that criticality impacted their whole lives and others making a distinction between

knowledge, context and criticality. Others initially stated they did not understand criticality or they did not engage in it, however on further questioning, they offered some insight into their understanding when asked about personal life decisions they had made about their families that required critical discussions with their extended family and personal reflections. On questioning them about their life decisions, the majority of the students made a clear distinction between making decisions about their personal circumstances, and being critical on the PGCE, stating that when making personal life choices, it only affected them so it was more 'straightforward'. Developing criticality seemed to revolve around resources and skills, such as reading critically and researching, which may be practised in exercises when developing critical thinking skills (Holmes, Weiman et al, 2015; Pontzer Ehrhardt, 2011).

Throughout the interviews, all the students tried to communicate how they understood criticality, but for some, it seemed to be easier to highlight what they believed to be evidence of criticality. It was also interesting that many of the students did not initially make the link between criticality in life and criticality in education, perhaps suggesting that the thought processes are different in terms of how they perceive criticality. When considering how individuals develop confidence and self-determination, this can occur through a sense of agency in making life decisions and choices. The majority of the students in my study shared that they had little opportunity to develop confidence in their studies due to a lack of opportunity within the education systems they had been part of. A high-stake testing curriculum made great demands of the teachers and students, therefore opportunities to question and reflect were limited. The reasons for this included a traditional curriculum that remained part of the education systems following colonial rule (India, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, Tanzania) or the need to compete on a world platform (China), as well as cultural traditions which placed great importance on teachers who were deemed to be always right.

As Fox (1994) and Canagarajah (1999) stated, criticality may be interpreted differently depending on international students' experiences of schooling and education generally. This seemed to be mirrored in the students I interviewed as well. All the students stated that they valued all their experiences of education, with

some stating that in England, there seemed to be more freedom to express themselves, which was different from their previous experiences. However, this also need further probing, and some acknowledged that they had positive experiences of their education in their countries, but exposure to a British academic system left them comparing the systems, and on the surface, it seemed the British system was perhaps more 'advanced'.

They seemed to develop criticality on the PGCE through reflection and discussion in class, which for many, was different to what they were used to. Those that had previously experienced such environments remembered their teachers with appreciation and continued to value their impact. There also appeared to be a negative impression of their previous education, which perhaps Habermas (1987) warns about in his analysis of lifeworlds, However, when I questioned the students during the interviews, it was during this time that some realised they had had some positive experiences that they could have made use of during the PGCE. Being a student in different contexts seemed to demand learning a new way to be a student in which they had agency and could question (Shor and Freire, 1987; Giroux, 1987). This seemed to be something each developed in their own way and within their own timeframes.

Cultural difference seemed to impact the students' understanding of criticality as expected on the PGCE in terms of their relationships with teachers, their levels of confidence and their ability to fully immerse themselves as student-teachers. Their previous identities as students seemed to include defined roles as passive recipients of knowledge and an expectation that their teachers were fully in control. Culturally, this was linked to the importance placed on education and the power given to teachers from their families and peers. If students did not follow the expected 'norms' of behaviour as students, they were either reprimanded or perhaps labelled as unsuccessful. Participating in PGCE class discussions was a challenge for some as it was not part of their educational experiences, and in fact, their views may have been discouraged and silenced. This may be questioned further; how did these 'negative' experiences lead to them becoming successful as students since they had qualified as teachers and had been employed in schools and universities in their

countries? When studying on the PGCE, were they part of a new academic culture that did not consider or value their previous experiences (Maringe and Jenkins, 2015), and so trying to adapt to a new lifeworld?

Culture and intercultural identity (Cantle, 2012; Meer and Modood, 2012) play a large part in how the students engaged with criticality. The students were trying to adapt to a new way of thinking and working, and yet was there an opportunity for them to share what they already know and had experienced to then build on and develop criticality as defined by Freire (1972)?

Critical thinking and critical being

I return to the two definitions of criticality highlighted in the literature review, and consider how the findings may lead to some revisions to my earlier framework for criticality (Figure 1). The teaching of critical thinking skills, similar to Study Skills, is essential for students to synthesise theories around reflection and academic reading and writing (Cottrell, 2013; Freeman and Stone, 2006), however, when referring to the context I examine for this study, I suggest that PGCE students' development of criticality is impacted by affective factors, such as levels of confidence and fear that developed as a result of their previous educational experiences. Therefore, understanding reflection as defined by Schön (1983), and practising academic reading and writing exercises, while essential in the journey to become a reflective, critical teacher, is part of the process of critical thinking.

Turning to Dunne's (2015) definition of a 'critical being' as someone who is the author of their life demands a deeper consideration of factors around power, identity and emancipation (Freire, 1972). As the students I interviewed have educational experiences from diverse contexts, they may be encouraged to forge new identities and forget their previous lifeworlds within a new, powerful system they are part of on the PGCE (Habermas, 1987). However, as Habermas (1987) continues in his analysis, it is not possible to change the system to be part of a new academic culture, a new lifeworld may be the only way that the students can be successful, critical teachers.

From the students' interviews, it seems that there are multiple factors that lead to an understanding and engagement with criticality. Some of these include the ability to reflect and question, as well as how confident and determined they are to succeed. From their responses, they are able to value the importance of criticality within their lives, as well as within the PGCE, which perhaps infers that a critical being is one who can engage with criticality across different contexts. Thus, PGCE students need to possibly engage in praxis through their understanding of criticality by being aware of the knowledge they share with their students, and the relationships they form with their students to move away from the banking system and disrupt the status quo in the classroom (Freire, 1972).

Confidence and cultural educational 'norms' are additional factors the students spoke about when discussing criticality. Moving from one country to another meant that for some, a lack of confidence became a barrier in how they engaged in the PGCE classes, which could suggest a link with Habermas' (1987) theory of lifeworlds. However, asking them about their experiences was crucial to understanding their development of criticality for them and myself as the tutor. It is also crucial that as the tutor, I question my own assumptions about the students. At the beginning of the PGCE, the students' apparent lack of ability to be critical seemed to suggest that they did not understand what was expected in terms of criticality for the PGCE. However, this was clearly not the case when I discussed their work in tutorials, and listened to their experiences of education during the interviews of their life stories. Their reluctance to include a critical perspective in their written work, and express their views in class was not due to a lack of understanding of criticality. Rather, it was due to their previous experiences that resulted in affective factors (fear, lack of confidence) coming to the fore, as well as the fact they were studying in an unfamiliar environment where expectations may have been unclear on the part of the teacher educators. As Ngozi Adichie (2009) stresses, it was important I heard their life stories, and not just assume a lack of understanding. Students needed opportunities to express themselves and develop a sense of agency in their own abilities and ambitions, and the space to be cognisant of their understanding of criticality.

Cultural educational norms played a major part in how the students engaged with criticality. For many of the students, the traditional classroom placed the teacher in a position of power, with a focus on sufficient knowledge to pass exams. Passing exams was the mark of success for the teachers, students and their families and peers. Within the PGCE, there are no exams, and the pedagogic knowledge the students engage in demands a critical lens. Therefore, when initially it seemed as if they struggled with criticality on the PGCE, some of the students felt as if they had failed, and as a tutor, I did not consider their previous successes when evaluating their PGCE work. Criticality was not unfamiliar to them; they were unaware that their previous experiences had value for the PGCE. Each student benefitted from their previous educational experiences, and placed great value on education, leading to a determination to teach in this country. Therefore, they valued knowledge, and also reflected on the knowledge they had been introduced to, and some started to consider the process of knowledge within their teaching during the PGCE.

As a result of the above and the findings from the interviews I conducted, I consider a revised framework in developing criticality in Figure 3:

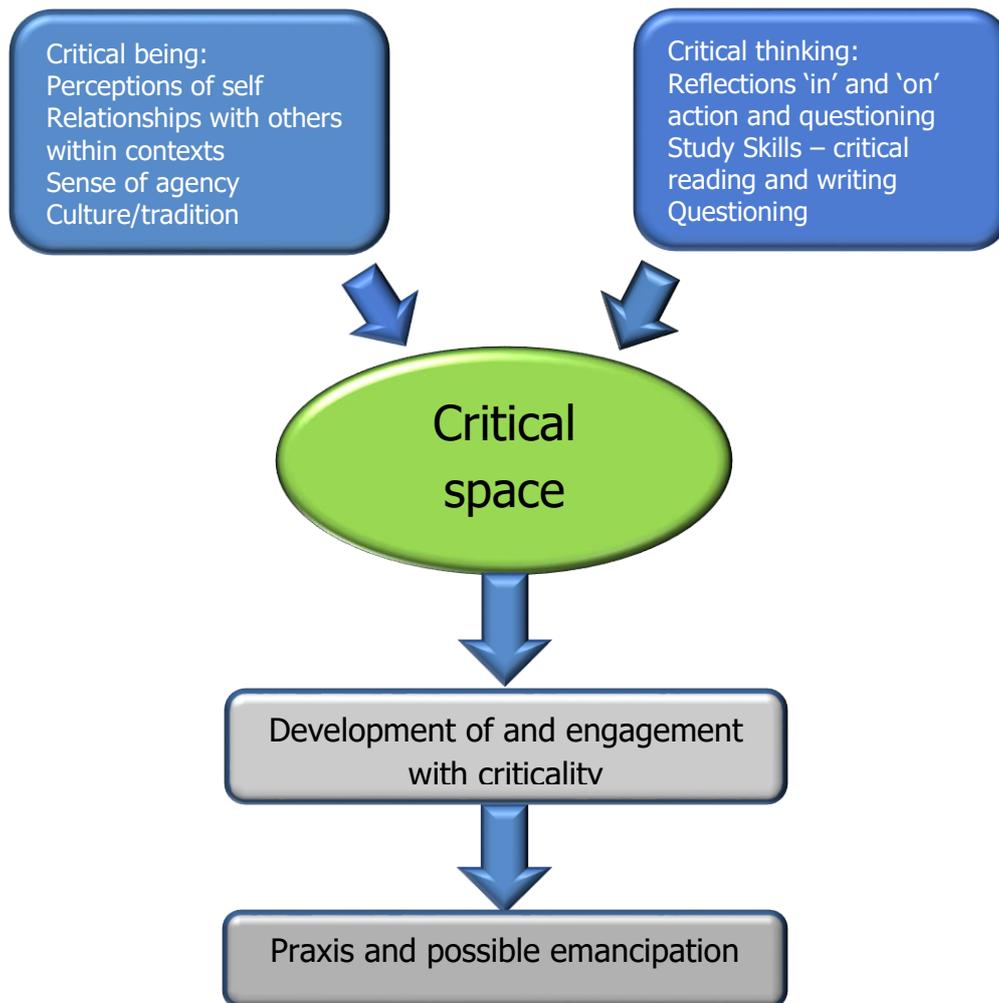


Figure 3 – A revised framework for criticality

Figure 3 is a revised version of the framework initially introduced in Chapter 2, (Figure 1), in which I consider a way of approaching criticality that takes into account students' previous experiences, as well as a consideration of the process of criticality which includes the definitions of 'critical thinking' and 'critical being'. I begin by switching 'critical thinking' and 'critical being' from Figure 1 to stress the importance of the affective reasons in developing criticality, and also continue with the 'mechanics' of 'critical thinking skills'. The students talked about a lack of confidence, and being educated in a culture of fear of punishment which impacted how they engaged with and participated in the PGCE sessions. Such anxieties still exist to some degree as students are involved in classroom debates about pedagogy, context and application. However, as the debates are framed around pedagogy, it may be that students do not feel they are able or allowed to critique theories that

they may have been told are 'right' by their teachers in the past. Certainly, it appears that the students' experiences of living in former British colonies and following a British curriculum seem to have left them believing they cannot be critical of western educational 'experts' (Joshi, 2005) because this is what they were taught in their previous establishments. The critical space in Figure 3 allows for such debates to take place, and for questioning of previously-held beliefs and assumptions.

Creating this 'critical space' in which students and tutors can have opportunities to reflect on what is expected in terms of criticality, including 'the qualities and expectations of academic success' (Hammersley-Fletcher and Hanley, 2016, p.991) may also help tutors to consider what this actually means for the PGCE and the students to become critically reflective teachers. Tutors can take advantage of this critical space to reflect on their own 'biases' (Hammersley-Fletcher and Hanley, 2015, p.991) about their views of the international students' previous educational experiences, thus moving beyond the 'single story' (Ngozi Adichie, 2009). It may also offer tutors an opportunity to reflect on whose knowledge of pedagogy is shared as advocated by Dunne (2015) and Hammersley-Fletcher and Hanley (2016).

The critical space offers the students a platform to be heard as individuals with varied experiences who may have an understanding of criticality that perhaps needs to be reflected on and revised to address the academic requirements of the PGCE. However, more importantly, the space is vital for the students' experiences to be acknowledged and even encouraged (Freire, 1985) so that they can share their conceptions of criticality, and perhaps increase their confidence in their own ability to be critical.

This space includes aspects of critical thinking skills, such as academic writing conventions, and being able to question and reflect, all of which are vital in terms of professionalism (ETF, 2014). Tutors may focus on aspects of critical thinking skills, such as academic writing conventions in teaching criticality to students, with little consideration of how the students apply this knowledge. In order to be successful on the course, the students may learn the writing conventions and apply them in their

work, but with little understanding of why the conventions are important as part of the process of criticality. The students are thus adapting to a new lifeworld by disregarding their previous writing conventions, and we as the tutors may not be giving them the space to perhaps link the two. Whether this is 'academic imperialism' (Maringe and Jenkins, 2015, p.612) is contestable, however it is fair to state that for the students, it is challenging to discard their previous lifeworld (Appiah, 2005), and perhaps unfair to expect this of them, which may be what we suggest as the tutors.

For teacher educators, this space (Fig 3) is crucial in enabling students to reflect on their previous educational experiences and dispel any assumptions tutors may have of international students lacking understanding of criticality. Students come into HE with diverse experiences and knowledge, and it is the responsibility of teacher educators to acknowledge and value these. Thus, we may need to examine our induction processes so that a critical space may become part of the course induction structure for all students. For students to feel confident in expressing their views on pedagogy, there needs to be more than a structural process of transition into British academia. Therefore, in addition to formal introductions to systems (academic writing conventions, searching for and referencing sources), students' experiences need to be heard and considered in the planning of the PGCE programme, starting with the induction process. Tutors may also need to be aware that criticality may be interpreted differently by such diverse students, and the only way to know this is to listen and ask questions. As George told me in astonishment at the end of the second interview:

'... I ... I had the skill but I didn't have a name for it by then'

thus revealing that he had an understanding of criticality before starting the PGCE, but he did not realise the terms used in class. As a result of the interviews with George, after we had finished the second interview, he told me that the whole process had really changed him. On sharing his life story with me, he realised how far he had come in his journey and the obstacles he had faced to achieve his ambition to be a qualified teacher in the UK. This had filled him with great joy, and he had decided to write up his life story and share it with others to inspire them. The

critical space I refer to Figure 3 may enable students to develop their confidence and sense of agency in how they evidence their understanding of criticality on the PGCE.

Lifeworlds and praxis

An additional factor that also needs to be considered is the importance of the critical space to offer students the opportunity to reflect on their own identities and life journeys as they develop criticality. Since they are moving from one lifeworld to another, the students may feel pressured to discard their previous ways of learning to adopt the new British academic expectations for the PGCE. Within this study, it may be argued that the international PGCE students are in a 'colonized lifeworld' (McLean, 2006, p. 11); they are in unfamiliar roles as students and teachers in a different country, and in an unfamiliar setting among peers who are familiar with the western academic culture (who themselves may be lacking in confidence in their own abilities to critically analyse). They have to work within the administrative boundaries of the PGCE programme, which are stipulated by the HEI and broader professional teaching standards. At the same time, they come with a lifeworld that was familiar to them in a different system, and the system of the PGCE is, for the majority, unknown, and also holds all the power. There may be aspects of the new system that are familiar, but they may not know how to navigate the system within this new lifeworld. The power in the system they are in as PGCE students has interrupted their previous lifeworld, so perhaps their former lifeworld is being destroyed by the system, or it may be that their lifeworld is considered to have little value or relevance in this new system that they are students in.

In order to manage their own studies, the international students may need to discard their previous lifeworlds because of this 'colonization' when they are learning the protocols of western academic culture. The challenge is being able to assimilate to perhaps create a new lifeworld, in this case through their understanding and ability to critically analyse pedagogy, which they are able to do within the framework of their previous lifeworld. Their previous educational experiences may impact how they engage with criticality, because their previous identities as students are part of a lifeworld that is now 'colonized' in a new academic environment. Baxter's (2011)

criticism of Habermas' definition of lifeworld offers some into the role of the individual and the lifeworld and the part the individual plays in wider society (McLean, 2006). During the interviews, the students did self-reflect and thus consider what they bring to the 'system', in this case, the PGCE programme. Through this study, I may have raised awareness of the individual student's sense of agency, as can be seen through Priya's and George's comments. It may be that they were unaware of their own understanding of criticality from their education in their home countries because it did not seem to 'fit in' with the demands of the western educational programme.

Within their previous educational experiences, it may be that criticality is similar to being able to 'describe' according to the western concept of critical analysis (Maringe and Jenkins, 2015), or that they are expecting to listen and take notes (Robinson-Pant, 2005). Therefore, perhaps there needs to be consideration of culture, race and gender, which McLean (2006) argues are legitimate criticisms of Habermas' work. The anxiety that Priya spoke of on realising that she had failed in her first essay was real and led to a lack of confidence in her own abilities despite having qualified and trained in her specialist field in India. This example of 'colonization' as referred to by Habermas (1987), is the 'system' potentially destroying Priya's previous lifeworld because the new 'system' she was part of on the PGCE placed little value on her previous educational experiences beyond being accepted onto the PGCE. The 'system' she was part of on the PGCE may have led her to have doubts about her own abilities, and even question her professional knowledge and skills, all of which are part of her identity.

The critical space I refer to in Figure 3 may offer Priya the opportunity to consider how her lifeworld can play a part in changing the system she is now part of (Baxter, 2011). By reflecting on their previous lifeworld and considering what they bring to the new 'system', the students may learn more about the new 'system', and thus feel more confident about being a part of it. In this way, a new lifeworld may emerge that does not enforce 'academic imperialism' (Maringe and Jenkins, 2015, p. 612), nor does it oblige the students to discard their previous identity, which Appiah (2005) believes is not possible.

This may be the case for all the students, whether they feel like Priya that their previous education holds little value, or like Dorina who is confident and secure in her educational experiences and journey. The critical space may allow the students time to re-evaluate their previous educational journeys, and find a way of working in the 'spaces-in-between', rather than feeling forced to discard their previous lifeworld.

As the students are able to have this critical space to develop and engage with criticality, I suggest that this may lead on to a deeper understanding of praxis, and perhaps empowerment for the students. Praxis leads to transformation (Freire, 1985), and for the PGCE students, this needs time to reflect on and assimilate. It requires an understanding of our own power (Ledwith, 2007) which can impact our students. For the international students, praxis may be particularly challenging when they are familiar with environments where passing exams was the only focus, but understanding praxis may enable them to transform their practice as professionals, which the critical space may allow.

By understanding praxis, Freire (1972) argues that the students are liberated from the status quo, and so teachers are empowered to act in the way that is most appropriate for their students. Within the establishments that the PGCE students are teaching in, there are institutional pressures and expectations they have to comply with, but in terms of classroom pedagogy, the student-teachers may have the freedom to adapt teaching approaches for their own contexts and students. To do this, they need to critically analyse the pedagogy to justify their choices. The critical space may allow for this so that the students feel 'free' to adapt their teaching approaches, and so feel empowered. However, as Biesta (2013) states, emancipation is part of an individual's journey and cannot be 'offered' by others. As a consequence, I refer to 'possible emancipation' in the final stages because each individual student can believe s/he is free through their development and understanding of criticality and praxis. What is essential is that the students have access to an environment where they can debate, reflect, challenge, question and consider their previous understandings and experiences to develop into critically reflective teachers.

Conclusion to the discussion

This chapter has explored analysis of the students' life stories, and their understanding of criticality from their life experiences. The super-ordinate themes of **'perceptions of the self'**, **'relationships'** and **'culture/tradition'** have been identified and analysed using the principles of IPA which I defined in Chapter 3. The findings suggest that the students' development of criticality is impacted by their own personal characteristics, as well as external structural environments and the contexts they studied in. Of particular significance is the impact of the interviews on individual students during this study. By reflecting on their previous educational experiences, some students came to a realisation of their own agency and personal development; George and Isra reflected on the power of criticality for their own lives, and Meenakshi seemed to have matured in her own level of understanding. As a consequence of the process of analysis I went through, I offer a framework that may offer the students opportunities to share and clarify their understandings about notions of criticality, and in which tutors may also reflect on their own academic expectations of the students. The critical space includes opportunities to develop or consolidate the 'mechanics' of criticality, which are of equal importance for the students to qualify as critically reflective teachers.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

Introduction

Within this concluding chapter, I reflect on the key findings from my study, and how these address my research questions. I consider the students' experiences of the whole interview process and the insight I have gained from the life story interviews that enabled me to capture a nuanced understanding of how they engage with criticality. Following a brief summary of the originality of my research, I outline some of the possible practical implications of my study for the PGCE course structure, and defining professionalism in the post-compulsory sector. I also reflect on the limitations of my study and some of the problems I encountered, before expanding on further research that may follow as a result of my study. I finally reflect on my whole doctoral journey and personal development as a research student which has shaped and may change my professional journey.

Reflections on my findings

My aim in this study was to gain insight into how international students on a PGCE programme interpret criticality, and the factors that may influence their understanding and engagement with it in a British academic culture. I wanted to listen to their life stories and previous educational experiences as these offered insight into how they identified as students and critically reflective professionals.

Questioning the ten students about their previous educational experiences included discussions about their life experiences, all of which played a part in developing criticality. Following analysis of the data using IPA, I identified three super-ordinate themes: **'perceptions of the self'**, **'relationships'** and **'culture/tradition'**. These, along with the three sub-themes within each super-ordinate theme, are discussed in depth in the previous chapter.

For some educators of international students, criticality or critical thinking skills as expected in the west are lacking in these students (Bramhall, Gray et al, 2012; O'Sullivan and Guo, 2011) for a variety of reasons, including political and cultural. Some of the political factors include the existence of a curriculum from a colonial era

that includes little consideration of the context (as expressed by Raabiya, Daniel, Daisy), as well as a prescribed curriculum and assessment system that offers little flexibility (as explained by Ling, Priya, Alim). Cultural factors include a tradition of perceiving teachers as 'gurus' who cannot be questioned (Priya, Meenakshi, Daniel), as well as familial pressure to be academically successful by passing exams for which knowledge is memorised (Meenakshi, Ling).

However, the students that I interviewed are international in terms of their educational experiences, and also British. Their intercultural identities and aspirations to be teachers in Britain reveal complex factors that impact how they navigate the PGCE course and subsequent journeys as qualified teachers in the UK, all of which require criticality to be evidenced. The students do not lack understanding of criticality but seem to face some reluctance in expressing their views and debate issues in class or within their writing.

My findings suggest that there are multiple factors that need to be considered in the development and nurturing of criticality, and tutors need to be pro-active in acknowledging potential barriers students may face in their capacity to be critical, particularly when they are new to a British academic curriculum. As stated earlier, these barriers may be personal to each student, or may be a consequence of their previous educational experiences where questioning may have been discouraged due to the educational 'norms' of the countries they studied in. It is crucial, however, to consider each student's life experiences, and in the case of this study, reflect on the experiences the international students arrive with. The students I interviewed have demonstrated high levels of criticality through their life experiences and decision-making processes, and this needs to be recognised and valued. It is a tutor's responsibility to consider how this level of criticality can be applied to an academic context through debate of familiar concepts and modelling the expectations of criticality for the PGCE. Providing students with opportunities to share their experiences and reflections of how criticality develops as outlined in Figure 3 is essential to increase students' confidence and sense of agency, including an awareness of what is meant by criticality (George, Isra), as well as

affective factors, such as levels of confidence (Priya, Dorina) and the super-ordinate themes I identified focus on these.

The super-ordinate themes enabled me to focus on each individual's life experiences while trying to find similarities across the interviews. However, IPA also allowed me to consider differences between the students, which became more essential in my analysis. This was because as I continued with the interviews, I realised that despite similarities that students had in terms of geography and/or language, there were differences in how each approached their education and development of criticality. Therefore, the following from Smith, Flowers et al (2009, p. 32) is important:

'IPA is concerned with the detailed examination of human lived experiences. And it aims to conduct this examination in a way which as far as possible enables the experience to be expressed in its own terms, rather than according to predefined category systems'

While analysing the interviews and identifying the super-ordinate and sub-themes, I was able to consider differences between students' responses. An example of this was during an interview with Ling in which she raised the matter of age; being older meant criticality was 'easier' because an individual had more life experiences to refer to. This was something I had not found in others' responses, however, the life story interview process enabled her to clarify her thoughts and offer further explanations in the subsequent interview. Thus, IPA allows for the individual differences to be present, while trying to find similarities across lived experiences. This seemed to make the analytical process perhaps more complex, yet when asking questions about individuals' lived experiences, I gained valuable insight into how each developed an understanding of criticality which was complex in itself.

An additional aspect that I valued was the life story interview itself. It was hugely rewarding for me to hear the students' life stories, and it seemed to offer the students an opportunity to stop and reflect on their life journeys, and in many cases, realise how far they had travelled, not just in their development of criticality, but in their personal and professional lives as well. One of the students enjoyed the whole experience to such an extent that on meeting him several weeks after I had

interviewed him the second time, he told me that he was inspired to write his life story for others to read. As Atkinson (1998, p. 8) reminds us:

'... a life story ... is a way to better understand the past and the present and a way to leave a personal legacy for the future'

This was a perspective I had not previously considered; the powerful impact of reflecting for the students themselves. I had considered issues that may have been sensitive for the students, and listened and watched for changes in tone and/or non-verbal communication during the interviews, but the positive impact was not something I had considered.

Throughout this study, I have attempted to address the research questions referred to at the beginning of this chapter and within previous chapters. Asking the students explicitly about their experiences and understanding of criticality led to some personal revelations for some of the students, and yet considering the first two questions, it seems that there is no agreed consensus as to what criticality is. Criticality was defined in many ways, with some referring to the importance of reading widely and broadly, others realising that they had a personal stake in developing criticality, and others reflecting on their life journeys and who had helped them to develop criticality. The third question focussed on the students' ability to manage the academic expectations on the course, and this was interesting. Apart from Dorina, each student seemed to have detached themselves from their previous educational experiences (discarded their previous lifeworld) and appeared to express some dissatisfaction with the way they had been educated in other countries. By asking further questions about their experiences in school and university, the students seemed to come to a realisation that their previous experiences had value. The answers to this question were significant in encouraging the students to reflect on their own journeys as professionals and future teachers in this country. The final question about cultural difference was, I believe, not fully answered; the students did reflect on the importance of their interactions with others as they developed criticality, but the whole question needed to be more explicitly addressed. The question itself was too broad to be able to reach a definitive answer as my study focuses on culture as whole as well as the individual's culture. Culture is linked to

may factors which I have highlighted in the themes I have written about; confidence, relationships with others, the context and so on that makes this question perhaps too 'simplistic'. Culture also impacts identity and how the student-teachers saw themselves as students and new teachers. However, it seems that the students came to a realisation of their own self-worth as they took part in the interviews, and this perhaps led to an increase in confidence in how they engaged with criticality.

The whole process of life story interviews and analysis using IPA led to a deeper awareness of affective reasons, such as confidence and fear, that may influence how individuals understand and engage in criticality. The 'mechanics' of criticality are essential, but perhaps we, as tutors, do not appreciate the need for students to be able to feel comfortable in their learning environment to express themselves without fear. My findings and discussion in the previous chapter detail this in more depth.

Originality of my research

Contextualising my study in teacher education in the post-compulsory sector, and focusing on the students' experiences perhaps adds a new dimension to the limited amount of research of the PCE sector. Much of the research of this sector is focused on the impact of policy, and how teachers try to manage the external pressures that they face. My study focuses on student-teachers rather than policy, and gathers data that may help teacher-educators to structure a PGCE course to allow for students to fully engage in and evidence criticality as required through the professional standards.

An additional aspect of my study is that the students I chose are 'international' in terms of their educational and life experiences, yet also British citizens who have lived in the UK for many years. This is an alternative definition of an 'international student', which most researchers define as those students who study abroad for a course to then return to their countries with their qualifications. The PGCE international students straddle contexts and identities, and yet when they begin the PGCE, we disregard their 'international' identity because they have lived and worked in the UK prior to starting the course. This suggests the dangers of assuming that as all students have met the criteria for a programme, they may be a homogenous

group who will grasp the complexities of British academic culture at the same level and pace.

In an attempt to understand the students' experiences and frame these within a theoretical context, I refer to aspects of Freire's analysis of critical pedagogy and compare this with Habermas' theory of lifeworlds. There is a wealth of research on Freire, and implementation of critical pedagogy within teacher education, however the comparison with Habermas is perhaps a new contribution to this research, particularly within the context I have based my study. A critical theory approach is also different to much of the literature in FE which is mostly focused on the impact of policy on the sector (Hodkinson, 2008), management structures (Page, 2013), and the professional development of teachers (Orr, 2009; O'Leary, 2006).

In terms of methodology, using IPA as an analytical tool is uncommon for educational research. As stated in Chapter 3, IPA is mostly used within the field of psychology, however the principles are becoming more widely used across disciplines, including education. IPA offers insights into individual students' experiences that are invaluable in understanding how they see themselves when becoming qualified professionals in the post-compulsory sector. These insights may also contribute to tutors' further awareness of individual differences and similarities in their students.

Implications of the study

As this is a small-scale phenomenological study of individual students' lived experiences, it is idiographic and focuses on capturing the nuances of students' understandings and feelings as they developed and engaged with criticality as a result of their experiences. As a consequence, my study cannot claim that the professional standards or policies around the professionalisation of teachers in the FE sector are in need of a review. This may arise in subsequent discussions at national meetings/conferences about professional standards, and what it means to be a '**reflecting** and **enquiring**' teacher who is able to think '**critically**' (ETF, 2014), however, my findings do not focus on this at a national level. My study suggests that changes to the PGCE course structure may be implemented as a result

of the data I have collected and analysed to enable students to engage with criticality.

The course structure at present demands that students understand the British academic standards and requirements as a result of their previous qualifications, and can navigate their way through the PGCE criteria. My study suggests that there is a need to review the course structure and offer students opportunities to share their previous educational experiences and development of criticality. This opportunity, which I refer to as the 'critical space' (Figure 3 in Chapter 4), may be space that enables students to engage in sharing their understanding of criticality, and the reasons for its importance in qualifying as a teacher in the UK. Thus, the space becomes a focus on criticality and its application for the PGCE, as well as perhaps a space to understand the importance of praxis. It may allow students an opportunity to share their life stories, discover commonalities in experiences and understanding of criticality, as well as clarify any misconceptions, such as Alim's initial response during my first interview with him when he stated that in maths, they '*didn't have to do critical analysis*', or that:

'students from the Indian sub-continent and the Middle East, North Africa, they do not have any perception about critical analysis' (Alim, interview 1)

Such preconceptions need to be debated in the context of the PGCE, and providing the students a platform and space where this can happen may allow for this. The space then becomes time built into the course to reflect on previous experiences, and study relevant literature that examines notions of criticality. It may be taking the model described by Greenman and Dieckmann (2004) in Chapter 2, and revising it to suit the context of the PGCE. The space may be part of the first 2 weeks of the programme, and then additional weeks throughout the PGCE as appropriate to the Modules being studied at the time, however it is crucial to include opportunities for students to reflect on their previous educational experiences and identities as students to really develop criticality. I see the critical space as a way of perhaps merging the pedagogy and the practice more explicitly by asking questions about the students' educational experiences, which Greenman and Dieckmann (2004) advocate.

An additional factor that may be a result from my study is making use of the critical space to consolidate pre-existing knowledge and understanding in reading and writing critically, and using appropriate academic conventions. As I have stressed the importance and need for Study Skills in the Literature Review, this space may allow for practice of these skills as required on the PGCE, and may include cross-department collaboration with involvement from academic study skills colleagues and/or library staff. It may also be of benefit to involve subject mentors to participate in the discussion about criticality as they may offer insight from a discipline/subject perspective. However, I see the main focus of the critical space as one where the students can share their experiences of developing criticality.

Limitations of my study

Reflecting on the limitations of my study, as stated earlier, as it is small-scale and gathers data from individual life stories, I cannot make generalisations about all international students' experiences when on the PGCE. Despite including Dorina in my sample of ten students, as she was the 'ideal' student in terms of her understanding and conception of criticality, I cannot claim homogeneity for students who have been educated in other countries. Each student has their own individual experiences which has led to an understanding of criticality that may be developed further in terms of the PGCE, however, as is evident in the previous chapter in which I discussed my findings, the experiences are varied and diverse. I also did not choose to interview 'home' students, that is those who had been educated in the UK and were familiar with the system. Having many years of experience of teaching the PGCE, I knew that all students initially found criticality challenging when evidencing it in their work and practice, however I decided to focus on students who had been educated in other countries. Therefore, my study is limited to specific students, which may have been because we shared similarities in backgrounds and cultures, but again, I cannot claim that all students on the PGCE face the same challenges with criticality.

The use of IPA to analyse the data has been informative, offering me insight into the students' lives. However, my findings are reliant on the students' contributions and how fully they engaged in the interviews and my style of questioning. The semi-

structured interview was reliant on how I framed my questions, which had a dual role of being 'empathic *and* questioning' (Smith, Flowers et al, 2009, p. 36). Therefore, my questions had to show that I welcomed and was open to the students' responses, but that I was also asking them to examine their experiences from alternative perspectives, which was all part of the hermeneutic cycle. Therefore, the students and I were co-constructing knowledge and understanding of criticality (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015) and my questions had to allow this. I was aware that there were times when my questions were too 'open', and students responded with silence, which did not allow for co-construction of knowledge.

An additional factor I realised was that I was asking the students to recall memories that were, for some, in the distant past, therefore I was reliant on their interpretations of those experiences. Although this is the double hermeneutics aspect that Smith, Flowers et al (2009) clarify is part of the IPA process, I was aware that the students' memories of their schooldays may have been hazy. Despite this, some of the students, on reading the transcripts of the interviews, clarified their stories if they thought it necessary, and used the second interviews to do this as well. I also perhaps needed to schedule the second interviews differently; once at the start of the PGCE, and another near the end of the first year. This may have allowed for a 'clearer' measure of how they developed criticality, however, this was not possible due to the students' availability.

The stories the students shared with me were rich and fascinating to listen to. However, my study does not fully give justice to the individuals' lived experiences because of the fact that it is a thesis, and so limited in how much I can include. The students shared much with me, and there were other themes I could have explored in more depth which I could not. This may be why Smith, Flowers et al (2009) suggest a smaller number of participants when conducting an IPA study. By interviewing three or four participants, I could have interviewed them multiple times, and really captured a more thorough and richer narrative from each individual, which would have allowed for differences to be analysed in more depth. Despite only interviewing ten students, I may have omitted some nuances in their experiences, or

simplified the analysis of the super-ordinate themes and sub-themes in an effort to include each student's narrative.

Further research

As part of my framework in developing criticality, I suggest a critical space which needs further consideration and study. What exactly will I include in this space and how? There is a need to examine how we encourage useful and valuable discussion and debate in the critical space. In this space, the students will be encouraged to share their previous educational experiences and understanding of criticality, however, I cannot presume that by asking students to talk to each other, they will know how and what to discuss and share. I also see this critical space as a place where students may be honest and take risks in defining criticality, which may be a challenge. I consider a focus on dialogic pedagogy may offer some insight into the way the critical space can be designed and how it may be used for all students. Dialogic pedagogy takes some aspects of critical pedagogy and analyses approaches to classroom discussion. Matusov's (2015) work in teacher education suggests approaches in how to construct culturally responsive dialogue among teachers and students when there is a difference in the discourse cultures between the two. This, along with Mercer's (2000) extensive work on language and thought, may offer some theoretical approaches that can help to create an environment where criticality is debated from many different perspectives.

As discussed within the limitations of my study earlier, by focusing on the educational experiences of international students, I did not consider all the other students' backgrounds and experiences. This is where my study can continue as gathering the views of 'home' students on how they develop and engage with criticality may lead to further insight and perhaps reveal similarities in experiences, which, at one level, it seems the two do not share. Initially, it seems that all students struggle with criticality on the PGCE, so understanding why some students are able to navigate their way through this within a shorter time frame, or sharing how they developed criticality from others and in other ways may help to define criticality on the PGCE with more clarity.

Following on from this, I also see that it is important to carry out a similar study across other disciplines and not just within teacher education. Criticality across disciplines may be interpreted differently, and a similar study may allow for time to discover and analyse what it means within, for example, other social science subjects as well as science subjects. Barnett (1992) refers to a 'critical dialogue' in which courses in HE may be subject to review through processes that include this 'critical dialogue'. He defines 'critical dialogue' as an opportunity for those that are involved in the review to be self-critical. Thus, to carry out a review, teachers and students need to define criticality in the context of the disciplines they are working in. A study that offers an opportunity to define subject-specific criticality (if this is an agreed concept) as well as perhaps more 'generic' definitions of criticality may help in the review process, as well as provide some clarity in how criticality needs to be evidenced across disciplines. Whether this study takes an IPA approach, or a different analytical approach may be a point of discussion as part of a research project.

Reflections on my doctoral student journey

Reflecting on my journey so far, I have realised the journey is bound by multiple external factors that require flexibility and change. The students I selected initially agreed to sit with me twice to be interviewed, and this did not happen with three of them. Consequently, I feel the questions I wanted clarifying in the second interview have remained unanswered, so it seems like a partial story from them. I also realised the time between the interviews perhaps needed to be planned out more definitively as the students were not in a frame of mind to continue with the questions if too much time had lapsed between the interviews. Whether they had read the transcripts or not, there were times I recapped what had been discussed in the first interviews to continue with their life stories.

My own interviewing skills have developed as a result of this study. From having a prescribed list of questions to ask, to allowing for silences and thinking space, I learnt to adapt according to the individual student and their responses, and to ensure they were in charge of directing the interview. A life story interview demands such a process, but I struggled to find a balance initially. This in particular, was a

great learning experience for me, as coming from a teaching background, silence in the classroom was uncomfortable and I needed to fill it with further questions.

Making use of IPA to analyse the large amount of data has been a steep learning curve. Having Smith, Flowers et al's (2009) prescriptive steps in how to analyse the data was extremely useful, yet I continuously doubt whether I have done justice to the students' lived experiences in my analysis. Including brief vignettes was one way of giving the students a voice in my study, however there is so much more I could have included about each individual's experiences and stories. I have tried to do this through the discussion in Chapter 4 by including relevant extracts from the interviews I conducted, but I know so much more about each student that is missing in this study. Much of this has been about their lives rather than focusing on their development of criticality, however, I am certain that the more self-belief an individual has in their experiences, the more confidently they can engage in criticality. Consequently, trying to create a narrative from the data and also build a picture of each individual's life story has been about balance, and there is much that I have been forced to exclude due to the fact I am writing within a limited word count.

In addition to this, I have questioned my own journey as a student and a teacher. Some of the students and I shared similar experiences and backgrounds, which made me reflect on where I have come from and how I reached some of my own goals, as well as how I may continue to reach others. Realising that these journeys are not linear and that each of us face challenges in how we reach our goals has been insightful. This is particularly relevant in terms of criticality; I remain uncertain how I developed my own understanding of criticality, even though I am aware that I am able to engage in criticality, and know when the students evidence it. Have I perhaps created a new lifeworld where I am able to work in the 'spaces-in-between'? My study began with the students I taught and their constant uncertainty about their own education and the journeys they had been on. In my view, it was evident they were able to engage in criticality through their life decisions and their educational experiences, but they remained unconvinced and I wished to find out why. I knew it was not as a result of their language skills, and as many had been teachers in their

countries of birth, they demonstrated an understanding of pedagogy that many of the 'home' students did not. Therefore, focusing on Study Skills sessions was not sufficient as criticality is about more than following steps to writing/reading/speaking critically. Previous experiences, fear and confidence were also part of the development of criticality, and as I conducted the interviews, I also realised how crucial it was to be confident. I believe there are parallels with the notion of 'imposter syndrome' where I feel I cannot say anything because I am not at the level of the reader/listener. However, this is something that I am constantly internalising myself as a student and potential 'researcher'.

In terms of my own development as a writer, I have spent a lot of time in developing a 'coherent' writing style, which has been a struggle for me. I create complex sentences when grappling with concepts that are unfamiliar to me, and at other times, I briefly write about concepts that I feel the reader would understand, therefore I do not need to spend time to ensure clarity. Building a narrative throughout the chapters has also been a challenge; at times I wrote sub-headings within chapters with no clear way of linking the ideas, again assuming the reader will create their own links through the act of reading. This has made me reflect on the whole writing process, and the multiple styles required depending on the purpose of the writing. Although I have done this throughout my studies, writing as a student and researcher, different styles are required and I still believe that I am learning and trying to develop these skills.

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Appendices

Appendix A: consent form (partially completed)

Information for participants for research project:

An exploration of the challenges faced by internationally educated students in managing criticality on an ITE programme in an FE college

Researcher: Jalpa Ruparelia

Purpose of study:

To explore whether international students' previous educational experiences impact on how they manage the PGCE course, particularly the need to be critically analytical. It is to found out about their previous education and understanding of criticality to see if this can be a factor in how they manage the academic rigours on the PGCE

Why are you being asked to take part?

I need to interview students who are or have been PGCE/Cert Ed students. They are students who have migrated to the UK and have been educated in their home countries before settling in the UK and then enrolling on the PGCE. The interviews will be recorded

What will happen if you decide to take part?

You will be asked to sign a consent form and I will ask to interview you several times. You can have a copy of the interviews. You can withdraw from this study at any time

Confidentiality

All the interviews you take part in will be treated and stored confidentially as required by the Ethics Code of the University of Leicester and the Data Protection Act 2003. Your interviews will be transcribed anonymously and you can check them for accuracy. Any publications from this study will protect participants' anonymity

How will you benefit from taking part and how much time will be required?

The interviews will be for an hour each time and will take place three times at suitable times for you. The study may help to develop the PGCE course and look at planning for sessions that embed an understanding of criticality from the start. I can let you have a copy of the study should you want it

Thank you for reading this. If you have any queries, please ask. If you are willing to take part in the study, please sign the consent form

Participant Consent Form

An exploration of the challenges faced by internationally educated students in managing criticality on an ITE programme in an FE college

Please circle your answers:

1. I understand the information sheet for this study and have had the opportunity to ask any questions
Yes/No
2. I agree to take part in the above study
Yes/No
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time
Yes/No
4. I agree to interviews being recorded
Yes/No

Name of participant:

Signature:

Date:

Your email:

Researcher:

Jalpa Ruparelia, email:

Appendix B: Experience of a participant, not just description

<p>Meenakshi: the questions were in the textbook and pretty much 60% has to come from that textbook</p> <p>J: so when you did your BSc, you never questioned what was in the textbook either?</p> <p>Meenakshi: emmm no because they never asked us to read before unless we had this one lecturer. We had a special connection with her. We were a group of I think six or seven, we had a special connection with her. So she kind of ... you know she was not the normal person as how she would be with the other group. So for us, she was like a friend as well, so the classes with her were not a formal class. We used to have casual classes as well. We just used to attend and discuss certain things, talk about things, even if it is not in a classroom, we used to sit in the staffroom, just chitchat about some things so ... that came because of that connection with her</p> <p><i>Inf. 1, p. 11-12, l. 27-34 and 1-11</i></p>	<p>all answers come from books - no questioning didn't question just accepted</p> <p>need before? that was this?</p> <p>special? - why? that was missing into after lectures? that is a 'normal person'?</p> <p>Treated you differently to others? why?</p> <p>If friendly, it's not a 'normal class'?</p> <p>that is a 'casual class'?</p> <p>that is difference between 'normal' + 'casual' class?</p> <p>that did she feel about this? clearly liked it but why?</p> <p>less strict - made them feel of a teacher - made them experience</p>
<p>J: I find that experience that you had in Egypt really interesting ... what was it like studying you know when you were in the lectures or in the seminars? What was it like?</p>	

Isra: I didn't feel at home, I felt an outsider. At XXXXXX (British HEI where she has studied at undergraduate level), I felt comfortable, everyone's my peers even though I was still a foreigner in a foreign country, I mean in a different country. I am a foreigner here in the UK, but I felt more of a foreigner in Egypt, if that makes sense, than I felt here, cos the UK, cos I've been here so for so long and I just felt that was more my home. I grew up there a bit more, plus Egypt, even though I was Muslim, Egypt is in an Islamic country, I still did not feel at home, and you know the language, I just felt a bit sneered at and judged for the clothing... by the way I was not dressed Islamically then

p. 6-7, l. 24-33 and 1-4

Study in Egypt vs a British HEI.

Why? - compared to lang. used for British HEI - opposites

did she feel an insider despite being an 'outsider'? (pregn)

felt @ home in UK - lang. of belonging

experiences in Egypt led to feelings of isolation? Didn't settle.

hard lang.

Experiences in Egypt led to feelings of isolation - look at use of lang. - barriers.

Appendix C: Frequency of a theme

George: I did Ndebele which is my language, it includes Ndebele and Zulu, South African language, and I did A level Divinity and I also did A level Sociology

J: Amazing! And you did all this yourself?

George: I did it myself with no-one and with the Divinity I got a B, and I got a C with Ndebele and I got an E with Sociology, which is, one point, very, very good because people were actually in a formal school, they can't get these points. So you see that actually taught me to be really really motivated. I had a lot of problems like in class because in primary school I was given a nickname 'masarira' which means 'the who lags behind'. So you see the teacher would make fun of me and all that, and my confidence was being knocked down, but somehow I would tell myself that despite all this, I wanted to prove myself and I want to have a good future and I really want to be somebody in life, you know. And little did I know, I think I shared with you, if you don't mind, I shared with you that I'm dyslexic. Most of the people they don't know that I am because I always find some coping strategies and things like that. So that's the thing and when I went to teacher training, there is one guy who really inspired me ... *Int. 1, p. 6, l. 1-30*

Subjects studied @ A level - did all by himself.

sense of pride? - no help from others - repetition of words + outlining the gradeable got!

→ led to a feeling of pride in his own abilities

Contrasty lang. - one where he felt low, other where he wanted to 'prove himself'. He remained determined despite challenges - thought of the future? Pass? Did no-one help him in this? Teacher? but he confession that he was dyslexic but he managed well despite this (when he did not know). How did he manage to continue to pass? What drove him to continue to pass?

no other reason of the 2-3 points?

Appendix D - Examples of super-ordinate themes and sub-themes across all interviews

Super-ordinate theme 1 – ‘perceptions of self’	Extracts from interviews
<i>Sub-theme: confidence, self-determination, motivation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘You know I’ve got distinction in all that I have done’ - Alim int. 1, p. 20, l. 31-32; ‘I thought ok, I’m confident’ – int 1, p. 21, l. 33 • ‘So I was so much fired and I was so much encouraged and enthused’ – George int. 1, p. 5, l. 15-16 • ‘...and questioning yourself ..err.. will you be able to do this? You know confidence, lack of confidence’ – Priya int. 1, p.19, l. 14-15 ‘... to me it’s not about questioning your guru, but it’s about challenging yourself’ – int. 2, p. 1, l. 34-35 • ‘I used to hesitate because of, you know, my speaking, even though I knew, I had lost my confidence by then’ – Meenakshi, int. 1, p. 8, l. 18-19
<i>Sub-theme: personal circumstances, experiences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘If I was just educated in Tanzania for example, where the gap is, but being in the two worlds then I can see the difference’ – Raabiya, p. 9, l. 20-22 • ‘Because of the background, I didn’t have time to study ... I was ... living outside I would say’ – Daisy, p. 2, l. 7-8 • ‘It was not accepted by ME, whatever I was doing and it just put me down’ – Meenakshi, int. 1, p. 10, l. 1-2
<i>Sub-theme: Agency, lack of opportunity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘to answer the questions in life, you have to make your own decisions and it comes out of all the thought process and all the circumstances around you’ – Priya, int. 2, p. 1, l. 14-15 • ‘Maybe I could do it no chance to develop it’ – Ling, int 2, p.9, l. 10 • ‘...when we were in schools, we never had that culture of researching ... we were always given’ – Meenakshi, int. 2, p. 8, l. 12-14 • ‘I wasn’t able to critically analyse parts so I thought you know what, this is actually my fault’ – Isra, p. 11, l. 21 (having agency)
Super-ordinate theme 2 – ‘relationships’	
<i>Sub-theme: teachers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘the teacher is sort of like authoritative, the teacher is in charge, you are afraid of the teacher, if you didn’t understand anything, you don’t even ask’ – Daisy, p. 4, l. 19-22 ‘the relationship between the teachers and the students was sort of like, I don’t know, it was a barrier to our learning’ – p. 9, l. 22-24 • ‘basically, you are sort of conditioned’ – Daniel, int. 1, p. 6, l. 5 • ‘because it’s all .. err ... how do I say ...rote learning over there. So rarely do they do any kind of critical analysis’ – Alim, int. 1, p. 14-15, l. 31-1 ‘... they talk and we take notes and then you go and sit for the exam’ – int. 1, p. 15, l. 11-12 • ‘so you see the teacher would make fun of me ...’ - George, int. 1, p. 6, l. 15
<i>Sub-theme: family, peers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘...in China, only study for the better future, so the parents also concentrate on the students’ study’ – Ling, int 1, p. 9, l. 24-25 • ‘my dad was very philosophical if I can say that. He would never just accept one side...’ – Dorina int. 1, p. 8, l. 19-20 • ‘you are always believed to think that what the parents are saying when everything is in front of you

	<i>is right ... my father ... he would always say that you have to just do what I have told you to' – Meenakshi int. 1, p.12-13, l. 29- 8</i>
<i>Sub-theme: context</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'analysis is much different as well. It's the western world, book up to date' – Raabiya, p. 12, l. 28-29</i> • <i>'critical analysis to me is emm... ability to reflect what you're learning ... in the body of language to what is happening in real society' – p. 18, l. 16-18</i> • <i>'... I think we have a lack of understanding honestly because we, we ,, we have been brought up in a way that you always listen to you elders, you don't question your superior' – Alim, int. 2, l. 17-20</i> • <i>'I went to Egypt to do my Master's ... I didn't like a lot of the syllabuses and stuff that I was going to learn and also there was a lot of issues with clothing, stuff that I was going to wear, the distance' – Isra, p. 4, l. 18-21</i>
Super-ordinate theme 3 – 'culture/tradition'	
<i>Sub-theme: educational practices and 'norms'</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'... they would copy from the book and write on the board, we would copy that' – Daisy, p. 3, l. 27-28</i> • <i>'the environment, it was really strict and sometimes I think it made students nervous about asking questions' – Daniel, int. 1, p. 1, l. 17-18</i> • <i>'... I'm trying to get away from that culture myself as well ...' – Meenakshi, int. 1, p. 13, l. 15</i> • <i>'what used to happen is if we had a lesson, there were a set of questions which were always up to the lesson we were taught, we were given the questions and answers in the class' – int. 2, p. 3, l. 7-10</i> • <i>'.. in China because teachers just full lessons just teach, teach, teach. You take notes, you get solid base knowledge, you can learn lots of knowledge' – Ling int. 1, p. 10, l. 19-21</i>
<i>Sub-theme: resources and environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'... each class has 1000 students they have to do it manually, mark work in handwriting ...' – Raabiya, p. 15-16, l. 25-22</i> • <i>'... I didn't even have a copy of the book! I copied from the board' – Daisy, p. 6, l. 9-10</i> • <i>'In China we bought the book every new term and they gave us lots of books' – Ling, int. 2, p. 3, l. 24-25</i> • <i>'and before exams, they always let you have the books and the marks they give. Maybe this is the knowledge that we need to prepare for the examination, just which page' – p. 4, l. 6-10</i> • <i>'... whatever the content was in there, probably just 1, 2, 3 pages, we had to read that and accept the facts from there. We never read any additional facts from anywhere else' – Meenakshi, int. 1, p. 10, l. 27-31</i>
<i>Sub-theme: expectations from self and others</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'it was difficult you know it was so secretive because we all wanted to do very well, we didn't share information' – Daisy, p. 5, l. 10-11</i> • <i>'many of my class mates did not know critical analysis because some teachers found they just copy and paste, no analysis, they got zero ..' – Ling, int. 1, p. 17, l. 26-29</i> • <i>'I think if I started PGCE straight away coming from India, then I would have been a different person because that confidence wasn't there' – Priya, int. 1, p. 21, l. 12-14</i>

Appendix E: ethical approval form**RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW****Section I: Project Details**

1. Project title:	An exploration of the challenges faced by internationally educated students in managing criticality on an ITE programme in an FE college
Statement of Research Purpose	International students on a PGCE programme in FE find criticality a challenging notion initially. Their previous experiences suggest that they adopt a new 'lifeworld' to build a life in the UK. The study suggest a Freirean approach may lead to an understanding of criticality that assimilates their previous experiences to this new challenge
Project Aims/ Research questions:	The project aims to examine international students' understanding of criticality from their previous educational experiences abroad. The aim is to explore whether the students need to adopt a new 'lifeworld' in order to succeed on the ITE programme and develop as teachers in the UK. My questions are: 1. What are the previous educational experiences of the international students?2. What do said students understand about notions of criticality?3. How do they manage the rigours of the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme in terms of criticality?4. Does cultural difference impact on individual interpretation of criticality?
Proposed methods:	I aim to use life stories and life histories to interview participants three times each. The interviews will be semi-structured and recorded. The recordings will be transcribed and sent to the participants so that they can agree with what was expressed. I will be using previous work by the participants such as their written submissions in draft form as well as the final versions, and resubmissions. These will be discussed with the participants to try and understand their thinking and planning when writing critically and applying it to praxis
Method of recruiting research participants	The participants are either students or former students of mine and are known to me. I aim to ask them if they are willing to participate and then continue once permission is given.
Criteria for selecting research participants	The students I have selected have been educated in their own countries before moving to the UK as adults. They have studied to

	degree level either here or in their own countries. After joining the PGCE programme, each has initially struggled to manage the academic rigours of the course; their written work required revisions and time for discussion about their understanding of pedagogy had to be planned for.
Estimated number of Participants	10
Estimated start date	01/01/2015
Estimated end date	31/03/2016
Will the study involve recruitment of participants from outside the UK?	If yes, please indicate from which country(s). No