

## **Issues of identity and becoming a teacher in urban school contexts**

**Carlo Raffo, Andy Ash and Dave Hall**

University of Manchester  
School of Education  
The University of Manchester  
Oxford Road  
Manchester  
M13 9PL  
Email: [carlo.raffo@man.ac.uk](mailto:carlo.raffo@man.ac.uk)  
Tel: 0161 275 3282

BERA 2004 Annual Conference 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> September  
UMIST, Manchester

## **Abstract**

This paper is based upon research with a group of one year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Secondary trainee teachers during their initial teacher education and training (ITET) in a particular urban context in the UK. It considers tensions between trainees' evolving and developing identities and their teaching experiences in urban and often challenging contexts. An attempt is made to explain their perceptions and behaviour within these teaching contexts through the adoption of identity theory. This seeks to examine how a trainee's evolving teacher identity can be examined and understood through an exploration of the interplay between the various individual 'self-aspects' (Simon, 2004) that trainees bring to their ITET programme and the particular structural, cultural and social aspects that they then experience in the contexts of urban schools/colleges in which they train.

## **Introduction**

This paper is based upon research with a group of one year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Secondary trainee teachers during their initial teacher education and training (ITET) in a particular urban context in the United Kingdom.

The paper is informed by my work as a practitioner researcher in the field of teacher education and in particular how particular trainee teachers interpret school/college environments and classrooms in urban contexts and how they then respond and act to meet some of the challenges of working in such environments.

In order to explore this issue in more detail, the paper first examines some of the challenges of trying to understand the notions of an urban pedagogy within an urban context. There is then an attempt to examine trainee teachers' conceptualisation of urban pedagogy within such contexts. In order to understand trainee beliefs and actions about such a pedagogy in such contexts the paper's theoretical foundations are located firmly within identity theory. In so doing there is an attempt to move beyond both (a) potentially de-contextualised and technicist explanations of trainee agency that are heavily linked to acquiring pre-defined skills to meet prescribed standards (TTA, 2002) and (b) structural and potentially deterministic accounts of trainee teacher development that locates trainee progress squarely within the structuring confines of the socio-cultural dynamics of the school and the classroom (Levine & Moreland, 1991; Edwards & Protheroe, 2003) to a position that recognises the importance of a relational, socially constructed, socially structured and psychological set of factors that define identity and hence illuminate individual trainee behaviour and action at particular points in time (Simon, 2004). The paper concludes by considering how, in the light of the research, programmes of ITET might more fully accommodate and support trainee teachers in questioning the interplay between changing and evolving identities and beliefs and actions/interactions in the classroom/school.

## **Context**

The notion of 'urban education' is one that is currently receiving much attention in academic and policy circles in England as reflected in initiatives such as Excellence in Cities and the London Challenge but one which is contested with divergent and wide ranging views being expressed about both the meaning of urban and its potential significance in educational settings (Hall, 2004). Emerging from these differing views are more convergent notions of the urban or metropolitan which relate to relatively rapid shifts in populations and, in some cases, multicultural or multi ethnic communities, densities of populations surrounded by other densely populated areas mainly concentrated in the conurbations and concentrations of socio-economic disadvantage. Hall (ibid) has commented on how the research literature on the early careers of teachers in urban areas is particularly sparse consisting almost exclusively of reflective and evaluative studies [see, for example, Maguire (2001) and Batterson and Sixsmith (1995)]. Attempts to articulate an urban pedagogy, for example, in the literature are highly tentative and it seems reasonable to assume that they reflect the level of development of this concept in a UK context (Riddell, 1999).

So although relatively little is known about trainee teachers in urban settings there is a strong evidence base to suggest that there are particular demands made upon trainees in such contexts which are related at least in part to the features and characteristics of the environments within which urban schools exist (OFSTED, 2000; Maguire, 2001). These features include relatively low levels of aggregate attainment levels of pupils, higher levels of school exclusions and greater behaviour and attendance problems. Ostensibly these demands would appear to be severe and have had some impact on the recruitment of teachers to schools in urban settings with higher numbers of unoccupied posts, greater usage of supply teachers and higher staff and headteacher turnover rates (Howson, 2002) than in other schools. Given this position we were keen to examine how trainee teachers experienced and developed within such challenging circumstances with a view to improving ITET provision and preparation for teaching in such contexts.

## **Theoretical position**

This research at the outset sought to examine how trainee teachers' actions in schools in urban contexts were both informed by, and informed, their particular identities. We were conscious that much of the literature in initial teacher education took an either relatively straightforward view of teacher development that was based on the technical acquisition of skills linked to particular standards or had a strongly structuring socio-cultural perspective that defined certain divisions or labour, rules, routines and behaviours that enculturated trainee teachers into a particular way of behaving and working as a teacher. The evolving and changing agency of the individual trainee in the context of different sites of learning at times appears to be under theorised by both perspectives. A focus on identity as a social psychological concept might provide a more sophisticated way of trying to understand the complexities and regularities of trainee teacher experience and behaviour. In particular the

concept enables an understanding of how trainee teachers, as active meaning seekers through the process of self-representation, attempt to articulate their personality, values, biography and relations with the physical and social environment of the school in urban contexts. As such the concept of identity is seen as a mediating one where it results from interaction in the social world and in turn guides interaction in the social world. Hence the focus in this paper is on identity as a process-orientated tool rather than as entity in itself.

The initial hypothesis prior to undertaking the research was that pre-existing individual trainee identities derived from particular class and ethnic backgrounds and concomitant value systems, and linked to open and caring personality traits, might provide ways of seeing and experiencing urban schooling that could allow these trainees to relate more strongly to students in such contexts and hence enable the former to develop more effective, co-producing working relationships with the latter.

The theoretical position adopted was informed by Bernd Simon's notion of a self aspect model of identity (Simon, 2004) that attempts to integrate sociological and psychological theories. His work draws on sociological identity theory that derives from both symbolic interactionism and role theory (Stryker & Statham, 1985) and emphasises the relational, socially constructed and socially structured nature of identity in modern society. In addition Simon's interpretation of the psychological literature on identity highlights the importance of the self and, in particular, articulations of the self that include the self concept (Allport, 1968), self awareness and self-esteem (Hoyle et al, 1999), and self-development (Rogers, 1959). Simon's self-aspect model of identity synthesises both traditions into one and builds on the premise that, as active meaning seekers, people engage in self-interpretation, which refers to the process whereby people give coherence and meaning to their own experiences, including their relations with the physical and social environment. Through self-interpretation, individuals are able to understand themselves through the formation of an identity which in turn influences their subsequent behaviour. Simon's working assumption is that self-interpretation involves a number of self aspects that are seen as categories or concepts that serve to process and organise information about oneself. They can refer to:

- a. generalised psychological traits (eg introverted)
- b. physical features (eg red hair)
- c. roles (eg father)
- d. abilities (eg bilingual)
- e. tastes (eg preferences)
- f. behaviours (eg work a lot)
- g. explicit group or category membership

The development of self-aspects is a function of a person's experiences in various roles, relationships, situations. Simon sees the relationship between self-aspects and experiences as being analogous to the relation between theory and data. Self aspects help to interpret or explain experience. For example, "I don't understand the challenges of urban schools (experience). That's because I'm middle class (self aspect)". Similarly experiences can

change one's self-aspects. For example "teaching students in urban schools (experience) has opened my eyes to different notions of pedagogy. I can no longer rely on taken for granted assumptions about teaching and learning informed by my middle class experience of school (self-aspect)". Self-aspects can also increase the likelihood of certain experiences. For example, "I'm extroverted teacher so may be I should do something to cheer up the class". In this sense self-aspects may be viewed as mini-theories about oneself. Although Simon sees self-aspects and identity as constructed cognitive representations of oneself he also recognises they are social products in that their meanings emerge from social interaction with other people. Hence for Simon, people's self-interpretation/representation in terms of self-aspects provides them with an understanding of their identities that arise out of social, relational, complex, socially and cognitively structured and context specific factors. He sees identities, therefore, as inherently dynamic and, depending on the interplay of various person variables and social context variables, different identities can be at work at different times, which does not exclude the possibility, however, that identities can also solidify and function as rather stable self-definitions under appropriate conditions eg prolonged periods of social contextual invariance. The research, therefore, focuses on examining trainee teachers beliefs and self-interpretations of actions through the lens of Simon's self-aspect model to see whether any particular processes of trainee teacher identity development appeared to lend themselves better to teaching in challenging, urban educational contexts.

## **Methodology**

The data for this research was collected through the use of a self reporting biographical identity protocol given to a sample of 35, full-time, one year secondary PGCE trainee teachers from the 2003/04 cohort towards the end of their course. The sample consisted of 16 males and 19 females with an age range of 21-38. Thirty of the sample were white Britons, four were of Asian origin and one was of African origin.

The biographical identity protocol was derived from Simon's (ibid) theorising of identity that focused on the self-representation of individual self-aspects and in particular how these are informed by particular settings and psychological states of self interpretation. Hence information about the respondents' identity was gathered through self-representations of self-aspects that were mediated by out of school and in school experience ("Who am I in and out of school?"), their own educational experiences and their family history including parental occupations, particular predispositions to teaching, and their contextually informed experiences of varying school placements with regards to pedagogy, behaviour issues and developing relationships with mentors and students. One means of checking the validity of our interpretations of the data, was to give the interviewees a synopsis of their responses and asked whether it represented an accurate reflection of their thinking at the time. They were also invited to add any further information or comments.

## **Data analysis**

The trainee generated biographical data was examined to discover how and why trainees identities evolved, changed and or were consolidated as they went through the process of becoming a teacher in various schools/colleges. The aim of the research was to uncover, through trainee's self-representation in these particular contexts, underlying themes and explanatory variables and processes that might be powerful predictors of particular behaviours in particular urban school settings. In other words the analysis focused on examining whether trainees' particular ages, background experiences, ethnic origin, class, personality traits, abilities, roles, and behaviours in particular settings seemed to provide powerful and generalisable explanatory tools for articulating effective teacher engagement in urban educational settings.

The data, however, did not enable such generalisations to be made. Instead what was generated was a huge variety of process-orientated, highly complex and individual narratives of identity development and their mediating effects on action. By highlighting two different narratives in some detail the paper seeks to illuminate the importance of the interdependencies of personal biography, learning predispositions and the social and cultural dimensions of context in the way trainee teachers represent their evolving identities and account for their actions.

## **The Biographical Narratives**

### **Samira**

Samira is 27, Asian and single. In terms of who she feels she is, Samira sees herself as someone who is young, primarily because she is the youngest in her family. Although she is treated as the "baby" of the family, she still feels there are still very high expectations of her. This leads her to have very high expectations of herself.

*"If I do not fulfil my own expectations; I find it very hard to deal with and will try my hardest to achieve my goals"*

She see herself as very hardworking; something that has come about in the last few years and which has been helped by the fact that she is now finally doing a job that she enjoys.

Samira describes herself as quite an up-tight person when it comes to work and life in general.

*"I like order, routine and everything has to be in place. I get agitated when things go "out of order" and I try my hardest to get back to normality as soon as is possible! I find it hard to deal with situations where others have control! "*

Samira also describes herself as having very strong opinions on certain things and as being very stubborn about them. She is ambitious and yet sees herself as 'fun loving' and enjoys being around those with whom she is close.

*"I tend to be more confident when around those I am close to and therefore, am louder! I am loyal but I'm also very wary of people I do not know."*

Samira acknowledges that she is a bit quieter during the university-based elements of the course which isn't what she is like in more private settings.

*"In normal circumstances, I would openly disagree with those who said things I didn't agree with but have never been able to do this when in a classroom environment (when I was at school or during my degree) and am more comfortable doing this in a one to one or group situation."*

In contrast she feels that she is most confident on school placement:

*"...because I love what I am doing and I'm not the baby of the family anymore!"*

Samira describes herself as quite strict and not someone who might be seen as a "mate" by her students. She can "have a laugh" with students but there is a very clear line that needs to be drawn. Her view is that she is there to teach and that remains her priority.

Samira's educational experiences were varied. She attended a primary school in Nigeria until the age of 11 where she was one of the few "foreigners" in the school. According to Samira, discipline was key within the school and students were taught to give teachers respect in every possible way.

*"Rather than actual discipline policies, behaviour strategies used were focussed around canning and other similar methods of punishing students which worked very well and was considered the norm."*

Samira then attend an all girls grammar school where she felt she had experienced a very strict discipline/behaviour policy.

*"The student-teacher relationships were very formal and clear boundaries were set. Students were pushed and there was a significant amount of pressure in relation to achieving high grades. There were also good relationships between teachers and parents who played a fairly large part within the school, in relation to both governance and communication on students' progress. This was probably aided by the fact that parents held the school in high regard."*

Samira's parents were educated in India. Her father works as a surgeon and her mother is a retired teacher. According to Samira, both parents have very high expectations and aspirations for their children and therefore, have always "pushed" them to achieve their best.

*"My parents don't really view any type of failure as a sign of "inability" but more as a sign of not trying hard enough!"*

Samira's first teaching experience was based in a school with a wide catchment area and with students drawn from mainly deprived areas located close to the centre of the city. The school had an ethnically mixed intake of students and levels of attainment were below the national average. However, she felt that, regardless of background, all students "seemed" equal when within the school, behaved appropriately and on the whole appeared to be willing to learn.

*"I never came across students who were in any way averse to learning".*

Looking back on the placement she feels she fitted into the department. However, her initial impressions of the school were not what she expected.

*"The behaviour of students and the relationships students had with teachers were very different to what I had experienced in school and thus, what I expected."*

Samira felt that she had a formal but good working relationship with her mentor although it was again very different to what she expected.

*"I did not feel that I could be completely honest with my mentor, perhaps due to very differing personalities. On the other hand, our general attitudes to teaching, expectations etc were similar even though we had very different teaching styles."*

Samira's approach to teaching was generally student focused and she adopted this approach in order to make the learning more attainable and interesting to her students. Her technique was based on general theory from her university studies and her reading, as well as observing other teachers in action.

*"This helped me to identify the styles/techniques that I did and did not like. By self-evaluating my lessons as well as my colleagues evaluating me, I was able to look at areas that needed altering and adapting and change them accordingly."*

In comparison to her own experience of education, students did not appear to react well to disciplining. She was particularly aware of this within 6<sup>th</sup> form classes.

*"Students seemed to adopt a very casual approach to attendance which they were able to, as it seemed to be generally accepted by teachers."*

Samira did not feel that she could identify with any of the students at key stage 3 (year 7) or 4 (year 10). However, most of the students she taught were in the sixth form and were of Asian origin. She felt that she was able to identify with these students a bit more because she described herself as

being of the same origin. But she also recognised that there were different languages, backgrounds and cultures, between herself and her students that resulted in different views about the importance of learning and aspiration. She felt her ethnic association did, however, aid relationship building with these students as time went on.

*“They began asking questions regarding my background etc that helped to form some kind of relationship with many of the students.”*

She described that having this kind of informal relationship with students helped her eliminate many behaviour issues and she put this down to the students and herself building up some level of mutual respect.

Samira’s second placement was in a college that drew students from a large catchment area; most of which would be classed as economically deprived and located a little further from the city centre with a number of poor estates located close to it. She felt that college had a very relaxed atmosphere. Although there were discipline policies in place, her experiences of them were that they were generally ineffective. She described the majority students who she came across on vocational courses as either (a) “disinterested in their studies and only in college because of parental pressures” or (b) “lacked motivation to a very large extent, which I felt made teaching all the more difficult.” She did not feel that she fitted into this type of educational environment.

*“My experiences there made me realise that my teaching style, preferences and expectations (of myself and of students and colleagues) are more suited to a school environment due to the fact that guidelines and policies are more set in place and rigid, which is something I need due to my own personality and experience of education. I felt that there was an expectation of me to adopt the same relaxed manner in my teaching as other vocational teachers around me adopted which is something I found very difficult to do. However, when teaching students who were on the academic courses, I felt that I was more comfortable within the classroom, able to be myself and identified a lot more with the students – which was helped by the fact that they were willing to learn!”*

When Samira initially started the placement she found the relationship she had with my mentor very relaxed and she was comfortable and happy with this. She was made to feel comfortable with approaching her when necessary. However, over time, she became more frustrated with this relationship as she began to feel that she was not being supported.

*“I found constantly chasing and waiting for the mentor exasperating and unfair. Overall, I did not find that the mentor set a very good example to either students or me and as a result I found it difficult to value/trust the feedback that was given to me. I feel that this was again due to the relaxed atmosphere held in the college and its*

*vocational teachers. On many occasions, it was much easier and much more productive to seek help from the senior co-ordinator.”*

As with her first placement, Samira’s teaching style was student-centred. Her observations of other teachers at the college suggested that some adopted more teacher-centred approaches. Students appeared to be “spoon – fed” with an emphasis on:

*“... passing exams more than how to learn. I didn’t feel that this was the route I wanted to take because of the way I had been taught on university based days and also from the fact that its not how I view education should be. However, there were many times I found it difficult to avoid this because of time constraints and the fact that many students seemed unable to learn for themselves because of what they had become accustomed to.”*

Discipline and behaviour were aspects that Samira found more difficult in the college, particularly with vocational students. Students did not appear to respond to her in a positive manner. She felt that her vocational students, who were mainly ethnic Asian, were un-motivated and “lacked respect” towards her. She described them as being apathetic to learning and classified them on the whole as coming from working class families.

*“Unlike my first placement I did not find that I could identify with these students on any level. Even though I was of the same “origin” as them there were just as many differences between them and I and them and my white counterparts in terms of language, religion, social class, background etc. In some cases, I felt that being of the same origin as them worked against me. I received comments such as, “we were really happy when we found out that we were getting an Asian teacher, but I don’t feel like that anymore!” In some classes, it appeared that some Asian boys found it difficult to be told what to do by an Asian woman, something that I put down to their culture.”*

Samira identifies that she has been very privately self aware throughout the year, constantly finding herself contemplating what has happened throughout the day/term/year although she feels that she has never felt able to be openly honest with either of her mentors. The year has made her look at herself a lot more in order to adapt and change things to improve her teaching.

*“Although this obviously happens in terms of changing lesson plans and resources, I have found that I have had to change myself to some extent in terms of what I expect of others and how I can find the best in others even though what they do may not be as I would do it or what I expected of them. I think that this has been key, allowing me to build up students self esteem and confidence in their own works and their capabilities. Admittedly, I still think about and compare students, expectations of students, teachers and schools in general to what I experienced which is something that I am still working on avoiding!”*

## **Stephen**

Stephen is 38 and married with children. He feels he is family-focused and prefers to see the best in people. He feels he has quite strong views and is committed to doing his best with a belief that if something is worth doing, it's worth doing well. Stephen feels he is often very focused on detail. In terms of personality he describes himself as gregarious, adaptable, outward looking and very interested in what is going on around him.

In school/college he describes himself as very professional, setting what he would define as high, possibly even "authoritarian" (in his words) expectations in class. He is keen to do the best for his students, establish good relationships with them but doesn't want to be seen as their "mate". Outside the classroom, Stephen prefers not to give opinions unless asked, although he does feel that he has quite strong views (negative and positive) about what he sees

*"I don't feel it's my place (yet) to express opinions openly or be judgmental. I'm respectful of other professionals' abilities though I have been surprised at some colleagues' own lack of professionalism and respect for students."*

Stephen attended a local primary school until he was nine then moved to private preparatory school. He then attended a public school for his secondary education. He recollects that his education was structured, quite disciplined with an academic emphasis but had many opportunities to develop more fully along sporting and cultural dimensions. He thoroughly enjoyed most elements of the school.

Stephen's father was initially in the Air Force and then moved into business. His mother was a teacher in both primary and secondary schools. His family moved around extensively while he was growing up.

Stephen's urban teaching experience was in a 6<sup>th</sup> Form College based in a city with both a primary and secondary sector industrial heritage. The college's intake is predominately white, working class, with some high levels of deprivation in the local neighbourhoods from which the college recruits its students. He felt it was quite a culture shock to what he had experienced in his own education and in his first placement

*"The students are very different and the college had a much more independent culture. The students were treated as 'customers' of the college; first names used throughout; no uniform, no overt discipline policy – all in all, very different from my first experience."*

At first Stephen felt that he may have appeared a little too formal for the culture/environment of the college.

*“For example, I always wore a tie (and generally a suit) whereas many other staff members could have just walked out of a nightclub; however, I have a deeply held conviction that teachers are professional and should therefore behave professionally; in business education in particular, it is important to set an appropriate example.”*

He observed that the faculty ethos appeared variable but he developed his own approach to the faculty and to the teaching of different groups within it.

*“Some teachers were very structured and focused, others adopted a rather laissez-faire approach especially to discipline, homework. Personally, while I adjusted my ‘style’ to fit the culture, I still insisted on getting homework in, appropriate class behaviour etc, although I did sometimes adjust the degree of strictness to accommodate different classes. For example, the atmosphere in my AS classes was more business-like than in my GNVQ classes – in this instance, I felt a more relaxed, but still firm, approach would be more effective in keeping the GNVQ students on task. I took, and continue to take, the view that if something is worth doing, it’s worth doing well. I think some students were quite surprised at how unremitting I was in trying to get in homework.”*

Stephen felt that his relationship with his mentor was very good, although he felt they had quite different in outlooks on education.

*“I tend to be quite organised and had to be flexible as regards timing of, for example, tutorials, observations, etc. This was not a problem and helped me to develop my people management skills. At the same time, I appreciated my mentor’s ‘hands off’ approach, as it afforded me a lot of lee-way and plenty of opportunity to exercise my own initiative, something which I genuinely appreciated. I suspect we are quite different in our views as to how to go about changing things: for example, the college is undergoing much internal change at present, in many instances against the wishes of certain members of staff; my approach would be to try and ‘work with’ the problem, trying understand how and why and seek a consensus solution; my mentor prefers to confront that problem and tackle it head-on.”*

Stephen felt that his teaching was student-focused.

*“I feel that I developed tremendously since the start of my previous placement and tried to incorporate many more student-centred activities, with lots of ‘chunking’. This was partly based on earlier lesson observations (and is a style very different from my own education). Seeing the effectiveness of this approach – and the fact that it gives me more time and space in lessons – convinces me that this is an improvement.”*

Stephen was aware that, socially and culturally, he had little in common with his students. The 'openness' of the college highlighted how his own upbringing, education and values were in many cases quite different from those he taught. However he felt this made little difference to his attitude towards them or his desire to do the best that he could for them as regards teaching and learning.

*"I was particularly touched to receive unsolicited written messages of thanks from students when I left the college and the student questionnaires I asked classes to complete at the end of my placement generally indicated students enjoyed my lessons."*

Overall Stephen feels he has generally remained true to the values that I held when I started his PGCE:

*"...namely mutual respect, professionalism, doing one's best and self-reliance/discipline; these relate as much to my own behaviour as to what I value in other people, including the students that I teach. The extent to which I promote these values may not have changed, but the way in which I do so probably has, according to the type of students I teach and the teaching environment. I probably remain rather idealistic about teaching – I am occasionally disappointed that some teachers appear jaded, but have found a number of long serving teachers whose continuing commitment and enthusiasm is inspirational."*

### **Discussion**

The two cases in different ways suggest that the complex development of teacher identity is based on a relational, socially constructed, socially structured and psychological set of factors that create particular paradigms of understanding of teaching in urban contexts. These paradigms do not easily fit into an effectiveness model of engagement that simply focuses on the complementarity between trainee teachers' social, ethnic, and cultural make-ups and those of the students whom, and the schools within which, they teach.

Samira's disposition towards teaching, and education more generally, appear to be strongly influenced by both her own schooling experience and her family expectations. We see that she is pushed to succeed both by her family expectations and also her self-pressures. The role of teacher enables her to move beyond a self-identification with the 'child' of the family to that of the professional, hard-working, self-evaluative individual. Various school/college experiences either seem to consolidate particular self-aspects or fall outside her latitudes of acceptance (Sherif & Sherif, 1971). She likes structure, order and a sense of focused purpose and struggles in environments, and with individuals, that do not have similar approaches. In addition, although she categorises herself as being Asian, which at times appears partially helpful in developing relationships with particular Asian students, this seems less important than class as an explanatory tool of action or group identification. However, psychologically she describes herself as a privately self-aware

individual and recognises that certain self-aspects are potential barriers to teaching particular types of students in particular urban educational contexts. So although Samira struggles with teaching particular classes in particular settings, she is also aware of the need to change certain values, beliefs and orientations if she is to succeed in such settings in the future.

Stephen's main underpinning self aspects appear to relate to his values of doing ones best for both himself and his students and this very much seems to frame his approach to being a teacher in urban contexts. Although he is clear that his identity is quite different from his students, he feels that his dogged, professional approach to teaching and working with them (self-aspects) can enable him to develop effective working relationships that will enable them to achieve academic success. In addition the importance of seeing oneself as an apprentice within the college enables him to set parameters by which he can temper his frustrations with the laissez-faire approaches of other teachers and the college more generally. It's clear that he is confident about what he is trying to do and has the desire to make constant improvements through changed teaching approaches. His students are his clients/customers who are clearly different to him but who are there to have their needs met by his professional actions. He is, therefore, open to developing his practice to meet those needs.

## **Conclusion**

By focusing on the biographical narratives of two training teachers we can start to understand the complexities of the way pre-existing identities/self-aspects intersect with, and are moulded by (to a lesser or greater extent) the social world of the schools within which they operate. Simple viewpoints about the nature of urban schools and an effective urban pedagogy linked to prescribed actions and background of trainee teachers were not forthcoming in our research. The reasons for this appears to suggest that the complex nature of identity formation and its mediating effect on action does not necessarily suggest particular pathways or trajectories of behaviour by particular individuals in particular settings. If we are to take seriously how trainee teachers really operate in challenging urban schools then we need to allow them the opportunity of regularly articulating their self-representations of self-aspects and how they consequently appear to inform behaviour. By questioning the nature of how various self-aspects are changed or consolidated, trainees may start to modify particular identity affiliations and hence be more open to meet the challenges of working in urban contexts.

## References

- Allport, G.W. (1968) Is the concept of self necessary? In Gordon, C. & Gergan, K.J. (Eds) *The Self in social interaction: (Vol. 1) Classic and contemporary perspectives* (pp25-32). New York: Wiley
- Batteson, C. and Sixsmith, C. (1995) 'Reflections on an experiential, inner city placement for pre-service teachers' *Journal of Education for Teaching*, Vol.2, No.2, pp229-233
- Edwards, A and Protheroe, L (2003) Learning to See in Classrooms: what are student teachers learning about teaching and learning while learning to teach in schools? *British Educational Research Journal*, 29. 2. 227-242
- Gordon, C. & Gergan, K.J. (Eds) *The Self in social interaction: (Vol. 1) Classic and contemporary perspectives*. New York: Wiley
- Hall, D (2004) Initial teacher training and the transition to teaching in urban schools, paper presented at BERA 2004 Annual Conference 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> September UMIST, Manchester
- Howson, J. (2002) *Staying Power: The relationship between headteachers' length of service in primary and secondary schools and selected PANDA grades*, National College for School Leadership
- Hoyle, R.H., Kernis, M.H., Leary, M.R. & Baldwin, M.W. (1999) *Selfhood. Identity, esteem, regulation*, CO: Westview Press.
- Krock, S. (Ed.) *Psychology: A study of a science* Toronto:McGraw Hill
- Levine, J.M & Moreland, R.L. (1991) Culture and socialization in work groups in: Resnick, L.B., Levine, J.M, Teasley, S.D. (Eds) *Perspectives On Socially Shared Cognition* (Washington, American Psychological Association).
- Lindzey, G. & Aronson, E. (Eds) *Handbook of social psychology (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)*, New York: Random House
- Maguire, M. (2001) 'The cultural formation of teachers' class consciousness' *Journal of Education Policy* Vol.16, No.4, pp315-331
- Ofsted (2000) *Improving City Schools*, London: Ofsted
- Riddell, R. (1999) 'Is there a need to develop an urban pedagogy?' *Improving Schools* Vol.2, No.2, pp38-41
- Rogers, C. R. (1959) A theory of therapy, personality and interpersonal relationships, as developed in the client-centred framework. In Krock, S. (Ed.) *Psychology: A study of a science (Vol 3, pp 184-256)*. Toronto:McGraw Hill
- Sherif, M. and C. W, Sherif (1971), "Attitude as the Individual's Own Categories: The Social Judgment-Involvement Approach to Attitude and Attitude Change," in *Attitude, Ego Involvement, and Change*, p. 105-139
- Simon, B (2004) *Identity in Modern Society: A Social Psychological Perspective*, Blackwell Publishing
- Stryker, S. & Statham, A. (1985) Symbolic interactionism and role theory. In Lindzey, G. & Aronson, E. (Eds) *Handbook of social psychology (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)*, New York:Random House
- TTA (2002) *Qualifying to Teach – Handbook of Guidance*