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College of Social Sciences

Becoming a second language teacher: developing graduate attributes in an international landscape of academic and professional practices

Lindsay Knox

MA (Hons), MSc.

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School of Education, College of Social Sciences University of Glasgow

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Abstract

Higher Education Institutes in the twenty-first century find themselves subject to global economic forces which have reoriented the purpose of a tertiary education towards employment, with an objective of producing graduates to meet the demands of the workplace. Central to this, graduate attribute frameworks set out each institution's version of the skill set which the employable graduate should possess. However, these idealised visions may often fail to adequately account for the diversity of the student body and their applicability to their future employment contexts is questionable. Where international students are enrolled on vocationally oriented postgraduate programmes, it is unclear what such frameworks may mean for them.

Drawing on phenomenographic interviews with twenty international students from a Second Language Teacher Education programme at a Scottish university, this study shows that there is limited alignment between the student and institutional conceptualisation of graduate attributes. Moreover, it is demonstrated that the students' development of any such attributes is both constrained and enabled by the navigation and membership of a complex landscape of both academic and professional communities of practice.

Key Words: Graduate Attributes, Higher Education, Internationalisation, International Students, Language Teacher Education, Language Teaching

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Author's declaration

"I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution."

Printed Name: Lindsay Knox

Signature: Lindsay Knox

Abbreviations

BANA	Britain, Australia and North America
CELTA	Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults
CEM	Contextualised, embedded and mapped
CoP	Community of Practice
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESAP	English for Specific Academic Purposes
GA	Graduate Attribute
GAF	Graduate Attributes Framework
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
LoP	Landscape of Practice
LPP	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
PG	Postgraduate
PGDE	Postgraduate Diploma in Education
SLTE	Second Language Teacher Education

Chapter one: introduction

The twenty-first century university, whilst geographically located within national boundaries, occupies a position in a diverse, global landscape of tertiary education. As the world has become increasingly interconnected through political and economic forces, the

purposes and practices of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have evolved in different ways. With a growing focus on HEIs as supporting pillars in national economic policies, tertiary education has become alternatively conceptualised as a mechanism to increase the human capital required to service the global knowledge economy. Accordingly, universities have become more clearly oriented towards the employability of their graduates. Attention has turned to the skills students require to enter the workforce and, crucially, how degree programmes might meet those demands. The term *graduate attribute* (GA) has become a shorthand for the skills which a student is expected to have developed as a result of undertaking their chosen programme of study. Graduate attribute frameworks (GAFs) can now be found on the pages of most university websites, with each institution proclaiming the distinctive character of their graduates: an idealised graduate in possession of the desirable mindsets and skills which allow employers to distinguish their students from their competitors'. Broadly, these are usually related to communication and cognitive skills which are believed to equip the graduate to navigate a complex future.

Such frameworks are an example of the increasing competition within the Higher Education (HE) sector where institutions are attributed global rankings according to their excellence in research, teaching and learning. Institutions are marketed to a worldwide audience and are positioned within discourses of excellence and employability as well as ambition and aspiration. In addition to accommodating the demands of employers, a degree from a prestigious, highly ranked university with a clear statement on enhancing employment prospects is certainly also attractive to many prospective students, conscious of the need to differentiate themselves to secure employment in a crowded graduate marketplace. However, for academics within the HE sector, the frameworks' close association with the neoliberal agenda which positions universities in a marketplace with students as consumers, the concept often holds considerably less appeal. Many educators hold deeply rooted ideological objections to the belief that the purpose of a university education is to serve a political and economic agenda. Although the attributes themselves are arguably not so controversial, the frameworks' close association with the economic and political forces which underpin them is much less palatable.

However, even if the ideological objections to an alternatively oriented HE are set aside, and the identified attributes are deemed to be uncontentious, research into GAFs has found them to be problematic for a number of other reasons. Most notably, Barrie (2006) identified the fundamental issue that among academics tasked with developing the desired attributes, there was no consensus on what graduate attributes meant, or whether they were separate or integral to their curricula. Since Barrie's early seminal research, further studies on graduate

attributes have been conducted and there is now a considerable body of research which has contributed to understanding of this subject. These have typically focused on the following areas: academic resistance to employment-focused higher education (Morley, 2001); identifying and agreeing what graduate attributes are (Oliver & Jorre de St. Jorre, 2011; Hounsell 2011); the difficulty of having generic graduate attributes rather than discipline-specific ones (Jones, 2009, 2013); and the importance of context in the application of attributes (Hager, 2006).

As we enter the third decade of the new century, it is clear that graduate attributes continue to raise a number of questions. However, it can be seen that much of the research attention to date has tended to focus on the attributes and their operationalisation, with rather less attention paid to those who are engaged in the daily practices of learning, namely, the students. This is not to diminish its importance. The focus on identifying what attributes could be important, how they might be related to curricula and how they can be evaluated and assessed is important. Arriving at a shared understanding of what outcomes we might consider to be desirable from higher education, and how these can be achieved is necessary work. It provides a foundation for academics to consider how programmes can be designed and what may be gained from a degree, in addition to the subject knowledge itself. Nonetheless, of equal importance are the students who are to embody these attributes and who enrol on degree programmes.

It is notable that closer observation and examination of the graduate has been less prominent in the research about graduate attributes. Just as a generic approach to embedding graduate attributes has been questioned (Jones, 2009, 2013), then it seems to follow that the risk of homogenising the graduates themselves merits further discussion.

1.1 Differentiating the graduates

There is clearly much that differentiates students from one another, and while a highly individualised degree programme is obviously impractical, more discussion about who students are, and what their expectations of their study are, can only enrich the debate. It is acknowledged here that some work has already been done in this area, focusing on higher-level differences such as level of study and different disciplines. For example, Alsford and Smith (2013) and Anderson (2017) have discussed the relationship between frameworks and postgraduate students, highlighting assumptions about the skills which these students may already have developed as undergraduate students. Others, aligning with Jones's (2009, 2013) position on the need for discipline-specific graduate attributes, have investigated the

embedding of subject-specific skills, for example, in geography (Spronken-Smith, McLean, Smith, Bond, Jenkins, and Marshall, 2016). Of relevance to the present study, in an Advance HE project report (2014), concerns were raised that both the graduate attributes and their associated methods of development 'imply a homogenised, domestic student body'. More significantly, the author also noted assumptions that the skills and attributes identified in the UK sector would be of equal importance and value globally. This has particular significance for international students, a group which continues to populate UK HEIs, and which forms a considerable proportion of the number of students entering HE in the United Kingdom (UK). For the academic year, 2019-2020, data from Universities UK shows that there were 538,615 international students studying at UK institutions, accounting for approximately one-quarter of all enrolments in HE.

1.2 Research motivations

It is at this juncture that my own professional context, teaching at a Scottish university, and the research interest of this study intersect. Teaching on a postgraduate Masters programme which is predominantly chosen by international students, and which is vocationally oriented towards second language teacher education (SLTE), I have often questioned the alignment between the programme's proclaimed objectives and the students' own expectations and needs. Additionally, I was curious about whether they were cognisant of any attributes, as they are articulated in a GAF, which might be developed en route to the acquisition of their degree. I was interested to learn more about how these students perceive their Masters programme in relation to their probable future careers as second language teachers on their return to their home countries.

It seemed likely that, for these international students, a postgraduate qualification from a highly ranked institution overseas arguably had potential to add employability value. However, aside from the prestige factor, the vocational nature of the programme raised an interesting question. That is, the extent to which the students participating in this postgraduate programme in SLTE perceive it as a de facto accreditation or qualification for language teaching. Interestingly, Hughes and Barrie (2010, p. 329) note that where programmes are vocationally oriented, then professional associations can often be particularly influential as these studies can lead to a recognised professional accreditation. Although they do not provide specific examples of professions or disciplines, it may reasonably be concluded that this might include postgraduate teaching qualifications, such as the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), which links with an associated professional body. However, the programme in focus for this research neither leads to a

professional teaching qualification nor is it endorsed by a professional teaching body. Arguably, the programme description on the school's web pages contributes to an understanding of it as a quasi-qualification, stating that the programme is 'for teachers of all languages' and that they will 'receive training in how to best teach these languages based on the latest research in the field of language education'. Whilst not claiming to provide an accreditation, the programme undoubtedly has a professional orientation albeit framed within a research-driven, academic degree programme. Moreover, in view of the growing numbers of international students coming to study on this, and similar programmes, throughout the United Kingdom, it does not seem unreasonable to conclude that, within the students' local teaching context, the degree award may be similarly perceived and valued as, if not an actual accreditation, a gateway qualification into teaching. This led me to further doubt the alignment between the institution's espoused and articulated graduate attributes and those of the international students enrolled on this programme. Being aware that the term is contested among the academic community, and indeed may not necessarily be a conscious element of curriculum planning in the way that is often implied by university statements, it was unclear to me how much meaning the term itself would have for international students engaged in postgraduate study in the UK. This lack of understanding caused me some unease, on two fronts: pedagogically but also ethically.

From the pedagogic perspective, without a more developed understanding of who my students are and what their own learning goals are, it was arguably much harder to create programmes of study which allow them to reach their chosen destinations, professional or otherwise. Without first investing time to acknowledge and understand students' learning journeys during their sojourn in our institutions, the task of identifying appropriate 21st century graduate skills arguably becomes more challenging. Of equal concern, and contributing to an ethical unease, was the sense of complicity in the enterprise of an HE sector which invests heavily in recruiting non-domestic students and benefits considerably from the associated income-generation (Lomer & Mittelmeier, 2021). Yet, once on campus, having pursued them so relentlessly beforehand, the same students seem to lose some of their value despite the obvious opportunities for an authentic and inclusive international curriculum.

1.3 The research question

Consequently, asking students how they experience their learning on degree programmes and what their own learning priorities are seemed to be a fundamental first step in developing my own practice. Specifically, understanding how they conceptualise graduate attributes and

how they experience the development of them on their degree programmes became the focus of this research. The research question therefore aimed to investigate what meaning graduate attributes have for international students on a postgraduate Masters SLTE programme and was articulated as follows:

What meaning do graduate attributes have for international students studying on a postgraduate Masters Second Language Teaching Education programme?

Adopting a phenomenographic approach (see chapter four) to investigate the differences in their conceptualisations of graduate attributes, this study identified four distinct ways of understanding graduate attributes, emphasising the need for ongoing discussion between practitioners and their students to provide a more solid foundation to inform our curriculum and practices. The following chapters provide further context for this research and the dissertation is structured as outlined below.

1.4 The dissertation structure

Chapter two begins with a review of the literature to situate this research, looking at three distinct areas. Firstly, the focus is on the broader area of HE, internationalisation and the neoliberal influences which shape the sector. Secondly, the construct of graduate attributes is examined more closely, starting with a discussion of the issue of defining the term, before going on to consider the relationship between graduate attributes in the HE sector in Scotland and quality assurance. The section concludes with reflections on employability as it is conceptualised for international students.

Chapters three and four provide background and detail for the conceptual framework deployed to interpret the results, starting in chapter three with a discussion of Wenger's (1998) learning theory of communities of practice, then moving onto the more nuanced concept of landscapes of practice (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015), illustrating its appropriateness to the research context. Chapter four details the methodology of the study as well as the rationale for the choice of phenomenography as a research approach. Consideration is also given to the risks and affordances of researching one's own workplace, including a brief reflection on conducting research during a global pandemic.

Chapter five presents the research findings and includes sections on each of the four conceptions of graduate attributes identified as a result of phenomenographic analysis. Chapter six then offers an interpretation of what these conceptions mean.

Finally, chapter seven considers the implications of this research in three different aspects: practice implications for second language teacher education; practice implications for English for Academic Purposes; and finally, institutional implications. The dissertation concludes with final reflections on the process.

Chapter two: literature review

Chapter introduction

As outlined in the previous chapter, this research asks what graduate attributes (GAs) mean for international postgraduate students enrolled on a Master's programme in the disciplinary area of second language teacher education (SLTE) at a Scottish university. It is therefore centred on a very specific group of students, located in a particular time and space. However, in order to make meaning and to offer an answer to this question, their perspectives should first be viewed as they are situated within the broader Higher Education (HE) landscape. This chapter therefore seeks to locate my study within that context by reviewing the literature of three domains: internationalisation in HE, graduate attribute frameworks and SLTE. Each of these will be discussed in turn before concluding

with a reflection of both internationalisation and graduate attributes together as they intersect with SLTE, demonstrating the importance of this research which examines more closely the experiences and needs of international students preparing for their professional lives as language teachers in different and varied contexts.

2.1 Higher education and internationalisation

The modern university is subject to, and shaped by, multiple forces as it seeks to fulfil its evolving remit in the twenty-first century. The implementation of internationalisation strategies is arguably one of the most dominant influences. Firmly woven into the very fabric of the institution through structure, strategy and policy (Bond, 2020) the strategic importance of internationalisation is clearly evident: governance structures which include senior management remits exclusively focused on internationalisation; partnerships with international Higher Education Institutions (HEIs); transnational campuses; international research collaborations and knowledge exchange initiatives; so-called internationalised curricula; and international offices focused on recruitment of non-UK students, this latter arguably being the most visible symbol of internationalisation of all. However, despite its pervasive and widespread usage in discussions within HE, it is fair to say that it remains a much-discussed concept, often in terms of its motivations. It has been problematised on a number of grounds, for example, its economic impetus (Furedi, 2011); its role in the marketisation of HE; financially driven recruitment strategies (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Wu & Naidoo, 2016; Tannock, 2018); and its perceived impact on pedagogy (Devos, 2003). For the purposes of this study, it provides essential background which helps to contextualise GAs and will now be discussed starting with one of the most commonly presented definitions of internationalisation from Knight (2004, p. 11):

> Internationalisation at the national, sector and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions (primarily teaching/learning, research, service) or delivery of higher education.

Knight (2013, p. 85) herself points out almost a decade afterwards that this is a deliberately neutral definition. This was to allow for the concept to be contextualised to the local need, a desirable ambition which speaks to her desire to orient internationalisation to more academic values of ‘co-operation, partnership, exchange, mutual benefits and capacity building’ (p. 89). However, although this is a laudable intention and arguably one which academics will probably identify with, in their critical analysis of HE journals, Mwangi, Latafat, Hammond, Kommers, Thoma, Berger and Blanco-Ramirez (2018) still found that

internationalisation lacked clear definitions. The most likely reason for this lack of consensus is that internationalisation, despite best academic intentions, is inextricably linked with a different narrative from that embodied by Knight's definition which aligns with more 'academic and humanitarian rationales' (Bamberger, Morris, & Yemini, 2019, p. 206). Instead, it has become connected with 'competitive and economic rationales' (Bamberger, Morris, & Yemini, 2019, p. 206). This can perhaps go some way to explaining, as Knight (2013, p. 89) herself recognises, the fact that internationalisation is often found to be associated with the less noble values of 'competition, commercialisation, self-interest, and status building'.

It is these neoliberal interpretations of internationalisation which have tended to dominate discussions in the HE sector (Mwangi, et al., 2018). This sits alongside the positioning of international students in discourses of deficit, within which they are 'framed as in deficit or passive, rarely as partners or knowledge agents' (Lomer & Mittelmeier, 2021). These two narratives will now be explored.

2.1.2 A neoliberal approach to higher education

Altbach and Knight (2007, p. 292) do not equivocate in their exploration of what motivates internationalisation in HE: first on their list is 'profits'. It is undeniable, however it may be spun, that internationalisation brings financial benefits to HEIs in numerous ways, to the extent that Altbach and Knight profess that it is 'impossible to quantify the financial scope of internationalisation' (p. 293). One of the ways in which it generates considerable income is through the setting of extremely high tuition fees for international students. This allows universities to capitalise on demand from those who consider, or have been led to believe, that Western education is an investment in their future employability, giving rise to accusations that they represent 'cash cows' for HEIs (Robertson, 2011, p. 2206). Given the expense and the considerable financial investment for students, choosing an HEI to undertake their studies becomes, amongst other considerations, a consumer act, undertaken 'proactively' (Mogaji, 2016, p. 101). Consequently, the HE sector has become a highly competitive marketplace. A number of factors will undoubtedly contribute to their final choice but before they reach their decision, international students are free to, as Mogaji (2016, p. 99) states, 'shop around and choose where they want to study'. This, according to Wu and Naidoo, has resulted in HEIs pursuing 'aggressive' marketing directed towards the international student demographic (2016, p. 3).

That HE is market-oriented and has led to the construction of the student as a consumer rather than a learner does not sit well in the academy and this evolution is one which has drawn a great deal of criticism. One cause for concern is the way that students have been recast in a consumer role, which by extension, also positions institutions and the academics who work in them as a 'service-provider' (Furedi, 2011, p.2). This raises the question of what is actually being sold in this relationship. Saunston and Morrish (2011), who conducted a discourse analysis of university mission statements, suggest that there are two possible products: knowledge and the student. In the case of the former, they argue, knowledge appears as something already 'fully-formed', a commodity to be disseminated or transferred, a product rather than something that may be co-constructed by the students themselves. Such a view of knowledge seems to be a retrograde step and more aligned to what Freire (1970) described as the banking model of education, at odds with a more contemporary philosophy of education which values co-creation of knowledge, and a more equal partnership between learners and teachers.

In relation to the student-product, the authors (Saunston & Morrish, 2011, p. 78) found that where the word *student* appeared in the mission statements of Russell Group institutions, it tended to collocate with expressions of quality which:

> often have a superlative meaning, for example*, high-quality, best, most able, talented and excellence* […] students seem to be constructed as another 'high quality' product which is being used to market the university.

This somewhat dispiriting finding would seem to be in line with critiques of graduate attributes which proclaim the excellence of each institute's students and yet, on closer scrutiny, can often found lacking meaningful substance, disguised by aspirational images on institutional websites. However, before moving on to explore these more fully, there is another important point to be made in relation to this construction of the student. The same students that such marketing targets, that is, the high fee-paying, talented, able international students, appear to lose some of their academic lustre once they have begun their programmes when a new narrative often emerges. This latter is an alternative narrative which sits in sharp contrast to the yet-to-be-recruited prized international student. The new narrative has created a deficit model of the international student who has been described in a number of studies, and this merits expansion here.

2.1.3 Deficit model of internationalisation

In understanding the deficit discourse which surrounds international students, it is worth being explicit about how international students are defined as the easy label belies quite a complex status. As pointed out by Bond (2020), calling a student international is, in part, an administrative distinction. It determines their fee status but also their immigration status, that is, where they are normally domiciled and how this relates to visa requirements. Importantly, Bond (2020, p. 5) also perceptively emphasises that, after the bureaucratic processes are complete, this distinction 'become[s] blurred and almost irrelevant once learning begins', going on to explain that within that group there are still 'multiple shades of meaning' (p.5) which need to be teased out. As an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) practitioner, Bond's specific interest is in the subset of students for whom English is not their first language. For this group *international student* then becomes a convenient label which leads to unhelpful comparisons with home students. Bond (2020, p. 6) makes a compelling argument in relation to use of this term:

> […] it is important to recognise the power structures and cultural capital (both in terms of opportunities and prejudices) that lie behind it. It is not benign and can be used to separate out and 'other' specific groups of people as well as provide access to support. There is also no one label that can be used for this group of students that is not seen as denoting some kind of deficit differential, as any label must by its very nature be seen to separate one group from another, and measure one group against what is currently accepted as a standard norm.

In a similar argument, Lomer (2018, p. 310) suggests that in creating this binary, the international student becomes 'associated with assumptions about behaviours, motivations, and the capacity for study'. This, she argues, leads to students being labelled by their country of origin as a means to understand their learning experiences and outcomes. This theme garners much attention in the literature which reports how the learner traits of the international student can often be essentialised and portrayed as problematic, in other words, deficient in the academic skills expected at tertiary level. Heng (2020) concurs noting that academic research often concentrates on the deficits. In his research conducted in the context of Australian HE, Haugh (2016) also describes the ways in which English language skills are often portrayed as being inadequate for academic study and even as an explanation for declining academic standards, without consideration of the nuances of language capabilities. Similar results were reported in Zhang-Wu's (2018) literature review of studies reporting on the experience of Chinese international students at American HEIs. Studies selected for this review again portrayed these international students as linguistically deficit and unable to manage the demands of their degree programme. Such portrayals are undoubtedly damaging for those students in many different and difficult ways but also seem far removed from the ideas which informed Knight's vision of an

internationalisation with values of 'co-operation, partnership, exchange, mutual benefits and capacity building' (2013, p. 89). Marginson (2013, p. 12) succinctly articulates the fundamental issue inherent in these deficit discourses: that success is measured by the extent to which 'students discard their beliefs' to conform to the host country's academic expectations of what kind of graduate should emerge from their institutions, as enshrined on the websites of most HEIs in the form of their graduate attributes frameworks (GAFs). When international students do not conform to academic expectations, this can lead to the reinforcement of a discourse which reaches for linguistic deficiencies as an easy answer but does not necessarily seek out alternative explanations for why international students may be perceived as deficient as Heng's (2020) study suggests is the case. Undoubtedly, language competence, specifically the ability to construct the academic discourse expected in the academy, is a crucial aspect of the international student experience, and indeed is pertinent to all students in HE, regardless of their linguistic background.

However, if care is not taken to understand more deeply some of the ways in which these students experience learning and envisage their outcomes on their degree programmes, the more inclusive vision of internationalisation as articulated by Knight (2013), and energetically championed by HEIs on their public-facing platforms risks being overlooked. If international students are to be successful in achieving academic outcomes, then programmes of study need to be designed in ways which enable this. There is a need for further investigation into their experiences on their programmes in order to understand how their study contributes, or not, to the development of GAs. By continuing to focus exclusively on language ability, programmes which encapsulate Knight's values seem less likely to really match the promises of institutional policies and publicity. Additionally, understanding what outcomes international students want to accomplish from their study abroad experience offers a means to achieve this. Learning directly from them the kind of attributes they want to develop as a result of their study abroad is important. Assuming an alignment with the university-sanctioned ones which are typically prescribed in the institution's Graduate Attribute Frameworks (GAFs) seems counter to a view of collaborative, partnership-based internationalisation. This is not to say that there is no alignment or that the attributes promoted in GAFs are not desirable. Parallels may well be identified. However, if there are benefits for student learning and development in these frameworks, then, in addition to understanding their views, how they are understood and perceived by academic staff is clearly also an important factor. The introduction and implementation of GAFs continues to raise questions in the HE sector, and these are explored further in the following section.

2.2 Graduate attributes

In this section, I explore the argument that the concept of GAs, beyond its denotation in everyday usage, is set within discourses of marketisation of education, quality assurance and employability in the HE sector, with particular reference to how GA frameworks have been adopted and promoted by HEIs in Scotland. This is then followed by an examination of the problematic nature of implementing such frameworks. The section begins with establishing a definition of graduate attributes and their purpose in the HE sector.

2.2.1 Defining graduate attributes

Defining the term graduate attributes is not without some difficulty. It has often been acknowledged within the research literature of HE (Morley, 2001) that the terms of reference for GAs vary and that there is not necessarily a shared understanding of the concept. In his seminal discussion of how lecturers understood generic graduate attributes, Barrie (2006, p. 217) describes the ‘bewildering array’ of terms used within the Australian HE context, suggesting that this profusion of terms arose as a result of the way they were defined by different institutions and educational bodies.

A decade later, despite ongoing debates which sought to clarify the meaning of GAs, there was still no agreed terminology: Hill, Walkington and France (2016) list almost ten different phrases used. It could be said that a full agreement on the term is not important. Arguably, the variation in terminology is simply a question of synonymy (Wong, Chiu, Copsey-Blake, & Nikolopoulou, 2021), or as Hager puts it more scathingly, ‘lazy language’ (Hager, 2006, p. 18). It could also be argued that how these attributes are referred to or described is less important than ensuring that graduates leaving the HE system are in possession of the attributes deemed necessary for their future professional lives in a complex world. Although this also presupposes that this is an objective of HE, which is not necessarily a universally accepted opinion. For some, the focus on skills to enhance employability is viewed as an impoverished objective for education (Huang, Turner & Chen 2014, p. 182). Additionally, the implementation of GAs, appears to some to illustrate a further erosion of academic freedom, an attempt to regulate and manage what is to be taught in a manner which pushes at the limits of what is acceptable to academics (Morley, 2001, p. 134).

Nonetheless, if a position is adopted that we do not need to get caught up in terminology and semantics, then providing a definition of GAs is relatively straightforward. In the

simplest terms, the most frequently quoted definition of GAs is the one provided by Bowden, Hart, King, Trigwell and Watts (2000):

> Graduate attributes are the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution. These attributes include but go beyond the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed the core of most university courses. They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future.

This means that by undertaking further study and engaging fully with their programmes, students should reasonably expect to graduate equipped, not only with the disciplinary knowledge of their chosen specialisation, but also with a set of skills which will allow them to navigate the complexities of the modern world. More specifically, the development of GAs is viewed as an assurance that the twenty-first century graduate is ‘work ready’ (Bridgstock, 2009, p. 31) and can make a valuable contribution to the work force.

However, even if it can be agreed that the lack of clarity on whether we describe these as attributes, skills and outcomes is no more than a semantic preference, the language used to describe the specific individual attributes which are listed in GAFs is no more precise. This could be due in part to the need or desire for each institution to differentiate themselves from their comparators in a competitive tertiary market. As acknowledged by Advance HE (Advance HE, 2020) in the definition they offer on their website, GAs ‘are defined differently from one HE provider to another’. Another factor may also be, as suggested by O’Donnell, Rakshani, Rae and Smith (2017), the result of the inclusion of employers and industry stakeholders in the creation of frameworks. The consequence of this, argue the authors, is numerous articulations of GAs which are ‘diverse, in terminology, size and purpose’ (p. 22). What is also unclear, argue the authors, is whether what is described is indicative of substantially different concepts or whether they are essentially the same attributes with a different name.

Whilst individual institutions may adopt specific nomenclatures and present their GAFs differently, there is nonetheless some broad agreement among institutions on the areas in which students are expected to develop the requisite skills. This can be seen in research which has sought to map the presentation of GAs across different sectors. It is worth noting here that, although the focus of the present research is to learn how the identified group of students conceive of graduate attributes, having a sense of how those are articulated institutionally is also important. This is facilitated by such mapping research

which categorises GAs by type. Using this research to look more closely at the boundaries between the two different communities, institutions and their students, helps us understand where there is consonance, and dissonance, in conceptualisations. The following three surveys offer these categorisations.

In a 2011 mapping of Australian HEI GAFs (Oliver & Jorre de St Jorre, 2018), the following seven clusters were identified as being consistently emphasised: written and oral communication; critical and analytical thinking; problem solving; information literacy; learning and working independently; learning and working collaboratively; ethical and inclusive engagement. Repeating this in 2015, many of the same attributes were found to be common amongst providers. Around the same time, a mapping of GAs in Scottish HE was one of the outcomes of a study undertaken as part of the QAA Enhancement Theme projects (Hounsell, 2011) which focused on skills for graduates in the 21st century (see section 2.2.3 for further discussion of QAA). These are categorised as: lifelong learning; research, scholarship and enquiry; employability and career development; global citizenship; communication and information literacy; ethical, social and professional understanding; personal and intellectual autonomy; and collaboration, teamwork and leadership. More recently, a third systematic mapping of GAs published by UK HEIs (Wong, Chiu, Copsey-Blake, & Nikolopoulou, 2021) categorised these into four broad domain discourses: self-awareness and lifelong learning; employability and professional development; academic and research literacy; and global citizenship and engagement. Less granularly expressed than the Australian categories, there are nonetheless commonalties to be found in these four domains. The first primarily focuses on the personal qualities a graduate may be in possession of, such as effective communication or the ability to manage their time. It also places importance on remaining active in their learning throughout their lifetimes. The second broad area, employability, is described by the authors as including such skills as being able to work in a team, managing workplace tensions and numeracy skills. The third discourse, academic literacy, encompassed the ability to develop and articulate arguments clearly, presumably according to an agreed set of conventions. It also includes research literacy so that they might be able to critically analyse their own work but also that of the body of research within their field. Global citizenship and engagement, which they found to be prevalent in almost three-quarters of the universities they surveyed, is described as a discourse which (2021, p.8):

> […] is conscious of the roles of graduates across different societies, and embodies the skills and qualities needed to thrive in various contexts around the world.

In relation to international graduates, and specifically to this research, this ambitious objective, with its focus on context, appears especially relevant and raises a number of questions: what the specific attributes which equip students to engage both locally and globally are; how these are being embedded and developed within programmes; and more crucially, how feasible it is for those working in UK HE to truly know or even predict the different contexts that international students will find themselves in once they have graduated from the UK HEI.

In producing the aforementioned map of the GA landscape, the authors' intention was to fill a gap in UK-focused research which they have certainly done. Categorising the different attributes into the dominant discourses provides a very useful picture of priorities in UK HE. However, what is also noticeable is that they have done well to find the commonalities, as even within each area, there is considerable variation in how specific skills are perceived and articulated. Moreover, what is even more striking and pertinent for the present research is that they have noted (as an aside as this is not their primary focus) the vagueness of most universities in articulating how the listed attributes can be attained, with most obfuscating the issue by saying it will be achieved as they progress through their degree programme. At this point, the previous position of terminology tolerance becomes more troubling. It may be possible, to some extent, to overlook the lack of agreement on the overarching terminology and to accept interchangeable synonyms for the specific graduate attributes. However, it feels more problematic when there appears to be a lack of detail on the practical issues of how graduate attributes are developed within programmes of study. An alternative, and more convincing, position is that the lack of lexical clarity is indicative of a more concerning and ongoing lack of conceptual clarity about the nature of graduate attributes: what their purpose is; how they are chosen; and how they are implemented in curricula. Studies to date on the subject of GAs would seem to give more support to this latter interpretation and paint a picture of conflicting perspectives. These range between an active resistance to what is perceived as another example of a neoliberal initiative in the marketisation of HE, an academic interrogation of what GAs can and should be, to an active embedding of GA frameworks and their implementation in subject curricula. Having now established the difficulties of defining the term, it is also necessary to better understand the place of graduate attributes within this broader HE landscape. Contextualising this concept necessarily requires a closer examination of two areas which loom large in any discussion about the sector: employability and quality assurance. Locating graduate attributes within these two areas affords us a more nuanced understanding of the role and function of GA frameworks beyond the surface level of institutional descriptions.

2.2.2 The employability agenda in HE

Underpinning the development of GAFs is the positioning of HEIs in the global economy. Their significance to the economy has been well established as successive governments have sought to harness the potential of universities, in terms of human capital, to serve economic policy. As the world has evolved and global markets have become increasingly interconnected, national governments have been concerned with having a workforce which is skilled in navigating this complex new environment and which can keep pace with the rapid technological advancements and societal change. An associated expectation is that individuals will experience greater mobility in their careers, not just in geographical terms but also professionally speaking. Whereas once people may have expected to stay in the same job, perhaps even in the same company, for many years, the expectation now is that employees will experience more significant shifts in their careers, both within and between sectors (O'Donnell, Rakhshani, Rae & Smith, 2017). These two factors have combined to influence HE in very significant ways (Bridgstock, 2009) and the link between governmental support for universities and their role in producing employable graduates is widely recognised. The sphere of influence on what is done in universities goes beyond the campus perimeter. For universities, economic policy has meant greater accountability to a wider range of stakeholders. This is accompanied by the need for HEIs to evidence that their programmes of study are fit for this purpose, and that students emerging from their graduation halls, are equipped for the twenty first century workplace. The publication of a GAF is one of the ways that the university can demonstrate that it is fulfilling its role in providing this and is one of the indicators of quality in a crowded HE arena. Activity in the Scottish HE sector provides a clear illustration of the relationship between GAFs and Quality Assurance and is the focus of the next section.

2.2.3 Scottish HE and quality assurance

Scotland, in line with other countries, most notably Australia, has placed considerable importance and emphasis on graduate attributes. According to Universities Scotland, the representative body for Scotland's 19 universities, each of its member institutions has put employability 'at the core of […] *their* learning and teaching strategy', thus reinforcing the link between GAs and the development of a skilled workforce to strengthen the economy (Universities Scotland, 2020). This agency notes the importance of GAFs to develop 'the kind of wider "soft" skills that employers look for' (Universities Scotland, n.d.). This commitment to embedding graduate attributes in university curricula is also visible in

high-profile Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) projects, the main body with responsibility for quality assurance in the HE sector, of which QAA Scotland is part (QAAS). According to its website, the QAAS remit includes 'review and enhancement' work (Quality Assurance Agency, 2020). This includes the enhancement projects such as those related to graduate attributes mentioned above (section 2.2.3), which are worth considering in more detail.

One initiative was the decision of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) to make graduate skills one of its enhancement themes in 2011 *Graduates for the 21st Century*. Chosen by the HE sector, these themes form part of the Quality Enhancement Framework used by Scottish institutions and incorporate programmes of activity which aim to enhance different aspects of HE. In this case, the focus was on identification of the skills required by graduates in the 21st century but, perhaps more importantly, consideration of the best way to support student achievement of such attributes.

More recently, in 2018, the QAA also identified Graduate Skills as the subject of one of its *Focus on* projects (QAA Scotland, 2021). These projects are designed to support institutions in the sector to implement and practically operationalise recommendations from Enhancement-led Institutional Reviews (ELIR). In scope was consideration of how to: embed skills within curricula for graduates of all disciplines; support students from 'all backgrounds' to develop skills to be successful in the workplace; and to ensure that 'Scottish graduates are enabled to live and work in a global society' (QAA Scotland, 2020). A positive point to note from this project was that it solicited the views of students themselves rather than focusing on other stakeholders such as academics, or employers whose views tend to predominate in other literature in this area. As highlighted in the report from the Australian Learning & Teaching Council's project on graduate attributes (Barrie, Hughes, & Smith, 2009), there are a number of groups which have stakes in any discussion on GAs. To exclude key actors, that is, the future graduates themselves, is likely to impact on the success of uptake of GA frameworks. Arguably, a second positive aspect is its emphasis on supporting students from diverse 'backgrounds and characteristics' (QAA Scotland, 2021) in their attribute development. Recognition of this diversity is certainly a step in the right direction although a project such as this can only go as far as making recommendations. The extent to which HEIs then choose to act on these, and how they implement them in programmes is perhaps less well known. What is less clear here is who the 'Scottish graduates' are and where they will work, or what kind of work they will do.

In addition to such projects, the agency issues their own QAA 'Quality Marks' to Scottish HEIs who have met or exceeded 'expectations for quality and standards' (Quality Assurance Agency, 2021) by conducting Enhancement-led Institutional Reviews (ELIRs). Outcomes from these reviews are used by individual institutions to address areas for development, or more precisely, enhancement. The ELIR handbook notes that enhancement, as defined by the Scottish sector, is focused on 'taking deliberate steps to bring about improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experiences of students' (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2017). The espoused approach is very much focused on collaboration and partnership with institutions to achieve the required standards.

However, despite the narrative of enhancement and the explicitly stated focus on the student learning experience, which is hard to argue against, the work of such agencies is not uncontroversial or without criticism. This kind of quality assurance activity is often discussed within the discourses of neoliberalism and management practices, which have had such an impact on academic work and, as such, may often be met with resistance by academics (Lucas, 2014) for different reasons. Whilst quality assurance itself is not the main focus of this research, it is, nonetheless, worth elaborating on this as a factor contributing to academics' resistance as graduate attributes are, for some, so tightly implicated with quality assurance processes. Regulatory practices such as these are illustrative of the way in which many academics view quality assurance as a means of ensuring institutional compliance with a political agenda which seeks to control the sector and so increase its value to the economy.

A second source of dissatisfaction with GA frameworks is their role in marketing universities to prospective students. Anderson (2017) discusses the ways in which institutions use GAs to differentiate themselves from competitor institutions. As noted above, universities face increasing competition to recruit. Anderson argues that many students approach their choice of institution with a consumer perspective, looking for an institution whose name on their degree certificate will confer an advantage when they enter the workplace. It is unlikely that the aspirational vision of the kind of graduate they will become will be the sole deciding factor in their choice of university for prospective students. As Killick (2009, p. 6) remarks, in the context of universities competing for their share of the market, they 'increasingly "sell" themselves through the broad ephemera of location, facilities, celebrity and brand'. Nonetheless, the connection with future employability may well hold some sway.

This close association of graduate attributes with neoliberal and performative narratives is one of the reasons that institutional GA frameworks, in the words of Anderson (2017, p. 9), run the risk of 'languishing on an institution's […] webpages in splendid isolation from other learning opportunities' as academics continue to resist any initiatives which seem to detract from their own views of what a university should be. However, even where there is some acceptance of GAs as a broad concept, this has been hampered by other fundamental issues which bear further discussion. The first of these is the lack of a shared understanding among key stakeholders of what GAs are.

One of the most influential studies which first highlighted this problem was conducted by Barrie (2006) who has contributed extensively to research into GAs. This research, motivated by a desire to better understand what generic GAs were, used phenomenography to explore what academic's conceptions were. He found that, contrary to what may be assumed by the publication of GA frameworks, '[GAs] appear to mean very different things to the individuals charged with developing such outcomes' (Barrie, 2006, p. 239). The four variations in conceptions he identified were defined as: pre-cursory; complementary; translation; and enabling. The dimensions in variation related to the extent to which they are separate or integral to the curriculum of the discipline. Precursory refers to those basic numeracy and literacy skills which one might expect students to have already acquired whereas complementary skills may be acquired during tertiary study, but which are taught alongside rather than integrated into the curriculum. The translation conception sees as necessary that the skills are translated into the subject therefore within the remit of the academic to develop. The fourth enabling conception sees GAs as having interdisciplinary applicability. Clearly, the lack of consensus poses problems if HEIs are trying to encourage the embedding of their GAs within programme curricula, not least because some academics may not even view this as part of their role. However, for some, the idea of developing curriculum to accommodate the GAs is also open to debate. The commonly held belief that graduate attributes can be acquired through the curriculum and taught to students has been questioned increasingly over the last decade, with a number of studies doubting the efficacy of generic GAs as an approach. As thinking has shifted from viewing GAs as super-disciplinary, more attention has been paid to the interaction between the generic skills and disciplinary epistemologies.

Jones's (2009, 2013) research occupies this space, and she proposes that 'de-disciplining' GAs (2009, p. 85), that is, separating them from their disciplinary knowledge bases, can be problematic in different ways. Crucially, she asserts that by removing them from their home base, they may lose their full value and potential and be seen merely as additions to

the curriculum rather than as an integral tool for supporting students' engagement with it. This is in line with Barrie's original research which found that GAs were indeed viewed by some as 'additive' skills unconnected to university learning outcomes, which Jones suggests can partially account for the lack of buy-in from academics.

Jones (2013, p. 601) continues to problematise the view that GAs, as they are envisaged by policy documents and subsequently implemented, can be generic and transferred across disciplines. She vigorously advocates for a teaching of GAs which recognises, amongst other factors, the considerable influence of disciplinary knowledge. It is her belief that:

> […] notions of graduate attributes succeed when they are conceptualised as integral to the 'community', for example, when they fit with the disciplinary and departmental culture, with the epistemic frames and with teaching practice.

It is worth focusing on Jones's use of the word community in this comment which she takes care to define. In fact, she identifies a number of different communities who participate in the teaching of GAs, and this is framed with reference to Becher and Trowler's (2001) work on academic 'tribes' which have different ways of doing the discipline. Jones (2012, p. 595) considers the 'numerous communities' to include '[..] the teaching unit, disciplinary or sub-disciplinary community, department and institution' and highlights that all of these will have 'differing aims and constraints and interact or conflict in various ways around the teaching of graduate attributes'. She does note that the scope of the study did not extend to include students as another participant in the community although she recognises their contribution 'as an important factor in the ways in which academics discussed their teaching' (p. 595). However, it does not give the students, as a learning community, a voice in how GAs might be taught, nor does it take account of the communities in which the students may eventually apply the attributes.

Hager (2006, p. 38), on the other hand, makes a strong argument for recognition of what he calls the 'contextuality' of attributes. Where Jones (2009) invites us to consider disciplinary knowledge as being integral to the development of attributes, Hager echoes this but also urges us to be mindful of the context of the workplace and, specifically, the features of that workplace setting which can shape the attributes considered appropriate. These features include but are not limited to: its particular culture and norms; its institutions and practices; and its economic and social environment. Most notably, Hager believes that in the task of deciding and establishing graduate attributes, context has a much stronger influence than the profession itself. In other words, within a single occupation, there may be considerable variation in the attributes deemed necessary across

different sites. While he does not explicitly mention those work sites as being in locations which are geographically or culturally different, this idea takes on particular resonance when it is related to international students who are gaining their professional knowledge in one location but who are likely to practise elsewhere as is the case in the context of this study.

This raises a number of issues but perhaps one of the more pressing questions for consideration is how this contextual workplace knowledge can be accessed and best integrated by academics into a coherent framework of attributes with an SLTE-oriented degree programme. This is an important question, which to some extent, has already been debated within the field of SLTE as the common understandings of its knowledge base have been examined in recent decades. This will be considered in more detail in section 2.3. However, prior to that, it is important to bring the graduate back into focus.

2.2.4 Identifying the graduate in graduate attributes

It should be acknowledged that much of the research has been focused on the perceptions of academic staff rather than students, a point made by Jones (2013). The research to date has gone some way to addressing conceptual confusion by providing descriptive categories (Barrie, 2006) and identifying the factors which shape the conceptualisation of the attributes (Jones, 2013). It is undeniable that these perspectives are important as academics are in the front line of curriculum design and delivery. However, focusing attention on the 'attributes' in the term *graduate attributes* risks losing sight of the other element. What has perhaps been less well interrogated is the graduate. If educators are committed to student learning and developing their existing attributes as well as new ones, then an equally important task is to understand who their students are and where they are going. In other words, to make graduate attributes meaningful, they surely need to be informed by the profiles and future contexts of the very graduates who are intended to embody them. Whilst we may accept that it is not feasible from an institutional perspective to individualise and tailor GAFs completely, some studies have recognised and argued for the need for more contextual factors to be taken into account in order to provide a more nuanced articulation and implementation of these frameworks.

One issue which has perhaps received less attention is differentiation between different types of students. For example, some GAFs take little account of whether a student is an undergraduate or a postgraduate student. This can perhaps be attributed to an assumption that, as a postgraduate student, you may have already developed the attributes deemed

desirable for entry to the world of work (Anderson, 2017) during an undergraduate degree programme. However, Alsford and Smith (2013) make the point that it can be misleading to presume that those engaged in postgraduate study are, by definition, joining the programme directly from undergraduate degrees in the same discipline. Therefore, while there is an expectation that PG students will develop the graduate attributes defined by the institution, it is also possible that they will be 'playing catch-up' with regard to disciplinary knowledge and expending cognitive effort on the mastery of their discipline's threshold concepts which provide the entry point or 'portal' to their disciplinary community (Meyer & Land, 2003). Anderson (2017) also expands on a related point made by Alsford and Smith (2013) to note that beginning a postgraduate degree does not, of itself, imply more effective learning skills. Alsford and Smith (2013) summarise their concerns thus:

> Postgraduate students can no longer be seen as a homogenous group of high achieving students who have decided to continue studying their undergraduate subject, rather they are a heterogeneous group with their own motivations, previous educational experiences, expectations, and differing support needs.

Recognising such heterogeneity in learner profiles is part of the challenge in the construction of GAFs. However, understanding what postgraduate students are bringing with them as they begin their programmes is only part of the puzzle. In the conceptualisation of GAs, understanding where graduates are going once they have graduated, and the contexts of employability they will find themselves in, also needs more consideration. Internationalisation heavily promotes the idea of mobility, not only geographically but also within the career lifecycle. In discussions of internationalisation, it is commonly believed that graduates need to be able to navigate different cultural settings. What is perhaps less clear is what is known about these different settings and how they may inform the attributes needed by international students. Nor is it clear how postgraduate programmes might reasonably play a role in shaping them. The following section considers employability through the lens of internationalisation.

2.2.5 International students and employability

The UK is one of the prime destinations for international students who come in large numbers. While the British HE sector attracts students from all over the globe, for Chinese students in particular, it has been one of the most desirable destinations in the last decade (Cebolla-Boado, Hu, & Soysal, 2018) with HESA reporting that student numbers from China increased by 20% between 2018-19 and 2019-20 (HESA, 2021). Motivations for pursuing an international education undoubtedly vary, with each individual making this

choice based on different factors. These include practical reasons such as the, comparatively short, length of a UK Masters degree with associated cost implications (Li, 2013). However, it is likely that future employability is considered as a key motivation and a salient question which needs to be addressed is how employability may be viewed by international students and what it means for them. As discussed in the preceding sections on graduate attributes, the frameworks deployed by many HEIs are based on the premise of a skills agenda, but it is not certain that this view of employability aligns with that of postgraduate students seeking employment. As discussed above, the concept of employability has been inextricably linked to the neoliberal agenda for education, premised on an understanding that the primary purpose of universities is to develop students with the skills deemed necessary by employers to be productive, work-ready employees. However, studies into employability have tended to focus on the UK employment market and have taken little account of students who may not be seeking employment here. There has been scant attention paid to those international students who will return to their home country or to what employability may mean for them. Understanding how they perceive the relationship between their UK degree and future employability is an essential element in assessing what meaning graduate attributes have for such students. A small number of studies focus on the experience of Chinese students, unsurprisingly, as they are the largest group of international students. A key theme emerging from this more focused literature is the shift in local perceptions of the international education experience.

A commonly held view is that having a degree from a UK university enhances employability once students return to their home countries. While this may still hold some truth, more recent research has revealed that having academic credentials from the UK does not necessarily hold the same power as it once did. Li (2013) reports that this is due in part to the increase in students from China who study abroad but also to the fact that more of these students now return home following their graduation. This means that the local graduate employment market is more crowded. Having an international degree does not set you apart in the way it may have done at the turn of the century and cannot be assumed to be an indicator of employability. Huang and Turner (2018) also report that Chinese employers are less satisfied that returning students meet their exacting standards, nor do they have the skills that employers require. In short, they suggest that the degree, in and of itself, may no longer be sufficient to ensure that these students have the competitive edge over their peers who have not studied abroad.

Huang and Turner (2018) turn their attention to the requirements of international students in a study focused on the attitudes of Chinese students to their own employability as well as the support they seek during their time at a UK university. Their discussion is centred on the perceived opportunities implicit within an international education and how students take advantage of these to enhance their employment prospects. They conclude with recommendations for the institution to further develop the support they offer, having noted that very few universities offered tailored employment support for international students. Moreover, they argue that the lack of specific support fuels the argument that international students are viewed for the financial benefits that they bring to their institutions. For the students themselves, the benefits to their own personal development seemed to be more in focus than benefits to career development. This is in line with Li's (2013) own findings which suggest that, for those who participated in her study, it is the development of self, rather than the qualification, which was seen as advantageous. It is on this basis that Li argues for a framing of employability which recognises it as a personal construct, as distinct from an outcome focused on labour markets. Interestingly, Li also notes that for many students, entering an international employment market is not a goal, with many planning to return to work in China. This also aligns with other studies which promote a more person-oriented view of GAs. For example, Su (2014) proposes that current conceptualisations of GAs are overly focused on curricular mapping but neglect the student, overlooking their ability to act and participate in their own development. Similarly, Daniels and Brooker (2014) express concern about the tendency to focus on the identity of the working graduate rather than the learning student, arguing that it is this latter student identity which is being developed during the programme of study and which should thus be prioritised.

The shortage of research which explores how students conceive of their employability and manage it has been identified by Huang, Turner and Chen (2014), who also critique what research does exist, finding it to be centred on those whose voices are important to government rather than the other main stakeholders, that is, the graduates themselves. Moreover, they state, the research which does consider the student voice has tended to focus on home students. Their point that having a better understanding of these students' own intentions regarding their employment can only result in more coherent institutional support is convincing.

2.2.6 Section conclusion

In this review of the research to date on graduate attributes, I have sought to demonstrate that beyond the aspirational language deployed by HEIs on their institutional web pages, there are a number of unresolved issues with the notion of a graduate attributes framework and its role in producing the ideal, work ready graduate. A fundamental issue is resistance to the notion of an idealised list of graduate attributes. GAFs are often viewed as no more than a tool to promote an institution in a competitive marketplace. They reinforce the belief of many in the sector that education is driven by an unpalatable neoliberal agenda rather than by a desire to promote education of the individual for the common good. It also seems clear that, even where there is some acceptance of the idea itself, however grudging, that there is not really a shared understanding among the academics, who are key to implementing them, of what graduate attributes might be. Moreover, even where agreement can be reached on the attributes themselves, how such frameworks can be operationalised within curricula, and assessed, also requires further attention. Such questions are important, and it is fully acknowledged that these are areas which are also worthy of further discussion.

It could be concluded that how we define these terms is less important than the joint work that educators do with their students in helping them develop the attributes in ways which give meaning to their work and can sustain them, following graduation, in their chosen profession, or indeed over the course of their professional lives within a complex and interconnected world. Crucial to this discussion is consideration of other key stakeholders, namely the graduates themselves who are the subject of these attributes. As we have seen, there is little research which focuses on students' own perspectives, or their individual understandings of graduate attributes. Graduate attributes tend to be somewhat unstratified in their institutional articulation, oriented towards a homogenous group of students, arguably underpinned by assumptions of a homogenous professional, cultural, geographical destination upon graduation. In an effort to address this, the focus of this study are international students undertaking postgraduate study within the UK on a Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) programme. Of specific interest is the meaning graduate attributes have for them. In the next section, the focus turns to the field of SLTE, tracing its development over recent decades, as it has been shaped by epistemological changes but also by the same shifts in the political economy which have been outlined above.

2.3 Second language teacher education

Following a brief contextualisation of this study in relation to the field of Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE), a definition of SLTE and its scope are considered. The discussion then moves on to situate the postgraduate SLTE programme within two domains: firstly, within the field of SLTE provisions; and secondly, its place in the broader globalised Higher Education landscape. Having established the backdrop to this study, the chapter then goes on to discuss what may constitute the knowledge base of an SLTE programme and the salience of contextual and situational factors in establishing its content.

Before beginning a more detailed consideration of the extant literature in SLTE, it is first helpful to highlight the scope of the field. Although what follows may seem obvious, it is worth emphasising. As Tedick (2005) reminds us, second language teaching occurs in multiple settings, at different levels, in various geographical locations and within diverse educational contexts. To be precise, SLTE can encompass the teaching of any language, not only the more widely spoken global language such as English, Mandarin, or Spanish but also languages which have comparatively fewer speakers. Additionally, the teaching of these languages may take place not only within a range of educational settings, state or commercial, but also to different age groups (kindergarten, primary, secondary, tertiary or adult education) and in multiple locations around the globe. This broad variation is reflected in the destinations of the students on the programme in focus in this research. For example, upon graduation, one student may be seeking work as a primary school teacher of English in Beijing, whilst a classmate may be teaching Lithuanian to adults working in a global company in Vilnius.

This considerable contextual variation is relevant when considering the knowledge base which underpins the programme, and for the literature drawn on for this discussion: a significant proportion of the research base of SLTE is focused on the teaching of English as a second language rather than the teaching of other languages. This is undoubtedly related to the positioning of English as a global language, a position with its origins in a colonial history, rather than a complete absence of research into the teaching of languages other than English. Nonetheless, as the second language most widely taught, it is inevitable that there is a very widely accessible research base for SLTE which is focused on, and written in, English.

2.3.1 The scope of second language teacher education

Bearing in mind the above, providing a concise definition of SLTE could be challenging. Nonetheless, if one is to consider it in its most essential form, SLTE is generally understood to be concerned with the learning and professional development of second language teachers. SLTE programmes, regardless of context, should provide a framework for this learning and development, firstly, considering what a teacher needs to know about language teaching and secondly, how they should teach such content to their students. Burns and Richards (2009) propose that the development of SLTE as a field has occurred in response to two different forces, which might be described as internal and external. Firstly, the field has developed in relation to changes in how the language teaching community has understood what comprises its own knowledge base (the internal influence). Secondly, externally, SLTE has been greatly shaped by the influence of globalisation. This influence can be understood in different ways: on one level, globalisation has increased the need to learn English in many countries. In turn, this has led to the prioritisation of language learning, and so consequently, the education of language teachers has come under closer scrutiny at the domestic level in a number of nations. The landscape of teacher education has evolved in response, with national education authorities focusing more closely on their language teaching policies, language teaching standards, and looking for ways to increase accountability (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 1). In the following section, I will discuss the main developments in the field of SLTE through these two lenses: the changes which have arisen from within the field as it researches its own practices; and the external influences of the political economy. The discussion begins with consideration of debates regarding the language teacher knowledge base before going on to contemplate the influence of globalisation on SLTE programmes. The section concludes by locating the programme which is the focus of this study within the wider SLTE landscape and examining it within the context of globalisation.

2.3.2 The knowledge base of SLTE

At the core of any discipline is its knowledge base, and it is important to understand what that encompasses for SLTE. Although the definition of a professional body of knowledge is open to interpretation, as will be discussed in more detail in chapter three in relation to Wenger-Trayner's (2015) concept of landscapes of practice, being able to lay claim to one can be seen as one fundamental characteristic of being a professional language teacher (Wallace, 1991). Leung (2009) concurs that the definition of professionalism should include the disciplinary knowledge expected of the practitioner. The practitioner must be able to draw on this rich source in order to exercise their work in the way that is expected of them by different key stakeholders. This naturally includes their professional

community of practice but also extends to others such as students (and also their parents, particularly at the level of compulsory education) and regulatory bodies to name a few. Johnson (2009, p. 11) describes the knowledge base succinctly as ‘a professional self-definition’, adding that agreeing and disseminating a knowledge base brings the profession’ both recognition and value’. What has also been widely agreed is that the nature of the SLTE knowledge base has evolved over the last few decades and it is this trajectory which will be discussed now before moving onto a more detailed discussion of what constitutes the nature of professional language teaching.

Freeman (2009, p. 12) has conceptualised the development of SLTE as a ‘widening gyre’. By conceptualising the field in expanding circles, with each new circle containing the previous ones, SLTE can be understood as having evolved and expanded in the following ways. Traditionally, the SLTE knowledge base was considered to include a focus on two main areas: firstly, what might be considered the academic foundations of language teaching and learning and secondly, the classroom teaching skills. In their call for SLTE knowledge base to be reconceptualised, Freeman and Johnson (1998) pointed out that the field was still largely reliant on other disciplines such as theoretical and applied linguistics and second language acquisition. Whilst not suggesting that this type of disciplinary knowledge was irrelevant, their argument was that this did not account for the actual practice of second language teachers. In other words, how practitioners do their work with students. This earlier conceptualisation of the knowledge base is in line with one of the three models of professional education identified by Wallace (1991). Wallace termed this the applied science approach to language teacher education, a view which itself draws broadly from Schön’s (1983) critique of technical rationality and the notion of a professional education which privileges academic, or scientific, knowledge. In this view, practitioners draw on scientific knowledge in order to resolve practical classroom problems, with the premise that such knowledge has universal applicability. As Wallace (1991, p. 9) expands, this mode of education is one-directional. Empirical evidence is transmitted to the trainee teacher by the expert rather than considering the situated classroom experience of the practitioner. The problem with such an approach is that it results in a body of knowledge which is devoid of context and which, Freeman and Johnson argue (1998, p. 399) ‘denies the complexities of human interaction and reduces teaching to a quantifiable set of behaviours.’

For that reason, the call to reconceptualise the knowledge base demanded that SLTE programmes also needed to pay attention to how languages were taught in the classroom but also how the content is perceived by teachers and students. Teaching context, and the

notion of a located SLTE became central to this conceptualisation of teacher education, as did the belief that for practice to be meaningful, it needed to be reflected upon by the practitioner so that it might meet the needs of the learner. The first of these, what Johnson (2009) refers to as SLTE's sociocultural turn, will now be examined in more detail before going on to consider how the notion of reflective practice has come to be a cornerstone of SLTE.

2.3.3 The sociocultural turn in SLTE

Reacting against the limitations of an applied science model, and moving away from a behaviourist approach to learning, the sociocultural view is premised on legitimising practitioner knowledge and incorporating it into the knowledge base, thus further expanding Freeman's gyre (2009). Critical of the idea that language teachers should simply accept top-down theories of language learning and teaching, this perspective promotes the knowledge which is generated as they practise their profession: identifying, exploring, and resolving problems as they arise. This is not to say that there is a complete rejection of the science. Instead, theory is filtered by experience (Golombek, 1998, p.461). For Golombek, teacher educators need to make links between what she termed 'personal practical knowledge' with empirical knowledge. This aligns with Johnson's (1997) view that a teacher education programme needs to make space for teacher-learners to find meaning in theory by looking at it through the lens of their own experiences, both as teachers but also as students. This latter perspective, that teachers use their own learning experiences in shaping their beliefs about their teaching practice, is not unusual nor is it new. Lortie's (1975) seminal work on the schoolteacher was a reminder that before teachers begin to formally learn about teaching, they have already spent thousands of hours in a classroom learning and being taught. This prior knowledge which Lortie described as the 'apprenticeship of observation' is not inconsiderable and therefore cannot be discounted or ignored. Graves (2009, p. 118) agrees on the importance of this for teacher education programmes, clarifying that teachers 'must first recognise their existing knowledge and beliefs about teaching in order to transform them'. This suggests a more rigorous unpacking of the tacit assumptions about teaching that teacher-learners may hold, even before they set foot in a classroom as practitioners. This is perhaps especially pertinent in the context of postgraduate SLTE programmes where the students may have little or no practical experience of language teaching through which they can filter the theories which they are learning about in their courses. As Johnson and Golombek (2011, p. 1) state, they are joining a profession:

> with largely unarticulated, yet deeply ingrained, notions about what language is, how it is learned, and how it should be taught.

This can, consequently, contribute to the development of a 'highly personalised' (Forde, McMahon, McPhee & Patrick, 2006, p. 11) professional identity shaped by firmly-held beliefs and values. Recognising this phenomenon is only part of the second language teacher educator's puzzle: the more challenging work is to find ways of managing this, whilst achieving the goals of an academic programme, and within the context of an international cohort destined for a variety of teaching contexts. Having no or little practical teaching experience to draw on means that often their main source of knowledge is their own apprenticeship of observation, which can look very different from the decontextualised theories about language learning and teaching which they are learning about in their courses, but also different from that of the teacher educators' own experience. This 'professional pluralism' (Schön, 1983, p. 17) of conflicting beliefs can be problematic and creates something of a predicament as professionals try to navigate the reality of their particular classrooms. Whilst not overlooking the rich opportunities for internationalisation at home that this multiplicity of perspectives affords, it can, nonetheless, create extra pressures in a postgraduate academic programme where stakes are high and everyone has their own expectations of what constitutes a successful outcome. One possible approach which teacher educators designing programmes can employ to facilitate this surfacing of beliefs is to include activities which develop a reflective attitude in their teacher-learners. This broader philosopy of being a reflective practitioner has become a cornerstone of numerous professional education domains and is one which has been enthusiastically been embraced and greatly popularised in SLTE, and merits further discussion.

2.3.4 The reflective practitioner

The concept of the reflective practitioner can be traced back several decades, long before the orientation towards a sociocultural turn in SLTE. One of its earliest proponents, Dewey (1933), placed robust reflection at the heart of education and it can now be considered securely embedded in the professional discourses of this field. However, how it is implemented in practice can vary.

Wallace's (1991) reflective model of teacher education has professional competence as its principle goal. As the name suggests, this model places reflection centrally within a cyclical process. In his conception, which borrows from Schön's (1983) work on this, he takes account of 'received knowledge' (p.14), also known as the scientific knowledge base,

and the prior experiential knowledge (from the practitioner's own schooling or teaching experience) as the basic foundation for practice. However, Wallace recognises the need to build on this knowledge and experience base, and extends his model of professional competence to include reflection on practice, conceived of as cyclical. That is, practice is consistently reflected on in what he terms 'a reflective cycle' (pp. 14-15). Rather than simply imitating what has been observed and experienced, or applying the science unthinkingly, the practitioner acts and then reflects with a view to adapting practice to better meet the needs of the language learners in their classrooms, similar to Schön's (1983) construct of 'reflection-on-action' (p.276).

Ambitiously, and possibly rather optimistically, Wallace (1991, pp. 14-15) contends that this cycle will lead to 'professional competence'. This perhaps overstates Schön's (1983) original proposition which places reflection at the heart of being a professional, positioning it as a means to be able to reframe the relationship between theory and practice, sometimes viewed more as a hard boundary. Reflection, for such proponents, can provide a way to navigate the 'swampy lowlands' which is where Schön (1983, p. 42) suggests that one finds the matters of most concern to the practitioner, or to put it more bluntly 'where situations are confusing "messes" incapable of technical solutions.' It is, initially, difficult to argue against such an approach as it has considerable appeal. Reflective practice is a highly seductive construct and one which promises much for the keen-to-develop language teaching practitioner, even if Schön himself did not necessarily have education in mind when he wrote about it, concerned as he was with other professions (specifically, engineering, architecture, management, psychotherapy and town planning). Nonetheless, there is an extensive literature on the potential benefits of embedding reflective practice in professional education. Brookfield (1995) argues for its transformational power. By challenging, in a sustained manner, the taken-for-granted beliefs about one's practice and reflecting on it through four lenses (literature, colleagues, students; and autobiography), Brookfield proposes that the classroom environment can become a more democratic space where knowledge can be exchanged but also co-constructed. Farrell (2007) highlights the value of reflection in liberating the practitioner from highly ritualised practices which run the risk of professional burnout but perhaps also allows for recognition that language teachers are professional. Unlike Wallace, who still acknowledges the place of the research-base and received knowledge, Farrell (2007, p. 7) is less convinced by traditional approaches to teacher development, arguing that top-down knowledge transmission from 'outside experts' can have little impact on practice. This is consonant with the idea that the practitioner can be the one who also generates legitimate knowledge. Farrell also places emphasis on the value of reflection, not only in its ability to change practice, but also

allowing for confirmation of existing practices. Likewise, Crandall (2000, p.40) is sure of reflective practice's power to:

> [..] develop more informed practice, making tacit beliefs and practical knowledge explicit, articulating what teachers know and leading to new ways of knowing and teaching.

The essential point here is that reflection, to be effective, needs to be rigorous. Unfortunately, it is not always the case that the need for rigour in reflective practice is always well understood.

While most people may consider that they are reflective, if the desired outcome of reflection is to drive change and to transform, then the nature of it has to be better understood. This is often a point of criticism. Although the term is quite ubiquitous in the literature, it is not always defined precisely. Moon (1999, p. vii) ascribes this lack of clarity to the concept having its roots in different disciplines and with no agreed definition. However, it has become so axiomatic that reflection will result in better teaching (Burton, 2009, p. 298) that arguably, it has become no more than a 'vague slogan' (Mclaughlin, 1999, p. 9). Noffke and Brennan (2005, p. 58) also use this description of it as a slogan, in the sense that it is a term often deployed by actors with different goals and intentions: sometimes with the objective of democratising teaching, giving power back to the teacher as a creator of knowledge; other times, it is used as a means to offset other, less palatable measures such as an increased focus on holding teachers accountable to externally-imposed standards. Therefore, for the term to have substance and meaning when it is embedded within a model of SLTE, then it certainly requires a clearer conceptualisation. Newcomers to a profession need to have recourse to concrete suggestions about how to be a reflective practitioner. A clearly understood model of how to reflect potentially increases the likelihood of reflection contributing to a more principled practice in the language classroom.

Indeed, Brookfield (1995), Farrell (2007) and Wallace (1991), amongst others, offer practical ways of realising reflective practice whether through conceptual frameworks such as Brookfield's four lenses or practical processes of reflection, for example, micro-teaching. Wallace (1991, p. 87) describes this latter technique of short observed teaching practice episodes which allow for the development of 'experiential knowledge of professional action in a controlled and progressive way'. Typically on SLTE programmes, micro-teaching is done with peers: one participant teaches their classmates for a short period. The teaching episode is then followed by a guided reflection with peers, facilitated

by the teacher educator. However, the artificial nature of teaching their own peers (some of whom actually speak the language they are teaching) can make it feel less developmental, and does not reflect real-life practices (Papageorgiou, Copland, Viana, Bowker & Moran, 2019). If it can be assumed that language teaching competence is an objective, for both students and educators, without the appropriate opportunity to engage in the practices of a professional language teacher, then achieving this is arguably more challenging. What is more, even if competence is a shared goal, what is less certain is the extent to which there is a shared definition of it. Within the setting of an internationalised university SLTE programme, this is a puzzle which is worth exploring further. In this next section, the literature on competence and expertise in language teaching will be reviewed.

2.3.5 Becoming a competent language teacher

In considering what has been written about the construct of the competent language teacher, it is worth recognising that the term itself may often be used interchangeably with others. In reviewing the SLTE literature, two terms, professionalism and expertise, which are more commonly used than competence. It is therefore useful to begin with an acknowledgement of the blurry boundaries between them. For the purposes of this discussion, competence will be discussed through the lens of professional language teaching and expertise reflecting the dominant narratives within the disciplinary research. Firstly, the discussion focuses on the different ways in which professionalism has been constructed.

Leung (2009, p.49) has usefully differentiated between two different types of professionalism, identifying ‘sponsored professionalism’ and ‘independent professionalism’. The first of these refers to those iniatives and activities developed and endorsed by professional or political bodies seeking to enhance but also regulate teachers’ competence or professionalism. This kind of regulation can often be in conflict with teachers’ own perceptions of themselves and their ability to exercise their autonomy and their own professional judgement. Coombe and Burridge (2020) describe this kind of sponsored professionalism in terms of those regulatory bodies having a means to discipline and control. This facilitates the measurement, assessment and comparison of institutions and the professionals within them, a phenomenon which was addressed earlier in relation to the marketisation of universities. The second type, independent professionalism, incorporates the view held by Leung that language teachers, working alone in a variety of contexts will need to develop their own interpretation of professionalism, one which takes account of the social and political variations in their teaching context. Whilst Leung’s

research is based on English Language Teaching (ELT), the two definitions have applicability to the professional education of all language teachers, and may perhaps also be extended to include pre-professional practitioners such as students on SLTE programmes. Independent professionalism may have particular resonance in relation this research. It is likely upon graduation they will return to a more familiar community of language teaching practitioners with an established definition of competence. However, during their postgraduate programmes, being distant from this, and simultaneously encountering new professional perspectives, would seem to strongly support the need for them to at least start to develop an interpretation of professionalism which might sustain them on their postgraduate sojourn and beyond. However, it is the former kind, sponsored professionalism which may be more recognisable to them as it is manifested in the certification and qualifications which may be expected of a language teacher.

Whilst not the only means to measure competence, arguably, these have, nonetheless, a signifcant role in helping language teachers to inhabit the mantle of the professional (Wright, 2010). Pennington (1992) and Barduhn & Johnson (2009), writing about the need to improve the status of English language teachers in tertiary education, considered qualifications as one of four main areas which could contribute to recognition of their professionalism. This does need to be seen in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) where, until worryingly recently before it was challenged, being a native speaker was enough to confer professional status on the individual. Thankfully, English is now more aligned to the more common belief amongst language teaching communities that pertinent qualifications form an important element of demonstrating expertise and competence. However, this is not an uncontroversial discussion. Whilst there is a broad agreement about the need to be qualified as a hallmark of professionalism, what constitutes appropriate qualifcation or certification is less easily resolved. This is a debate which takes place both within and across national boundaries. One of the issues relates to the sheer range of language teaching qualifications which are available and knowing which is the most relevant to the context where teaching will take place. As Barduhn and Johnson (2009, p. 60) succinctly summarise it, 'qualifications abound' and in such a crowded market, it is inevitable that there will be debate about their value.
In the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), one of the most common qualifications is the Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), typically delivered as an intensive one-month training programme. Despite enjoying an international reputation as a professional qualification, it has not been without its critics. Typically, its brevity and focus on skills and techniques has led to questions about its ability to actually promote reflection (Ferguson & Donno, 2003; McBeath, 2017). This

argument is perhaps less valid as it is now more widely positioned as an initial teacher qualification at entry-level, a stepping-stone towards its longer, and more in-depth sister qualification, the Diploma of English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA) which arguably does promote critical reflection of practice. A more serious criticism of this suite of qualifications, and its less prominent equivalents, is its perceived failure to recognise differences in teaching contexts. McBeath (2017, p. 249) is unequivocal in his view that it approaches language teaching with a 'one-size-fits-all' mindset from a 'primarily British, Australasia, and North America (BANA), if not Eurocentric' perspective on good practice. What is troubling here in this relatively recently published view from McBeath is that the discussion about designing SLTE programmes which are sensitive to local environments is not a new one. Freeman and Johnson's (1998) call to reconceptualise the knowledge base of SLTE emerged at at time where debates about the accepted content of teacher education programmes were rightly being interrogated. Phillipson (1996) and Canagarajah (1999) were among those calling for resistance to linguistic imperialism and rightly questioning the dominance and hegemony of the native speaker and their power over which variety of English was taught but also how it was taught. In 2001, Kumaravadivelu conceived of the 'post-method pedagogy' which appealed for a pedagogy 'of particularity', stating (p. 538):

> […] language pedagogy, to be relevant, must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu.

And yet, the same discussions and criticisms of the relevance of SLTE programmes to the destination contexts of their participants continue (Kahmi-Stein, 2009). Furthermore, although it is acknowledged that the question of how SLTE programmes within BANA settings can support the preparation and development of these future teachers has been asked, the extent to which it has been answered satisfactorily is perhaps less certain. Any attempt to respond to this surely relies on closer inspection of individual programmes and the contexts they are situated in, including the factors which may either constrain or enable the design of a principled pedagogy of particularity. It is important that this discussion should also extend to the SLTE Masters programmes offered by UK HEIs and include the international students who join them. Their inclusion in the discussion has the potential to further understanding of how these quasi-vocational postgraduate programmes might prepare these students for their professional lives as language teachers. This brings us closer to a point where three sets of competing objectives intersect: the programme objectives which define 'what sort of teacher should emerge from an SLTE programme' (Wright, 2010, p. 263); the institutional objectives which distinguish the kind of graduates they want to brand as their own; and finally, the graduate-cum-future-teacher's own

personal objectives in following this programme. Identity, and its formation, lies at the heart of all three. The concept of graduate attributes, however they are conceived of, can be seen as premised on a construct of identity formation. As explained previously, finalised GAFs are achieved through consultation with different stakeholders, each with their own vision of what the graduate should be. By producing frameworks and reifying the ideal graduate, policy makers and senior university strategists are discursively constructing an identity for the students who graduate with degrees from their institution. However, the extent to which such a graduate identity aligns with students' own sense of a language teacher identity is arguably less well understood. Therefore an exploration of the factors which might influence identity formation for language teachers is pertinent. As in mainstream education, interest in identity as it relates to language teachers has grown over the last two decades and this is reflected in the research base of SLTE where a number of different aspects of language teacher identity have been explored and studied. This is the focus of the following section.

2.3.6 Becoming a language teacher, claiming an identity

In seeking a definition, there is generally broad agreement that a professional identity is more than just a job description with associated functions (Forde, McMahon, McPhee & Patrick, 2006). Alongside the changes in SLTE which saw the profession shift in its thinking from a view of language teaching as learning a set of skills and behaviours, towards a more nuanced, context-sensitive enterprise, there has been an accompanying shift in how language teachers identify themselves as professionals. Language teacher identity is now seen as being constructed in complex ways which transcend what Schön (1983) referred to as technical rationality and the belief that the application of a method would suffice to teach students the language they needed to learn (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & Johnson, 2005). Miller (2009, p.173) expresses this complexity thus:

> Current work on teacher identity highlights that language teaching cannot be separated from social language use in classrooms, and the centrality of situated meanings within repertoires of social practices involving specific social and institutional context and memberships.

In other words, the way of being a language teacher cannot simply be reduced to being able to teach language learners about grammar or vocabulary or giving corrective feedback on a piece of writing. This is not to relegate the importance of subject knowledge in identity construction. Indeed, for some scholars, it is also viewed as an aspect of professional identity (Forde, McMahon, McPhee & Patrick, 2006). Certainly, without a

solid knowledge base in the subject area, the claim to a professional identity would almost certainly be questioned by other stakeholders, but probably also by the practitioners themselves. Imposter syndrome is a well-known phenomenon and teachers are not exempt (Brookfield, 1995). Nonetheless, it is believed that identity is also partly formed by numerous external contextual factors such as the students they are teaching, the socio-economic setting, the purpose of their teaching, the status of the language they are teaching, and their own status within the department or institution. Moreover, identity is also shaped from the inside by one's own values and beliefs which themselves are formed by previous learning or teaching experiences. What this also indicates is that identity is not something fixed and unchanging, a point which is regularly made in discussions of identity. Varghese, Morgan, Johnston and Johnson (2005, p. 22) regard this as a central characteristic of identity, adding that it is 'multiple, shifting, and in conflict'. The notion of conflict is of interest and is worth consideration in this context, or at least, an acknowledgment that there is a potential tension involved in identity formation. Relatedly, (Singh & Richards, 2009) alludes to the disconnect between SLTE programmes and real-life classrooms, intimating that this can be detrimental to identity formation. Flores (2001) is more explicit in her study claiming that teacher education programmes are less influential for novice teachers than workplace conditions. For this reason, exploring ways in which an internationalised teacher education programme may present a site of conflict in the identity formation of international students is desirable. One potential cause of this conflict lies in the interstices of what Varghese, Morgan, Johnston and Johnson (2005, p. 23) describe as 'claimed' or 'assigned' identity: where the former is the identity that one creates for oneself and the latter is the one which is created for you for others. This has resonance for the international student. As described in section 2.1, the international student already experiences identity assignment through discourses of deficit. However, it is possible that this imposition of identity also extends to their professional self, whereby teacher educators, and even their peers, may well have their own views on how language teachers enact their identity, which in turn colours how they teach. Singh and Richards (2009, p. 201) write convincingly about the primacy of the course room on an SLTE course, as a location which is:

> […] contingent on teacher learning, as its life unfolds over time, as events and processes interact, and shape the way participants think, feel and act.

There is therefore value in considering the extent to which the teacher educators' views align with those of the students enrolled in their programmes. Moreover, as students graduate from the programme and transition into language teaching posts in their home countries, their professional identities will continue to develop within the local context.

Returning to Miller's (2009) description of the complexity of identity construction, ways of being a language teacher in different institutional contexts, within new communities, with unfamiliar repertoires to navigate, all contribute to the growth and development of the professional identity. What is interesting is how this is managed by the novice teacher as they engage in the daily work of the language teacher within their specific context but also the extent to which any graduate attributes developed on their Masters programmes, however or by whomever they have been defined, support that process. The influence of practice on identity is clear, but arguably more influential is the role of other members of the communities they find themselves in. The concept of a Community of Practice (CoP) as an element of my conceptual framework will be explored more fully in chapter three. However, before examining it in more detail, it is first necessary to provide a more specific description of SLTE programmes offered by UK HEIs and consider their relationship to future teaching contexts.

2.3.7 Second language teacher education in the internationalised university

SLTE postgraduate programmes have become well established in the UK HEI landscape, as evidenced by the number of institutions which offer such provision. In its annual publication of Masters' programmes, the EL Gazette (2021) listed over fifty UK institutions which offer more than 100 SLTE-related programmes between them. The different programmes vary in their specific focus, but degree titles generally include Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), English Language Teaching (ELT), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Applied Linguistics, and Language Teaching, reflecting the market demand for programmes which focus on English as a second language. In the context of language teaching, and how such programmes are understood by that community, these are all widely perceived as being related to the SLTE knowledge base. In some ways, the specific title or focus of each programme is less significant than the content of the curriculum. In this respect, the programme which is the object of this study is somewhat unusual in that it focuses on the teaching of languages, rather than one specific language. Programmes such as these are, of course, open to anyone. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that a British Council study (Copland, Viana, Bowker, Moran, Papageorgiou & Shapira, 2017) which investigated the experiences of students on ELT Masters programmes in the UK acknowledges the popularity of these programmes with overseas students, notably from Asia, and specifically from mainland China.

It is perhaps then somewhat surprising that, despite the quantity of programmes, their apparent appeal to international students, as well as their financial importance to institutions in generating income from students' tuition fees, the British Council study reports that this is generally an under-researched area. This paucity of research was also the perception of Hennebry-Leung, Gayton, Xiao, & Chen (2019, p. 685) in their investigation of how Chinese graduates transition from their postgraduate TESOL programmes to the classroom. This study notes that little has been reported of the issues which may arise when students are taught theories 'developed in sociocultural contexts that are quite different from those in which students were schooled and will later teach'. Nonetheless, despite this shortage of research, the studies which have been done do offer interesting and important insights into these programmes and students' experiences of them. Notably, alignment, or more often the lack of alignment, between the students' experience and expectations of their programme is a common theme (Copland et al., 2017) and these are worth considering in more depth given their relevance to this current study.

Li and Tin (2013) found that participating students reported satisfaction in some areas but that the lack of opportunities for teaching practice was a cause for dissatisfaction. This perceived gap in their programme is further documented by Papageorgiou, Copland, Viana, Bowker and Moran (2019) whose investigation, conducted with home and international students, revealed that only 34 of the 141 UK SLTE Masters offered teaching practice as one of the programme courses. In common with Li and Tin's study , those respondents also reported that they would prefer to have more opportunities for teaching as a means to put theories into practice. In relation to the preferred learning modes deployed on HE postgraduate programmes, Hennebry and Fordyce (2018) report on the perceptions of international students from Confucian heritage backgrounds of cooperative learning within an MSc TESOL programme. Interestingly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the authors concluded that students from such diverse backgrounds required more guidance from programme tutors. Support was needed not only to navigate environments where cooperative learning was promoted, but also to understand its purpose. Their results showed that the assumptions of the benefits of a cooperative learning approach made by course tutors was not always clear to students who found themselves feeling insecure when the output and final outcomes from such activities seemed 'confusing, inconclusive, and lacking definitive answers' (Hennebry and Fordyce, 2018, p. 277). Whilst not specifically focused on the relationship between cooperative learning and SLTE, the study does have relevance for teacher learning, focusing attention as it does, on the challenges for students in this context in managing their expectations regarding knowledge construction and legitimate sources of knowledge. Moreover, Hennebry and Fordyce (2018, p. 271) are

beginning to surface the tensions that may exist between student, programme, and institutional conceptualisations of desirable attributes as they highlight that cooperative learning 'for many universities in the UK […] has come to be considered a key graduate attribute'. Hennebry, in a more recent collaboration (Hennebry-Leung, Gayton, Xiao, and Chen, 2019), investigates this further. Although commonalities in the transition experience for international sojourners were still found with those who had not undertaken international postgraduate study, the research nonetheless outlines some of the challenges of relating pedagogic content from international Masters programme to their classroom teaching once in teaching posts.

This does seem to invite the question of the extent to which an SLTE-oriented postgraduate degree can function as a relevant teaching qualification (Copland et al., 2017) for international students. Whilst such degrees do not confer what we might recognise as professional teaching status or qualification, it seems probable that, for international students, they may, in effect, be perceived as language teaching qualifications. This most probably brings with it other expectations. What is more certain is that such qualifications are arguably viewed by the students themselves as an essential requirement for employment in their home countries and a means to differentiate themselves from their peers to compete successfully in the job market. This reinforces the view that language teaching, and specifically English language teaching is a highly commodified industry (Chowdhury & Phan, 2014).

It is argued here that this commodification is closely linked to neoliberal policies. Block, Gray and Holborow's (2012, p. 115) examination of neoliberalism and its relationship with applied linguistics includes a critical analysis of this ideology's impact on language teacher education. In particular, it focuses on what they describe as SLTE's 'interwoven strands' of epistemology and politics. Whilst acknowledging the positive epistemological shift towards a sociocultural turn within SLTE, as described above, the authors make the argument that this development has happened in tandem with political activity. Central to their position is that neoliberal policy purposely creates new markets which shapes how education is practised 'in effect colonising domains of activity which previously had been organised along very different lines' (2012, p. 115). More troubling still, they contend that these methods then run completely counter to the principles of a sociocultural turn. It should be noted that their attention is mainly focused on SLTE in two specific contexts: the UK Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) for those intending to teach Modern Foreign Languages (MFLs) in the British education system; and the initial ELT qualification, the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA).

Nevertheless, comparisons can certainly be drawn with the type of postgraduate SLTE programmes which are the focus here and which seem to illustrate the very point that neoliberal policies support the creation of new markets. Globally, governments are working towards similar goals of developing a work force to support and advance its economic policies. Language skills play a central role in this, most notably English proficiency, as it continues to dominate as the cultural and commercial lingua franca. Consequently, ensuring that English is then taught to a high enough standard has become a priority in education policies for national governments. This, in turn, creates a demand for highly marketable SLTE programmes, which UK HEIs have been quick to capitalise on with the establishment of a high number of programmes, as was indicated at the start of this section. This is troubling for several reasons. As has been discussed above, SLTE claims to have re-invented itself epistemologically. Graddol (2006), Kachru (1985), and Philippson (1996) have all contributed to important debates which have shifted the profession away from colonial views of linguistic imperialism and the problematic dominance of the native-speaker teacher. Calls have been made for a more context-sensitive and nuanced approach to language teaching and yet, there is not a clear indication that postgraduate SLTE programmes offered at UK universities have entirely caught up with that. Instead, what seems clearer is that they seem to symbolise how powerful marketing narratives can sell language teacher education as a product.

2.3.8 Chapter summary

The objective of this chapter has been to contextualise and provide background to the subject of the present research through a review of the relevant literature. Understanding the relationship between graduate attributes and international students entering the subject area of language teacher education necessarily involves a more detailed examination of the current HE landscape in the UK. Through the existing research, there is a clear narrative of an HE system which is inextricably linked to global economies and market forces. Research persuasively shows that universities are central to governmental economic strategy which, in turn, influences how universities market themselves and orient their programmes towards employability. As new markets develop in response to global and economic trends, international students are attracted to programmes such as the one which is the focus of this research. It is evident that there has been an increasingly dominant discourse within language education circles insisting that this is a discipline cognisant of the need for a context-sensitive approach to the education of second language teachers and a very conscious distancing from a linguistically imperialist stance. Whilst this can be seen as a positive development, questions remain about how far the pedagogical approach of

these postgraduate SLTE programmes at UK HEIs realise these values. The development of graduate attributes such as those promoted by GAFs could conceivably provide students with the tools to evaluate what they have learned and to apply it to their future teaching contexts. However, it is apparent that not enough is yet known about the extent to which the institution's intended graduate attributes align with those which the students have identified for themselves and how those may be accomplished through their programme of study. It is these considerations which motivated this research which aimed to understand what meaning graduate attributes have for international students on this programme of study. The chapter which follows describes the conceptual framework which was deployed to frame the interpretation of the research findings.

Chapter three: a conceptual framework

As described in chapter two, the research question arose from the professional puzzle of how well Higher Education (HE) institutional conceptions of graduate attributes (GAs) aligned with the attributes the students themselves hoped to develop and take with them on their return to their home countries, to enter language teaching careers in a variety of different educational settings. In this chapter, I will discuss the conceptual framework deployed to understand and make meaning from the students' discussion of GAs as they shared them in their interviews, and which underpins the resultant interpretation. The key foundations for my conceptual framework are drawn from the work done by Lave and Wenger (1991), Wenger (1998) and Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) on communities and landscapes of practice. The chapter begins with some background to these choices before discussing these key concepts in more detail.

3.1 Conceptualising the research project

In research, the conceptual framework of a study is one of the ways in which the researcher can try to ensure that the resulting findings are trustworthy, by offering clarification of the study rationale and by providing a stronger foundation for the claims made following analysis. Crucially, it allows readers to situate the findings within other research in the same area. Marshall and Rossman (2016, p. 16) expand on this idea, saying:

> By linking the specific research questions to larger theoretical constructs, to existing puzzles or contested positions in a field, or to important policy issues, the writer shows that the particulars of this study serve to illuminate larger issues and therefore hold potential significance for that field.

While qualitative research does not necessarily seek to be generalisable, it was my hope that, in addition to finding some answers to my own professional puzzles in relation to my work on an SLTE with international students, the research could also contribute to the knowledge base of other teacher educators in my own context. Moreover, outside of SLTE, there was some optimism that it could be a trigger for conversations about GAs within the institution. Given its importance in the overall research design, selecting an appropriate framework can be one of the more challenging and daunting aspects of academic research, especially for the inexperienced researcher. Not least, as Crawford (2019) notes, because there are multiple definitions of what a conceptual framework actually is, but also because of the multitude of possible frameworks to choose from. Crawford's (2019) view that there are three broad sources for possible conceptual frameworks, namely, experience, literature, and theory, was encouraging. In the position of being a novice researcher

developing my own conceptual framework, I was buoyed by the inclusion of experience as a resource to draw on. I was also conscious of the acknowledgement from Crawford's (2019) brief meta-analysis of literature on the subject that experience alone cannot bear the whole weight of a research study. Nonetheless, it could, at least, serve as the stimulus to create a conceptual framework whilst I began identifying appropriate interpretative tools from literature in the field of SLTE and HE.

Being an enthusiastic linguist, it is perhaps not surprising that the stimulus for a conceptual framework of my doctoral research began by connecting words and images and linking the literal with the metaphorical. The study abroad experience of international students is often described in the literature as a sojourn, which can be defined as a temporary stay. The academic sojourn, with its transitions and adjustments, is a prime site for the development of skills and qualities. Shifting between the familiar and the unfamiliar with inevitable changes in landscape, undoubtedly has a great deal of potential for considerable growth and transformation in an individual, both personal and professional. Indeed, the discourse around GAs is founded on this very notion: that a degree from your chosen university will develop mindsets and skills which will transform you and make you stand out from the crowd, identifiable as a graduate of your institution. The imagery of an unfamiliar landscape resonated and, for me, found echoes in Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's learning concept of landscapes of practice (2015): the idea that international students were not only crossing geographical boundaries but also potentially knowledge and practice boundaries was salient in my reflections on my own work with them. Equally important was the idea that a sojourn indicates a homeward journey, a return to the familiar environment. Reading about academics' understandings of GAs through a phenomenographic analysis in Barrie's (2006) work had prompted me to read more about this research approach. I was particularly struck by the way that the outcome space resulting from phenomenographic analysis (see chapter four) seemed to have potential to provide a concrete description of students' conceptualisations of GAs within the landscape of the postgraduate SLTE programme. On further reading, Säljö's (1988, p. 44) suggestion that the outcome space reflects a 'map of a territory' seemed to helpfully extend, at least for me, the metaphor, bringing maps and landscapes together.

The next step was the identification of the thinking tools which would allow me to make meaning of the conceptions of GAs as they were articulated through the data collection process, and which would allow me to read 'the map'. These tools needed to be able to account for the participants' descriptions of their collective experience as international students navigating their studies in the UK, trying to make sense of their learning, and how

it might be applied to their professional futures on their return. More specifically, they were required to help shed light on the following areas: what the students identified as being the attributes necessary for them to develop competence as professional language teaching practitioners; and how their postgraduate study could help them to develop the attributes they believed necessary as they constructed their pre-professional identity. The Wenger-Trayners' (2015) work on landscapes of practice, which combines a focus on practice knowledge with identity and professional learning, seemed to offer several useful concepts which would help to achieve this task.

Building on the previous work with Jean Lave (Lave & Wenger, 1991) on situated learning and later work on communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), the term landscape of practice is used to describe a profession's body of knowledge. This landscape is composed of several communities of practice, and crucially, the boundaries which exist between those communities. If we consider that international students can also be understood as travellers across boundaries between different communities of practice seeking to develop their competence as second language teachers, and that this travel shapes the development of graduate attributes, it is argued here that landscapes of practice, as a conceptual framework, supports an exploration of this. Further explanation of this position requires a more detailed setting out of the concepts which are central to the understanding of landscape of practice. Specifically, these are: situated learning; communities of practice; modes of belonging, regimes of competence; boundaries; and knowledgeability. Each of these will be explained in turn before summarising the mapping of this research to the conceptual framework, beginning with the fundamental concept of situated learning and its relationship with communities of practice.

3.2 Situated learning

The quest to understand and theorize learning is not new or unique: how humans learn and what it means to learn has been the subject of many academic enquiries. For Lave and Wenger (1991), the desire to find an adequate theory of learning arose from their work on the concept of apprenticeship, a term used in their academic circles to talk about a type of learning, but one which they felt lacked conceptual clarity. A specific issue was that the term had come to be used synonymously with situated learning which, they argued, also seemed to lack a clear meaning, often being confused with the idea of learning by doing. For them, situated learning was not only about learning which occurs in a particular time or space with a particular group of people. They were also keen to emphasise that learning

is not simply the transmission, and an individual's reception, of facts and information contained in an accepted body of knowledge within books.

Rather, what Lave and Wenger proposed was that learning is essentially social and is situated. From this perspective, learning is not seen as only occurring within the individual mind but rather as being negotiated between participants within the same learning context or community. In fact, learning occurs as individuals engage and participate within a social context. Moreover, as a social practice, the whole person is involved. Lave and Wenger's conceptualisation of situated learning is premised on the belief that learning is relational in character, is negotiated and takes place by participating in multiple social practices. In other words, it is the co-participation which is fundamental. This gave rise to their concept of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) which was proposed to describe engagement in a social practice in which learning is seen as 'an integral constituent' (1991). Moreover, LPP is understood to be integral to identity development as the individual engages, as a novice, in the practices of the community. It is worth clarifying here what is meant by participation which is both legitimate and peripheral. What makes participation legitimate is that it is accepted by the more mature members of the community, an accepted standard. Membership of the community is, in this sense, authorised, and access to the practices and activities is granted to the newcomers. Also pertinent to this discussion is that legitimate participation resides partly in the ability to speak the language of the community, 'talking the talk'. However, it is worth noting that being able to talk about the practice, does not necessarily translate to competence in the practice. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 108) state:

> Legitimate peripheral participation in such linguistic practice is a form of learning but does not imply that newcomers learn the actual practices the language is supposed to be about.

This has particular relevance where the site of learning can be described as a hybrid between an academic and a professional degree, such as the Masters programme in focus in this research. On these programmes, traditional teaching and assessment practices require students to talk and write about the practice of language teaching but with little opportunity to demonstrate, in real contexts, their grasp of the practices they have learned about. As noted earlier, opportunities to try out teaching can be limited. Peripheral participation refers to the degree of involvement by new members of the community where, traditionally, newcomers are occupied by tasks which are seen as less important or significant to the core practice of the community. Peripherality is described by Wenger (1998, p. 100) as providing 'an approximation of full participation that gives exposure to actual practice'. Interestingly, he goes on to make the point that peripherality can be

achieved in ways which include ‘lessened intensity, lessened risk, special assistance, lessened cost of error, close supervision, or lessened production pressures.’. One may question the extent to which it is true of all CoPs that peripheral participation allows the newcomer member to be able to ease themselves more gently into full membership and also the extent to which the path from newcomer to ‘old-timer’ is linear. It seems likely that the trajectory is a dynamic one but also one which has a temporal aspect which should also be acknowledged in the context of a one-year Masters programme.

In this respect, situated learning can be considered to provide a viable alternative to what might be seen from today’s standpoint as a more traditional view of learning which positions knowledge as being outside of, or separate from, the social or contextual factors which have shaped it (Rømer, 2002; Handley, Clark, Fincham & Sturdy, 2007). Further to this, Handley, Clark, Fincham and Sturdy (p. 174) point out that such conventional views of learning not only privilege knowledge acquisition but are also premised on the idea that ‘it can be acquired in isolation from the settings where the knowledge can be put into practice’. In the context of teaching, this assumption needs further interrogation.

The opposition of these two theories of learning and knowledge development seemed particularly relevant to the site of learning, which is the focus of this study, a postgraduate Masters programme. A general, widely held, understanding of a Masters programme is that it is aimed at those who would like to develop more specialised knowledge in a particular subject area, and also that it is academic in nature. For some, a Masters can be a pathway to doctoral study, which in turn may lead to an academic career in HE.

Other postgraduate degrees are more closely associated with a specific vocation or career, such as those for students planning to enter professions in the field of law, medicine, or education. In these cases, the Masters degree programme may emphasise more practical elements of the chosen career and will often include work placements and can be described as professional Masters (Drennan, 2008). In this research, the degree programme in question arguably falls somewhere between the two possibilities: academic and professional. One way to view this programme is as a hybrid which develops specialist knowledge thought to be required of any language teacher in an unspecified context through core and optional courses, some of which are more practical in nature. These courses aim to connect theory and practice with opportunities to try out language teaching pedagogies through peer teaching activities. However, (as noted in section 2.3.8) the degree awarded does not confer a professional qualified teacher status in the way that a qualification such as a UK Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) does. Nor does it

include what can be considered professional language teaching placements such as those undertaken by students on UK PGDE programmes. Aside from limited opportunities to volunteer in local schools, students on this programme have no opportunities to undertake assessed teaching practice as part of this degree. What is interesting is that for the international students who enrol on this programme, focusing as it does on language education, language teaching is the most likely career path. Perhaps even more interesting, is that working on the programme and interacting with different cohorts each year has given me the sense that the students do in fact perceive this degree as a teaching qualification. They seemed to privilege the acquisition of language teaching knowledge and learning theories which can help them in their chosen career upon graduation. This raises very interesting questions about LPP and situated learning where the learning is situated in a hybrid academic-professional Masters programme within a UK HEI, and when the learners will graduate and most likely practise their profession outside the UK. Although the programme places considerable emphasis on applying theory to practice, the extent to which these are representative of the practices enacted in those communities they hope to participate in once they have graduated merits further consideration. As Handley, Clark, Fincham and Sturdy (2007) query, the extent to which knowledge acquired outside their teaching context can be applied is questionable.

3.2.1 Communities of practice

Communities of practice (CoPs) are fundamental to this social view of learning. CoPs can be defined as groups of people who are mutually engaged in the same domain of practice and who negotiate together its meaning. CoPs will include members of varying levels of experience, referred to by Wenger (1998) as newcomers and old-timers. Through their mutual engagement, these two groups shape the repertoire which is central to their practice. An important aspect of the CoP is its role in the development of individual identity, a point emphasised by Wenger when he describes the 'profound connection between identity and practice.' (Wenger, 1998, p. 149). For Wenger, it is the act of participation which allows us to define and identify ourselves as we shuttle between what is familiar and what is unfamiliar. Identity develops and is negotiated and 'ongoing' (p. 154). Moreover, this identity work can be challenging for the newcomer. Mercieca (2017, p. 13) states:

> Newcomers are challenged to find a place in and forge a new identity within a new set of circumstances. There is a certain level of vulnerability involved in this, as a person tries to find continuities between their past experiences elsewhere and their new experiences here.

The degree to which newcomers may feel they belong to a community, and how this belonging manifests itself, can clearly vary. In the case of international students, it is possible that the lack of those ‘continuities’ may be even more pronounced. The ways that they try to participate require an effort to understand the practices of the community and to make sense of these in their own narratives and autobiographies. This is emphasised by Handley, Clark, Fincham and Sturdy (2007, p.177) with the reminder that:

> […] an individual not only participates in multiple communities of practice, but also brings to those communities a personal history of involvement with social, familial, ethnic, and other groups and identities whose norms and discourses may complement or conflict with one another.

Wenger makes use of three concepts to describe different modes of belonging: engagement, imagination, and alignment and these offer a means to examine the act of participation. These will now be discussed in more detail.

3.2.2. Modes of belonging

Engagement viewed through the lens of a CoP means performing actions and negotiating their meaning alongside others and is essential to the practice of the community. Wenger underlines that practice does not exist ‘in books or in tools’ (1998, p. 73). As a mode of belonging, Wenger admits that engagement does have limitations. The first of these limitations is what he refers to as its boundedness: in practical terms, the time that the member can be engaged is finite, bound by available hours in the day. Individuals are also bound by the limits of their capacity to manage interactions with people and the artefacts of their practice. A second limitation is what he describes as the narrowness of engagement within the CoP, and which does not leave much space to gain insights into other communities’ practices. However, this second criticism is one which seems to be accounted for by the concept of knowledgeability within the construct of landscapes of practice which will be discussed more fully in section 3.3.1.

The second mode of belonging is imagination which Wenger argues has an important role in how identity within a CoP is experienced. Imagination in this sense is about the ability to transcend the moment and to look beyond the here and now, taking a step beyond engagement with the present activity. This might be interpreted as being able to develop a sense of location in the world and to draw connections between the present and the past. This can be seen to tie in with what Jackson (2017) suggests is necessary for undergraduates entering the employment market. Namely, that during the course of their

undergraduate studies they should be encouraged and supported to develop a pre-professional identity which encompasses 'awareness of […] a student's chosen profession, as well as […] understanding of professional self in relation to the broader general self.' (p. 833). Jackson takes the position that graduate employability, despite attempts to broaden the definition, remains overly focused on developing generic skills relevant to a broad range of industries and does not allow for this essential work. This would suggest that as they study towards becoming a professional in their chosen field, students need to make connections between the learning which is happening on their programme and the future practice of their profession, arguably an act of imagination as described by Wenger. Similar to the idea of Jackson's pre-professional identity, though admittedly situated in post HE study, is Ibarra's (1999, p. 765) discussion of the ways in which people doing identity work 'try on' professional personas and adapt by 'experimenting with provisional selves that serve as trials for possible but not yet fully elaborated professional identities'.

The third mode of belonging identified by Wenger is that of alignment. In his explanation of alignment, Wenger takes time to emphasise how it differs from engagement. When we engage, he states, we are not necessarily aligning our goals with the broader scale of the larger enterprise or the institutional demands nor are we necessarily trying to connect our actions with those of the institution. When members do align their actions and practice to connect with a larger enterprise, this, according to Wenger, brings with it a sense of belonging as viewpoints coordinate towards a common goal and purpose (p. 186). For students engaged in study on SLTE programmes in UK HE, this differentiation of alignment and engagement deserves closer examination as they aim for both academic and professional competence.

3.2.3 Competence

This idea of competence is understood as one of the defining hallmarks of a community of practice, more specifically what it means to be competent in that community, as defined through particular criteria and expectations and, crucially, negotiated and recognised by the community members. Only through their own engagement with, and experience of, the practice of the community does competence manifest, in what Wenger refers to as regimes of competence. Wenger identifies the following three abilities to denote competent membership (1998, p. 137)): mutuality of engagement; accountability to the enterprise; and negotiability of the enterprise. Mutuality of engagement is defined as being able to engage with community members and to establish relationships. In so doing, one is able to identify as a participant in the enterprise. Accountability to the enterprise refers to members being

able to demonstrate their full understanding of what the community is engaged in, and so to be able to take responsibility for its endeavour. Negotiability of the repertoire entails being able to employ the shared repertoire of the practice. Here repertoire can be understood to be the resources which have been developed by the community over time to negotiate meanings within the practice.

What is important in this definition is that competence is not based on a specific individual nor is it constant. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015, p. 14) refers to the 'dynamic interplay' between competence and experience and illustrates this with the example of newcomers to a community aligning themselves to the regime of competence and having their practice shaped by it. The converse is also true: new practices which emerge as a result of members innovating may also lead to competence being reformed. In other words, competence both constitutes and is constituted by experience.

It needs to be again acknowledged (see section 2.3.6). that competence is open to different interpretations and can also be rather a loaded term. Eraut (1998), in his analysis of the concept pays attention to the hierarchy of stakeholders who can influence definitions of competence, or more explicitly yield power – aligning with what Leung (2009, p.49) refers to as sponsored professionalism (see p. 63). In addition to employers, stakeholders also include professional bodies, providers of professional education and training and governments. This is recognised in some of the criticisms of CoPs as a learning theory which have argued that not enough emphasis has been placed on power issues. However, it seems fair to say that Wenger is conscious of this and is not proposing a naively democratic vision of competence where all members have equal status and can make claims to define it. He acknowledges that (2010, p. 8):

> The self-generating character attributed to communities of practice may seem to obscure the degree to which they are influenced and shaped by their context, be it institutional, political, or cultural.

This is also recognised in his later work which explicitly states that claims to competence can be rejected by the community membership. This implies that power is always in play in the social concept of learning (2015, p. 15) and that tensions are inherent within communities. This takes on particular relevance in the context of teacher education where it is the norm that professional bodies exist with the key functions of deciding what a competent teacher is, and to ensure that certain standards are met and maintained by those in the profession. This intersection of power and competence is very pertinent to the present study, particularly in relation to discussions within HE about the motivations for

internationalisation and the marketisation of education. Having outlined they key terms of situated learning, competence and communities of practice, the next section will discuss how ideas come together within Wenger's concept of landscapes of practice.

3.3 Landscapes of practice

To understand the evolution of Lave and Wenger's theory from CoP to Landscapes of practice (LoP), and its suitability as a framework for this research, it is helpful to revisit the discussions on the literature from chapter two. As was discussed more fully in section 2.2.2, the twenty-first century graduate is entering a workplace which is widely described as being increasingly multifaceted. Barnett (2006, p. 50) describes it as a 'world of complexity' whilst also warning of the need to define this term more carefully, noting the different types of complexity such as systemic, ethical, statistical, and emotional. This range of complexities alongside the inability to know what professionals will look like in the future are part of the drive behind the development of GA frameworks in HE. It is argued that graduates will need a wide range of attributes to be able to meet the challenges they will face in their future employment. Barnett believes that being employable in the twenty-first century means being able to bring different skills to resolve challenging new issues whilst 'one's beliefs, values and hold on the world are continually contested' (p. 63). As was noted in the earlier discussion, there is no clear consensus on what the skills are which might address this complexity, but there is at least an awareness of the issue, and it is this view that can largely explain the evolution of Wenger and Lave's CoP model to the LoP model.

In its earlier conceptualisations, CoPs were often defined by one job as can be seen in the original work on situated learning which drew on Lave's research project with Liberian tailors. It is also seen later in the work on CoPs which drew on Wenger's own dissertation about medical claim processors working for an insurance company. In this conceptualisation, a CoP tended to relate to one profession and its regime of competence as defined by the membership of the community. However, against the background of a complex and unknowable world, the CoP model no longer seems adequate to capture how graduates need to follow multiple trajectories in becoming a functioning employee. The workplace of today and the future is one where there may be several stakeholders, and this is what Wenger tries to recognise in the LoP model. The body of knowledge of a profession, he argues, should not be seen as being contained only in books, nor within a single postgraduate programme curriculum, but in a landscape of practices where several communities of practice are located and interact at their boundaries. Learning is not a case

of acquiring a curriculum 'but a self-transformative journey across this landscape of practices.' (Kontio, 2015, p. 1).

From the social learning perspective, learning is theorised as a journey through the landscape of practice. Learners will encounter different communities and their practices as they travel through the landscape, crossing borders and boundaries as they go. On this journey, it is expected that some communities will be more salient, and learners will spend more time engaging with those, developing competence as they engage in their practices whereas others will be less important. In some cases, interactions between communities will be interdependent, to the extent of being accountable to different communities. One of the main effects of the landscape of practice is that it compels those participating to negotiate their identity. The landscape also contributes to shaping and giving meaning to their practice, a process which requires, in addition to competence within their own CoP, knowledgeability, a concept which will be explained in the next section.

3.3.1 Competence versus knowledgeability

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (in Wenger-Trayner, Fenton-O'Creevy, Hutchinson, Kubiak, & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 14) define the difference between competence and knowledgeability thus:

> Whereas we use competence to describe the dimension of knowing negotiated and defined within a single community of practice, knowledgeability manifests itself in a person's relations to a multiplicity of practices across the landscape.

In its relationship to the landscape of practice, knowledgeability relates to the need for the participant to have some knowledge about the different practices they encounter, even where these may be practices which they are not a participant in and where they may have no claims to competence. The challenge for the individual then is to develop that knowledgeability within the wider landscape as they engage with the unfamiliar. Crucially, that knowledgeability may be contested or even rejected by others who are participating in the same landscape. Where it is not contested, it means that participants can be identified as 'reliable sources of information or legitimate providers of services.' (Wenger-Trayner, Fenton-O'Creevy, Hutchinson, Kubiak, & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 23). It is this latter point which I believe is central to trying to answer the research question and which links the landscapes of practice concept to graduate attributes.

3.3.2 Landscapes of practice for SLTE

Whilst no theory or concept can be expected to fully account for research findings, adopting a social learning theory such as this provides helpful tools with potential to explicate the conceptions of GAs which arose from the data analysis. Locating the Masters programme within a landscape of practice provides a way to reflect on the complexity of the experience of international students. With the idea of becoming a competent practitioner, and the different trajectories that entails, at its conceptual core, the notion of landscapes of practice provides a way to think about the different identities which international students are developing. It recognises the sojourn of the international student and with that, the crossing of boundaries between different understanding of academic and language teaching practices. Moreover, and this was one of the appeals of the framework, in this view of learning, an opportunity is provided for educators to consider and investigate which environments may be viewed as more propitious for learning. Even more crucially, in relation to the goals of this study, is the idea that it is not only the novice learner who stands to gain in their learning but all participants. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 15) explain:

> Learning is, as it were, distributed among co-participants, not a one-person act. While the apprentice may be the one transformed most dramatically by increased participation in a productive process, it is the wider process that is the crucial locus and pre-condition for this transformation. How do the masters of apprentices themselves change through acting as co-learners and, therefore, how does the skill being mastered change in the process? The larger community of practice reproduces itself through the formation of apprentices, yet it would presumably be transformed as well.

Newcomers, in other words, can also illustrate novel ways of participating in practice and can teach the 'masters'. Ultimately, adopting this conceptual framework, offered a means to conduct a research study which, in its own modest way, sought to align to Knight's (2013, p. 89) goals of an internationalisation built on ideals of 'co-operation, partnership, exchange, mutual benefits'. In order to realise this, the study was founded on a phenomenographic approach to data collection and analysis which would allow for elicitation of the experiences of international students. This approach is described more fully in the next chapter which is focused on the research methodology used to uncover what GAs mean for international students. The chapter begins with an account of the research context.

Chapter four: methodology

Chapter introduction

This chapter begins with a brief outline of the context for my research and introduces an examination of my own position within the study. This takes account of three main factors which influenced and shaped my research decisions: my professional knowledge as language learner, language teacher and SLTE educator; my relationship with the participants; and my place within the institution. This is followed by a discussion of the resulting choice of research approach which considers the philosophies underpinning this study, as well as the ethical considerations, which subsequently informed the research design. The chapter then moves on to detail the processes and procedures of phenomenographic data collection and analysis as they were implemented.

4.1 Research context: navigating positions on the insider-outsider continuum

The research was conducted in my workplace, a large HEI in the UK. My primary affiliation in the institution is within the English Language (EL) unit which focuses on pre-sessional and in-sessional English for Academic Purposes (EAP) provision for international students enrolled mainly on taught postgraduate degrees. In addition, as a result of my own language teaching experience and expertise, I also teach one of the first semester core courses of a Masters programme in the School of Education. This programme is one of two programmes in the subject area of Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) and is the locus of this study.

Undertaking a professional doctorate such as this offers the student a unique opportunity to engage deeply with, and to interrogate an aspect of, their own everyday professional practice in ways which have potential to benefit not only the individual, but also the profession and its community of practitioners (Jones, 2018). Nonetheless, along with the opportunities this type of research affords, interviewing one's own students and researching within one's own workplace, or insider research, brings its own challenges and sensitivities which I needed to be mindful of as I designed this project. As emphasised by Trowler (2016, p. 6), an endogenous inquiry may either 'illuminate' or 'obscure' points of interest emerging from the data analysis. These challenges, and how I endeavoured to manage them, are now outlined, beginning with a brief discussion of the notion of insider research.

It is worth acknowledging first that a binary conception which dichotomises the researcher as being inside or outside the research context may not always be the most useful lens through which to examine your own researcher position. Instead, Hellawell (2007), drawing on his experience as a doctoral supervisor, aptly talks about the insider-outsider continuum upon which the researcher's position may shift. Similarly, Milligan's (2014) reflections on her own position in her research into stakeholder perceptions of education in Kenya led her to suggest, for cross-cultural research, the term 'inbetweener'. In doing so, Milligan moves beyond the idea of the continuum by suggesting that such an appellation carries within it the idea that the researcher has agency to negotiate how they position themselves, moving between the extremes at each end (2014, p. 248). Crucial to this, she argues, is the understanding that those involved in the research will themselves also define the researcher in specific ways. Therefore, rather than labelling myself as an insider or an outsider, it has been more helpful to try to reflect, throughout the process, on the degrees to which I was an insider or an outsider, both institutionally, but also in terms of how the participants viewed me. Of prime importance was to consider how those relations had potential to influence this study as I interacted with them. By clarifying here my own position in relation to the research, my intention is to describe my growing consciousness of this, and the efforts made to manage any potential tensions.

4.1.2 Managing insiderness during the research process

Within the qualitative research paradigm, the researcher has been characterised as the instrument and, as such, there is a need to ensure the instrument is trustworthy. Reflexivity, whereby the researcher stays alert to, and accounts for, the process of their research and their interpretations, can provide reassurances to the research community that care has been taken. Undertaking this study has prompted exploration of my place within that community which are shared here.

Exploring my position on the continuum revealed two dimensions of insiderness: as an employee of the institution but also as a member of the community of second language teachers and second language teacher educators with its own knowledge base. Reflecting on this latter dimension, it seemed likely that, having been in this field for over twenty years, my own professional knowledge of SLTE and familiarity with the Masters programme may provide meaningful context to any resulting data as well as allow for an informed theorisation of any findings. However, the very familiarity which can support the meaning-making process may also mean that the researcher may not sufficiently

problematise the data. This point is made by Delamont (2001) who urges researchers to be wary of their proximity to the context as this can mean that points of potential interest in the data risk being overlooked because of their taken-for-grantedness. This requirement to make the familiar strange in order to reveal new understandings and inform practice is a common theme in the literature about qualitative research. However, it arguably takes on a different significance in the context of the professional doctorate where the doctoral student may well, as noted by Fillery-Travis and Robinson ((2018), have moved beyond novice status and be considered as an expert practitioner. As I planned and executed the study, there was potential for my own frames of reference, prior knowledge and beliefs about the knowledge base of language teaching to influence my interpretations in ways which might distort the voice of the participants.

The second dimension of insiderness which perhaps required more scrutiny and caution on my part was being inside the institution where the research was being conducted. More significantly, having a direct teaching relationship with the students who participated in my study, including an assessment role, was a main concern. Therefore, it was important to ensure that the potential dual role conflict, of assessor and researcher, was mitigated to the greatest possible extent (see section 4.2.2) so that the students could authentically express their views and reflections. These mitigations also needed to be in alignment with the overall principles of a phenomenographic approach which will first be elaborated on before moving into discussion of what they were.

4.2 Ways of knowing: an interpretivist-phenomenographic approach

The focus of this research had its origins in a number of my professional pre-occupations as discussed in the previous chapters. Some of these pre-dated my EdD journey from language learning student to language teaching professional: the lifelong language learner’s strong conviction of the power that language learning can give an individual; the language teacher educator’s desire to develop her own practice and to prepare her students for their own roles as language teachers. Others emerged from the first three years of doctoral study as I began to learn a different language which helped me to articulate and name these ideas: a growing sense of disquiet with the perceived homogenisation of the international student within HE and the assumptions about the skills and attributes which should be developed during their postgraduate programme; and, overall, a nagging doubt about perpetuating pedagogic practices within our programme which belie the claims by some within the language teacher education field, that we, as a community have espoused a more critical SLTE pedagogy (see chapter two).

The resulting research question, seeking to discover the meaning that graduate attributes have for international SLTE postgraduates, necessitated a research approach which would support the following: creation of a space for participants to articulate their own conceptualisations of the attributes they were developing as a result of the programme; an account of the variations in how they understood these attributes in relation to their future careers in language teaching; and finally, acknowledgement of their lived experience as international students who were learning about language teaching in one context (UK HE), but in preparation for careers in another (their home language education context). In setting these parameters, this research is located within the interpretivist paradigm. Differentiated by its orientation towards the meanings which are attached to phenomena by those experiencing it, interpretivists are challenged by the idea that there is a single reality which can be discovered by a scientific approach. Rather, it is focused on developing an understanding of subjective human experience as it is socially constructed within a given context. Willis (2007, p. 99) further underlines the importance of context, noting that understanding the research context is 'critical to the interpretation of the data gathered'. Moreover, following Geertz (1973), it is the interaction between the researcher and their participants within the study which creates the meanings. This study, situated within a specific context of postgraduate SLTE study, unambiguously seeks to understand the participants' perceptions of graduate attributes and to offer an interpretation of the final account.

Other research approaches within the interpretivist paradigm could arguably fulfil these criteria, as I rationalised my research design, but my choice of phenomenography was inspired by Barrie's (2006) phenomenographic study of Australian lecturer's perspectives of graduate attributes. Admittedly, on an extremely superficial level, its initial appeal lay in the creation of a deceptively simple outcome space containing a number of categories of description of the phenomenon in question. Whilst the complexity of its ontological and epistemological underpinnings was not immediately clear to me at that early stage, the potential of phenomenography to make meaning of the participants understandings of graduate attributes was apparent, in ways which I will now outline.

4.2.1 Phenomenography: rationalising a research approach

Phenomenography is defined as a research approach which focuses on the variation in the ways in which a particular phenomenon is experienced, and which offers a way to explore the range of meanings which individuals attribute to it (Åkerlind, 2012). Emerging from

Marton and Säljo's (1976) study with first-year university students which revealed the qualitatively different ways in which they had understood an academic article, phenomenography became a commonly used approach for research into learning and teaching in an HE setting (Entwistle, 1997, p. 128). Säljo, as cited in Entwistle (1997), states that the main objective of their study was to re-establish an empirical approach which illustrates the relationship between what individuals do when they learn and the anatomy of the understanding that they achieve. He goes on to describe the ethos of the study as one which gave primacy to the notion that the final understanding of a concept is fundamentally related to the content and context of learning. In this respect, it resonates with a view of SLTE, needing to be more nuanced and cognisant of teacher-learners' academic and professional contexts. In phenomenography, from the ontological perspective, understanding of a phenomenon is believed to consist of the relationship between the experiencer and that which is experienced. This refers to the idea that the phenomenon being investigated, in this case GAs, and the people who are experiencing this phenomenon are not considered separately as two different entities, what Zygmont and Naidoo (2018, p. 3) term 'a non-dualist ontology'. Rather, as Yates, Partridge and Bruce (2012, p. 98) describe it, phenomenographic research explores the relations formed between the 'research subjects and objects or aspects of the world'. They further explain that it is these indivisible relations between the experiencer and that which is experienced which embody the whole phenomenon. It is also worth noting that this notion of learning being relational also has consonance with Lave and Wenger's definition of situated learning (see 3.2) which positions learning as relational, between the learner and the community they are participating in.

Säljo makes the additional point that, not being sensitive enough to both the content and context of learning, results in abstractions. Arguably, abstractions can have their use in providing a shorthand for discussion within professional communities. However, problematically, they can also hide the complexity of matters, and important details can be overlooked. In addition, in use, a shared and mutual understanding of abstractions may be assumed. Unless such assumptions are openly interrogated, a mutual understanding cannot be guaranteed. A strength of phenomenography is that it makes space for this to happen with interviews which are designed to elicit people's lived experiences. As discussed in chapter two, teaching and learning development discourses have often categorised international students into one homogenous group, paying little attention to factors which differentiate them from one another such as cultural background, academic history, or disciplinary affiliations. According to Zygmont and Naidoo (2018, p. 5), epistemologically, phenomenography is premised on the idea that 'conceptions of a

phenomenon […] can be brought into a reflected state through the process of communication in the research interview'. This spoke to my desire to open a conversation space for international students, in which GAs were framed within learning content and context. It is important at this point to pay attention to one specific feature here which is that phenomenography focuses on the collective awareness of a specific phenomenon rather than the individual's. This means that in practice the data set is viewed all together rather than treating each transcript, and therefore each individual, separately. This may seem in contradiction to the motivation for this research which is critical of discourses within HE which treats international students as one homogenous group. It could be argued that by choosing this approach, I am perpetuating this. However, as is clarified in the discussion of data analysis, the resulting outcome space is a representation of the variations in perspectives so all views are included. Indeed, it is worth reiterating here that the defining feature of phenomenography is that it allows for a description of the variations in understanding of the selected phenomenon. An additional decision that I made to try to ensure that I was not homogenising international students was to proceed with individual interviews rather than focus groups which can also be conducted within a phenomenographic framework. However, my concern with focus groups was that sometimes individual voices, despite the best intentions of the interviewer, can be lost. An additional risk with focus groups is that participants, for different reasons, can be influenced by other group members and may not express their own view.

Another appealing feature of phenomenography lay in its potential to inform the way that I might practice SLTE within the parameters of the course I teach on. This chapter begins with an acknowledgement of the potential of doctoral study to transform aspects of everyday practice. Discussing phenomenography, Marton and Booth (1997) (cited in Zygmont & Naidoo, 2018, p. 4) argue that:

> […] participants can be guided to experience a phenomenon in more powerful ways if they can become simultaneously and focally aware of more critical aspects of a phenomenon than was previously the case.

If this holds true, then it might be anticipated that findings from this research may in turn guide my personal reflections on the teaching methods and approaches adopted in my own everyday practice, ideally in ways which would benefit future cohorts. Nonetheless, despite its merits, as with any research approach and methodology, phenomenography has also been criticised on several fronts, epistemological and methodological. It was important to be alert to these as I progressed my research design and to identify ways to manage and mitigate these.

An initial recurring critique in its evolution as an approach has been the lack of detail in the description of the research process given in earlier studies, which has previously left phenomenographic research open to questions about its trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). One such criticism comes from Ashworth and Lucas (1998), who are sceptical of phenomenographers' claims that the method allows entry into the life world of participants, specifically with reference to epoché or bracketing. In research terms, bracketing refers to the need for the researcher to refrain from importing her own conceptions or assumptions into the final descriptions so that the participants own ideas may emerge. This is often mentioned in discussions of phenomenography with commentators referring to the need to do this. Ashworth and Lucas's criticism is that, in discussions of phenomenographic research, exactly what is to be bracketed is not made explicit. They cite in great detail a number of studies from phenomenological research which clearly state the suppositions to be bracketed, for example, scientific theories or the prior construction of interpretive categories. In particular, they take issue with the idea that researchers may be comparing students' conceptions of a phenomenon with an 'authorised version' (1998, p. 425) of the concept. This criticism needs further reflection. As noted at the start of the chapter, phenomenography began with studies which considered students' conceptualisations of specific learning matter. Marton and Pong (2005), for example, discuss a phenomenographic analysis of how the mechanical concept of force is understood by students. In such studies which are focused on more factual phenomenon, it is certainly probable that, in analysing students' conceptions, the researchers may draw on accepted scientific definitions or 'authorised versions'. Later studies within HE, although adopting phenomenographic methods of data collection and analysis, have used these to examine broader phenomena associated with tertiary study such as internationalisation (Ojo & Booth, 2009) or study support (Hallett, 2013). Arguably, such subjects are less rigid in their interpretation and so there is less risk of an interviewer seeking to elicit or impose an authorised version.

However, even if the interviewer is an expert, or at least more knowledgeable, in the phenomenon under investigation, it is questionable whether an acknowledgement of their disciplinary body of knowledge constitutes a negation or diminishing of the student's experience. Arguably, Ashworth and Lucas are overlooking the original intention of phenomenography, and that which motivated my research: namely, the potential of this approach to provide valuable understandings for teaching and learning. The phenomenographic objective is not to find evidence to show that students are 'wrong' in what they have understood. Rather, it is to understand the student relationship with their

learning with a view to integrating those conceptualisations into the practice of teaching. In this research, there is no suggestion that there is one accepted set of institutional graduate attributes which students should espouse and work towards. Rather than adopt such an extreme position in my own study to try and bracket everything out, I have found Zygmont and Naidoo's (2018, p. 4) interpretation more practical. They suggest:

> […] remaining reflexive about but backgrounding the influence of social discourses on the participant, the relationship between participant and researcher, and the researcher's own relationship to the phenomenon.

In other words, whilst I am conscious of the institutional set of graduate attributes which are shared publicly, and the discourses which surround GAs in general, these can still be bracketed. This can be illustrated by the set of interview questions which were used for data collection (see section 4.2.4). Whilst it may have been possible to use the institutional framework of attributes to form the interview questions, this would not have been true to the spirit of bracketing and would have imposed a conceptualisation of attributes on the students rather than allowing for their own understandings to be surfaced. The value of this is underlined by Willis (2018, p. 488) in her exploration of phenomenography in a research project based in Uganda where she talked to local teachers about their pupils' experience of learning:

> By asking about experiences rather than inquiring about the participants' knowledge, expertise, opinions or views, the goads of Western paradigms were somewhat removed […] were able to describe their experiences […] with confidence.

This resonates with my desire to allow the students to speak for themselves rather than have their responses constrained by expectations of producing the correct answer they think the interviewer is looking for. What Willis (2018, p. 485) describes as a methodological 'latitude' in the way that participants are freed to speak about their experiences is at the core of what Marton believed about phenomenography. Namely, that if educators can reach a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between learners and what they are learning and the ways in which they understand it, then there is considerable potential for pedagogic development.

4.2.2 Phenomenographic data collection: selected participants

As noted above, the research was conducted within the UK HEI where I work and participants in this study were chosen purposively as postgraduate students from a Masters programme which focuses on SLTE. Students on this programme mostly intend to begin, or in some cases continue, a career as a second language teacher. The second language

which they want to teach varies among the students each year. In this cohort, languages included, but were not restricted to English, which is one of the main differences between this and the other programme which is exclusively focused on English Language Teaching (ELT). A significant number of students planned to teach Mandarin and a smaller number planned to teach other European or Asian languages. In the academic year in which the data collection was carried out, the programme comprised 70 international students, the majority of whom were female. Most students in the cohort were from China although there were a small number from other countries in Asia, Europe and South America. All members of the cohort had some prior language teaching experience although this ranged from a few months to more than five years and in formal and informal settings. The table below provides more specific information about each participant.

Table 1 Participant information

Pseudonym	Male/Female	Nationality	Age	Teaching Experience
Alison	F	Romanian	27	not given
Brad	M	El Salvador	26	5 years +
Caitlin	F	Chinese	27	3 years
Avery	M	Japanese	26	1.5 years
Alice	F	Chinese	24	1 year
Annie	F	Chinese	24	< 1 year
Carmen	F	Chinese	23	no experience
Anna	F	Chinese	24	1.5 years
Pablo	F	Lithuanian	29	5 years
Hare	F	Chinese	24	< 1 year
Julie	F	Chinese	22	< 1 year
Dora	F	Chinese	22	< 1 year
Jill	F	Chinese	25	3 years
Elsa	F	Chinese	24	1 year
Yoki	F	Chinese	26	2 years
Yiqia	F	Chinese	30	not given
Coke	F	Chinese	22	2 years
Ann	F	Chinese	24	not given
Zfich	F	Chinese	23	no experience
Karry	F	Chinese	23	< 1 year

Interpretivist research generally does not stipulate numbers of participants. Indeed, Patton (2002, p. 244) goes as far as to say that 'there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry.' However, I was guided by the central objective of phenomenography which is to capture variation in the ways that a specific group of people experience a phenomenon. And, although earlier accounts of phenomenographic research also do not specify participant numbers, it is generally considered important to capture the widest variation possible from the experiences of the target group. In order to arrive at the final outcome space with categories of description to represent the different ways in which graduate attributes were understood by international students, I wanted to ensure that I was able to secure this variation. I therefore aimed to recruit twenty participants from the whole cohort for my study as I felt this would allow me to obtain the perspectives of over a third of students from the programme, thus maximising variation in terms of the students' background and language teaching experience. This decision was also supported by Larsson and Holmstöm (2007, p. 56) and Zygmont and Naidoo (2018, p. 7) who note, based on their reviews of other phenomenographic studies, that data from around twenty participant interviews is generally considered sufficient to obtain as broad a range of views as possible.

In addition to the practical research decisions about how many participants to recruit, I was also mindful of the researcher's responsibilities in conducting the research with 'an ethic of respect' (BERA, 2018, p. 5). This requires the researcher to actively reflect on all aspects of the research at every stage and to take responsibility for making decisions which minimise harm to the participants. However, it is more than simply reducing risks. As well aiming to develop knowledge in a particular educational sector, there should also be an aspiration to bring direct benefit to those participating in the study. The following section discusses the steps taken to ensure that this research was conducted to achieve these goals.

4.2.3 Ethical Considerations

Having designed the research, one of the first practical steps was to seek permission from the Director of Postgraduate Studies in the relevant School, as part of the overall process of obtaining ethical approval to proceed with my study. Once this was given, students from the programme were contacted by email and invited to take part. Once a student had expressed an interest in participating, they were sent the participation information sheet and a statement of informed consent (see appendices one and two).

The framework of these two documents were central to guiding me in managing the research as ethically as possible. The principle of informed consent was foremost in my mind as I reflected on what information should be provided for these students and I tried to see the research request from their perspective. Thinking about them as language learners (albeit very competent users of English), I used a frequently asked questions (FAQ) format. I felt this would help with processing the information and believed that this would include some of the questions they themselves would want to ask but may worry about articulating. As noted above (see 4.1.2), given the nature of my relationship with the students as a course tutor and assessor, a main concern was that students would feel under pressure to participate. Mindful of the power imbalance implicit in this relationship, I was very conscious of the need to ensure that participation was voluntary and that they did not feel obligated to join the study. An important decision taken to address this was the timing of the data collection. The course I teach takes place in the first semester of the academic year and has two assessments. I therefore waited until the second semester, when the Board of Examiners had ratified their assessments, before seeking participants. At this point, I would have no further academic contact with them. I also used the participant information sheet to be as explicit about this as possible. The FAQ format allowed me to directly ask the question ‘Do I have to participate?’ and to explain that this did not form part of their degree programme. An additional question directly addressed their potential anxieties about expressing their opinion to a member of staff and reminded them of the ethical guidelines which would underpin the research. A third measure was to include a clear statement about my role in this study on the first page of the participant information sheet. I acknowledged our relationship as tutor and student but explained that I was writing to them as a student myself which I hoped would go some way to reducing the imbalance of power that they may have experienced.

Language, and its power (unsurprisingly in the context of this dissertation), was also a key consideration from an ethical perspective. Sections 4.2.5 and 4.2.8 below discuss in more detail the role of language in the data collection interviews and in the subsequent transcription. However, from my insider position, I was aware that some students may be concerned about their own use of language and their ability to participate fully in the interviews. Following the principle of minimising harm, I wanted to be sure that the research request did not increase the anxiety that potential students may already be experiencing in relation to their language competence and ability to complete their studies. The participant information sheet therefore included the following statement and question ‘I would like to take part but I am worried about my English and how I express myself. Can I participate?’ (Appendix two). The response sought to reassure them of their ability to

communicate but also that the interview questions did not seek an authorised answer. The language educator's instinct that their language anxieties may be an obstacle in attracting participants was borne out in the subsequent data in which academic language skills and their development became a clear focus.

Whilst attending to the potential risks, an important consideration for me was to create a research setting which might also benefit the students taking part. Three such benefits were clarified in the information given to potential participants. Firstly, the opportunity to be guided in a reflection on their studies at a midway point in their Masters programme could be useful. The interviews took place in the second semester. An extended opportunity to reflect on their studies from the perspective of their development was potentially productive as they engaged with new courses and began to think about their dissertation topic. Dewey (1933) considered reflective thinking to have important implications in education, allowing the thinker to articulate their puzzles and to start the process of attempting to resolve those. Moreover, the concept of reflective practice as part of the language educator's toolkit, is well established. Although it is somewhat problematic in how it is understood and implemented, as was noted in chapter two, it was hoped that the research interview would create a space for the participants to flex their reflective muscle and begin a conversation with themselves about their identities as students and as future language teachers. Nonetheless, although this was viewed as a benefit, I also recognised that in the course of such reflections, there was potential for students to become upset when discussing areas of difficulty in their study. Academics are increasingly aware of the mental health of students and how this may suffer during stressful postgraduate study. Many students feel greatly pressurised by both academic but also familial expectations and I needed to be alert to signs of distress during the interview. The questions were designed as openly as possible to allow the participants to feel like equal partners in the interview situation. It was also made clear in the information, and again verbally in the interview, that participants could withdraw at any point in the process. The information sheet also included links to a number of support services within the university which distressed students could access. Time was taken in the interviews to point this out to the participants, and I also used the transcription checking stage to follow up with students and to leave the channels of communication open.

A second perceived benefit was that participation would allow them to experience first-hand the data collection stage of a research project. If Masters students are considered as junior scholars in a research community, then their own experience of conducting research was arguably limited. Although not claiming that my own expertise was considerably more

developed, it seemed that as they approached the dissertation stage of their programme, the opportunity to be a participant in these research interviews would be instructive for them. They would see exemplars of participant information sheets, informed consent forms as well as being able to observe how I conducted the interviews. Indeed, in subsequent interviews, some participants shared with me that this was an influential factor in their decision to take part and so was clearly also perceived by them as a benefit.

The third benefit related again to language, and I suggested to the participants that the opportunity to have an extended conversation in English may be something that they would appreciate. At the time of preparing the information participation sheet early in 2020 and describing this then as a potential benefit, I could not have foreseen that an extended conversation with another human being in any language would bring value to the participants. The impact of conducting research during the COVID pandemic and the unintended consequences of that are discussed more fully in section 4.2.4 below.

BERA's guidelines (2018, p. 5) also support the researcher in adhering to 'an ethic of respect' in practical matters related to the privacy and autonomy of the participants. The identity of all participants was anonymised with each one choosing a pseudonym. Documentation which linked identifying information with pseudonyms was stored in a separate online location from transcripts using University 'clouds' in both my workplace and place of study. These are secure computer networks with password protection. Care was also taken not to identify the specific institution in which the research was conducted. GDPR regulations were adhered to so that any personal data would only be retained as long it was required for research purposes and securely disposed of thereafter.

4.2.4 Data collection interviews during a global pandemic

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic required some changes to be made to the planned data collection methods. On-campus teaching was suspended very suddenly by the national lockdown in the UK in March 2020, with students being confined to their accommodation and staff required to work from home, meaning that face-to-face interviews were no longer possible. The start of the data collection coincided with the start of lockdown before the nation became proficient with different communication platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Fortunately, the university's own Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has an in-built video-conferencing function which both the students and I were familiar enough with and so this was used to conduct and record the interviews. In this way, I was

able to conduct twenty online interviews with students. The switch to an online medium was not entirely smooth as, not unexpectedly, there were some technical problems, the main one being the quality and reliability of the broadband connection. Participants based in student accommodation were often competing for bandwidth as all their peers were online at the same time, either for study or to remain in much-needed contact with concerned family and friends during this unprecedented situation. Those participants who had managed to secure a flight home to their own country also had connection issues, especially, but not only, those who were in quarantine hotels at the time of the interview. Connections were, at times, unreliable. Nonetheless, despite this, most interviews were conducted with minimal disruption. The deployment of standard communication strategies such as asking for clarification, repetition or confirmation of what we thought we had heard resolved most communication breakdowns. Where the dialogue was more consistently disrupted, we relied on a number of technical solutions such as switching off video, leaving the 'room' and re-connecting, trying other video-conferencing tools, or simply aborting the interview and trying again at a different time.

One unintended consequence of conducting the interviews was the perception I had that the process of participating in this research during a time of global crisis was experienced by the students much more positively than would perhaps otherwise have been the case. The successful recruitment of twenty interviewees can perhaps be attributed in part to the previously established relationship between us in the course of their studies, or their willingness to be of service to their teacher. Nonetheless, although this was not articulated explicitly, it felt that the contact with a familiar face during a period of extreme worry and anxiety, also provided a welcome moment of relief. These were young students who were far from their usual support networks, both at home and on-campus, at a critical point in their postgraduate studies. In addition to being keen to participate for their own interest, their pleasure at having contact with their tutor was visible, with most conversations lasting an hour or even more rather than the planned 40 minutes. In completing the request for ethical approval, and justifying our research, we are, to consider the benefits for participants. It could not have been foreseen that simple human contact at this time of isolation would become one of the benefits.

4.2.5 Interviews: the role of language

Good or trustworthy research demands careful examination of the researcher's judgements throughout the research process and this reflexivity may be visible at all stages. In a study about language education, in which the conviction that empowering this group of

international students to voice their own views on graduate attributes is central, there is a certain irony in conducting the interviews in the language of the coloniser, which should be acknowledged here. Despite my claims to expertise in linguistic matters, the decision to conduct the interviews in English was purely pragmatic on one level. I do not speak the language of the participants who, as noted above, came from a variety of different linguistic backgrounds so could not conduct the interviews in their own language. Nor was it possible or practical, in the context of an assessed dissertation, to hire a team of interpreters. The language choice is discussed further in section 4.2.7 below.

4.2.6 Interview questions

The phenomenographic interview requires the interviewer to bring their respondents to a point of being able to articulate their conceptions of the phenomenon as they experience it. Marton and Booth (1997, p. 129) regard it as necessary that the interviewer facilitates 'a state of meta-awareness'. By this they mean that the respondent not only has an awareness of the phenomenon but also of *how* they have experienced it. A concern therefore was to ensure that the questions posed to participants achieved the desired purpose: in this case, for participants to share with the interviewer their conceptualisations of graduate attributes, whilst being mindful of the need not to lead students or influence how they articulate their experience, as was noted above in the discussion on bracketing in section 4.2.1 above.

Consequently, deciding how to even begin the interviews was one of the first challenges. Whilst Ashworth & Lucas (2000, p. 299) are emphatic about the need for bracketing, they also acknowledge that the interviews 'have to be introduced as being "about" something.' Marton and Booth's (1997) discussion of the phenomenographic process illuminates to an extent. It describes the research interview as being in two parts, with the first part asking participants to undertake a task and the second part asking them to reflect on how they undertook it. However, this is more pertinent to the earlier phenomenographic studies which focused largely on investigating how students approach particular disciplinary learning tasks. For example, students of physics may be given a physics problem to solve in the first part of an interview, and then be asked questions to probe how they had worked on solutions to the problem. The object of study in this case, GAs, is not a solution-oriented problem which can be solved by applying the laws of physics. One aspect of the challenge was that I had a strong instinct that the term 'graduate attributes' was not one which the participating students would have heard. Indeed, I was not confident that they had even seen the institution's own GA framework. (This was borne out in the data collection when only one of the twenty participants had actually heard of the term prior to

the interview.) This instinct was founded on a sense that, at the time, the term is not one which has wide currency in the institution. Initially, I considered using the institutional framework as a basis for the interviews but rejected this because of the risk, discussed earlier, of this becoming the authorised version (see 4.2.1) which participants might incorporate into their own meaning of GAs. In order to keep the interview as open as possible, I decided to begin the interviews by sharing a brief, more neutral definition of graduate attributes which is based on the following by Bowden, Hart, King, Trigwell and Watts (2000) (see section 2.2.1 for the original definition):

> Graduate attributes (GAs) are the qualities, skills and understandings that a student should develop as a consequence of the learning they engage with on their programme of study.

Although not a task in the traditional sense, engaging with this definition allowed for an introduction to the topic without influencing participants' own conceptions of what those 'qualities, skills and understandings' might be (Bowden, Hart, King, Trigwell and Watts, 2000). This ensured that the phenomenon in question was, as Marton and Booth put it, 'brought to awareness […] in an open and concrete form' (Marton and Booth, 1997, P. 130).

In some interviews, the definition was probed further: participants sometimes asked for examples which I refrained from giving. Instead, I expanded on the definition by asking them to compare themselves when they began the programme with themselves now in relation to the skills they may have developed or different ways of approaching different situations. Participants were encouraged to compare themselves with a hypothetical friend who had not completed this programme of study. All participants were then interviewed using the set of questions. Similar to other qualitative research methods, interviews in the phenomenographic tradition are partially structured so that each interview uses the same questions which are prepared in advance. All participants were asked the same set of questions, but the questions were followed up with probes designed to encourage the respondents to elaborate on their answers, always with the aim of eliciting as full a description as possible of the ways in which they experienced graduate attributes. The questions were as follows:

1. What do you think graduate attributes are? Can you give some examples?
2. Tell me about the skills or attributes you think you are developing during this Masters programme.
3. How are you developing those?

4. Which elements of the programme do you think specifically develop those attributes or skills?
5. What attributes do you think you will need if you pursue a career as a language teacher at home?

Each interview covered all the questions although the order varied depending on how each participant responded. Some questions were answered during a response to another question. Once the interviews were complete, I then moved on to data analysis.

4.2.7 Phenomenographic analysis

The goal of phenomenographic analysis is to develop an outcome space which captures and represents the different ways of experiencing the phenomenon in question. The outcome space is a diagrammatic representation of the qualitatively different ways in which the phenomenon is experienced by the those in the sample group and, in this study, was intended to reveal the different meanings ascribed to graduate attributes. A second important feature of the phenomenographic outcome space is that each variation is related to the others, 'typically by way of hierarchically inclusive relationships' (Åkerlind, 2012, p. 116). Åkerlind describes the structure of the outcome space as 'one of the least understood aspects of phenomenography' (2012, p. 116), and this is probably a fair statement which reflects the, at times, arduous task, of analysis which I will detail here.

Most accounts of phenomenographic study agree on six main stages of analysis and these are outlined here in table one.

Table 2 ***Stages of analysis in phenomenography***

Stages of analysis	Analytic process
1. Transcription	Recorded interviews are transcribed
2. Data familiarisation	Transcripts are read multiple times to ensure familiarity with content; transcripts viewed holistically rather than as individually
3. Identification of relevant utterances	Utterances of interest, in terms of relevance to the research question, are highlighted
4. Sorting data	Highlighted utterances are sorted into 'pools of meaning'

5. Contrasting	'Pools of meaning' are contrasted and assigned a category of description
6. Outcome space	Variations are displayed as categories of description, these are represented diagrammatically, showing the dimensions of variation and indicating the relationship between each

The simplicity of the process as it is described in the table above belies its complexity. In the following section, I will discuss my pathway through the data analysis, paying particular attention to the sorting stage which was the more challenging part.

4.2.8 Transcription

Following the data collection, there were twenty interviews to be transcribed leading to a number of questions related to both practical and interpretive matters. Practically, as noted above in section 4.2.3, online connections during the interviews were not always reliable which resulted in some short sections, or phrases being inaudible. This is noted as such in the transcripts. Sometimes, this was resolved within the interview through typical discourse strategies (confirmation, repetition, clarification), or afterwards through the sharing of transcripts with participants. Some participants returned their transcripts with gaps completed or by expanding and elaborating on their meaning. In addition to the practicalities, this also raised other issues which I will return to later.

A second practical decision to make concerned the mode of transcription, whether to use transcription software or not. Despite the large volume of data generated by twenty interviews, each of which lasted around forty-five minutes on average, I chose to do the transcriptions myself. The transcription task can often be seen, erroneously, as one of the more mechanical stages of qualitative research and something to be ticked off the researcher's to do list. It is sometimes viewed more as an aspect of data management rather than interpretation before the real analysis begins (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005) and 'taken for granted as mundane and unproblematic' (Lapadat, 2000, p. 204).

However, the combination of my profession, with a background in applied linguistics, and experience of my own Masters dissertation which employed conversational analysis, I was conscious that transcription itself can also be considered as an act of interpretation, depending on the choices made by the researcher. Moreover, as Lapadat (2000, p. 204) helpfully notes:

> The process of doing transcription also promotes intense familiarity with the data, which leads to the methodological and theoretical thinking essential to interpretation.

Repeated listening of the interviews ensured that I was indeed very familiar with the data and so steps one and two as outlined in table one above were combined. In making other decisions about the transcription, I tried to be guided by the research objectives to make meaning of the participants' understandings of graduate attributes and so initially moved towards the more denaturalised end of the transcription continuum (Bucholtz, 2000) retaining the features of spoken language such as hesitations, repetitions and instances of false starts. However, because participants were not using their first language, there were moments in some interviews which contained stretches of less fluent speech which, when transcribed, might have obscured (Bucholtz, 2000) what they wanted to say. For that reason, I did employ some tidy up features, for example, where a participant repeats 'I think that' several times as they try to retrieve a word, I did not include every single vocalisation of the phrase. It was also important for me to remain faithful to their grammatical and lexical choices even where these may be deemed non-standard by a less sympathetic listener. The participants were all competent users of English and if comprehension issues arose, these were jointly resolved in two ways: at the interview stage through use of confirmation and clarification checks or once the transcript had been returned to the participant for checking. As mentioned above, this second approach also brought methodological issues around transcription into sharp focus. This merits some attention.

Although involving participants in the transcription process may not typically have been a regular occurrence in qualitative research, it has been suggested that this practice has become more common (Mero-Jaffe, 2011, p. 234). My motivations for sharing the transcript with interviewees were multiple. Firstly, it seemed to be one way to increase the trustworthiness of the research by ensuring that there was transparency for both participants and the intended readership. Allowing the interviewees access to their transcript was a means to acknowledge that transcripts themselves are not carbon copies of 'a particular reality' (Mero-Jaffe, 2011, p. 234) but are, as mentioned above, interpretive acts because of the decisions made by the researcher. Partially inspired by Grundy, Pollon and McGinn's work (2003) on 'the participant-as-transcriber', although I produced the transcript rather than the participant, sharing it with the interviewee for verification seemed to offer a more collaborative experience and give some agency to the participant, allowing

them to have a say in how their voice was heard and not just how the interviewer heard it (Grundy, Pollon, and McGinn, 2003). This point is emphasised by Hallett who also adopted this practice in her phenomenographic study looking at academic literacy development, to ‘ascertain whether the record represented the “life world” as experienced by that student.’ (Hallett, 2013, p. 523).

Moreover, adopting this practice, arguably went some way towards a redressing of the power imbalance between me as the teacher-researcher and the student-participant although, on further reflection, perhaps does not entirely resolve this. I had already made some adjustments to this process following the trial study when one participant felt that their use of English necessitated an apology after seeing their own words in black and white. Rather than empowering my students, sharing their transcript had produced the opposite effect and seemed to dishearten them which was definitely not what I wanted to achieve. This disappointment can partly be explained by participants evaluating their speech by the same conventions which we apply to texts which are written (Mero-Jaffe, 2011, p. 240) and applying the same standards. To try to resolve this for the main study, when I returned the transcript to participants, I included a reminder that the transcript reflected spoken discourse and so it was normal for it not to be a perfect performance. However, even with this caveat, one participant (an extremely competent user of English) was still struck by her own words, creatively comparing her verbal contribution to being jumbled up like clothes in a washing machine. The possible solution of conducting the interviews in participants’ first language, whilst giving them more agency, is also problematic for a number of reasons. Practically, recruiting translators would then insert an extra layer of interpretation and, arguably, may take the researcher even further from the speaker’s intended meaning. Any future research I might conduct with students who are users of English as an additional language still requires some reflection on how to support participants to value their contribution, and it may be that a more creative, collaborative approach with students as joint research partners may hold part of the answer.

4.2.9 Identifying and grouping relevant utterances

Following the phenomenographic approach, transcriptions were then merged into one document and treated as one continuous stretch of data. Keeping the research question in focus at all times, this was read multiple times to find discussions which revealed conceptualisations of graduate attributes. Utterances which were considered to be of particular relevance to the research were highlighted. Relevance was determined by establishing whether the utterance revealed a way of conceptualising graduate attributes.

This was one of the most challenging parts of the data analysis process as it requires the researcher to keep the phenomenon itself in focus but to remain alert to the ways in which it is conceptualised or experienced by the participant as this is the interest. Marton (1986, P. 31) clarifies it in this way:

> […] phenomenography is not concerned solely with the phenomena that are experienced and thought about, or with the human beings who are experiencing or thinking about the phenomena […] phenomenography is concerned with the relations that exist between human beings and the world around them.

For example, a participant may talk about learning to think critically and identify this as a graduate attribute. This may alert attention to the phenomenon but the objective of the research was wider than simply finding out what the participants considered to be examples of GAs (although this is also of interest). Rather, phenomenography aims to uncover the meaning they have and how they are experienced in the context of the Masters programme.

Therefore, through the process of identifying and grouping relevant utterances into the pool of meaning, it was important to remember to look around this utterance to understand what meaning the participant has attributed to this rather than simply reporting that critical thinking has been identified as a graduate attribute. Utterances of interest were those where the participants were focused on particular aspects of GAs and could vary in length. The highlighted utterances were revisited several times before extracting them from each individual transcript and collecting them into a separate document to begin sorting them further. This document thus consisted of all the extracts from the twenty interviews which referred to the phenomenon as it was experienced by the participants.

The sorting phase of analysis, where the aim is to then categorise the utterances by their similarity, proved to be equally challenging, if not more so, partly because of the large volume of data and keeping it all in mind as I moved between the different utterances. This is reinforced by Åkerlind who talks about the difficulty 'of making the data manageable' (Åkerlind, 2005, p. 67). It was also challenging because of, as mentioned above in 4.2.1, phenomenography has often been criticised for the paucity of detail given in phenomenographic studies about the process of data analysis. As Collier-Reed and Ingerman point out (2013, P. 253), Marton's own description of the process does not fully elaborate on exactly how the utterances are collected according to similarity.

It was at this point I deviated slightly from the suggested process and inserted an extra step in order to manage the data as my working memory was being quite taxed by the cognitive load. Before trying to group utterances into 'broad clusters of ideas that go consistently together.' (Brew, 2001, p. 274), I grouped ideas together into broad topic areas, for example, where they talked about research skills, or when they mentioned assessments. I found that by doing this I could hold ideas and possible categories in mind more easily. It was also at this point that I resorted to printing the utterances so that I could manually manipulate them into categories of description and more easily re-sort as I refined the categories of each conceptualisation which are the 'primary outcomes of phenomenographic research' (Marton, 1986, P. 33). This produced about eighteen broad groups of utterances and so, from there, I went back to step four of sorting them into clusters. In sorting the utterances into categories of description, it is important for the researcher to identify the most distinctive aspects. As participants discussed GAs, there were a number of recurring elements which contextualised how they experienced them and, as I worked towards the categories of description, the dimensions of variation became more visible: how they oriented towards employability; how they developed the identified attributes; what role disciplinary theory and knowledge had; and finally, their own identity and how they perceived themselves.

As the discernment of these different dimensions and their variation began to crystalise, it was helpful to use a template of the diagrammatic structure of an outcome space to assist in defining and refining my categorisations. In some published phenomenographic research, the outcome space can sometimes appear as a simplified table without the useful phenomenographic descriptive labels for the anatomy of the conceptions. An exception is Zou's study (2018) which included her outcome space but also used phenomenographic terminology to label the columns of the outcome space (p. 1980). With the volume of data, and my struggles to keep everything in mind, I was inspired by her very clear presentation and used it as a basis to create my own template (see Appendix three) with some small modifications to the layout. What was particularly useful was the column she included with the title 'what is absent from the focus of awareness?' (Zou, 2018, p. 1980). Asking myself this question repeatedly facilitated the sorting of the utterances by helping to establish the boundaries of the conceptions as they began to take on a clearer form. This was a practical way to stay in control of the large volume of data. Resorting to pencil and paper, I printed the blank template to note ideas, with an eraser in hand, always mindful of the need not to foreclose my categories. Another modification to the outcome space was the inclusion of a final column where I noted the temporal aspect of each conception as it seemed pertinent to the discussion. This was based on the neoliberal perspective that the

acquisition of GAs is related to employability. It therefore seemed useful for the outcome space to record where each conception was temporally located in terms of employability. As can be seen in the template, this resulted in the following perspectives: pre-employment; employment; and employment and citizenship.

In the template (Appendix three), the column and row headings illustrate how the anatomy of each conception was described. Thus, as I sorted, it was possible to make note of what was in the focus of the students' awareness when they talked about GAs. Finally, it was possible to arrive at four different conceptions of GAs as they were experienced by these participants, with each conception clearly defined and delineated from the others by taking account of variation. The final step in the data analysis is to present findings in the form of the diagrammatic outcome space.

In the outcome space for this research, each identified conception is described in terms of both its referential meaning and its structural aspect. Each conception is named (for example, the academic skills conception) and reflects a category of description to differentiate it from other conceptions. This is the referential meaning. The structural meaning of each conception is described in terms of its external and internal horizon and can be viewed as the anatomy of the conception or the structure of awareness. The external horizon reflects the boundary of the variation, that is, the point at which it becomes a different conception. The internal horizon expands on this perceptual boundary by outlining what is or is not included in this conception. The remainder of the outcome space shows the dimensions along which each conception varies. In addition to a horizontal reading of the table to better understand each conception, it is also possible to read the vertical orientation with each conception being inclusive of the previous one. This latter point is important as it is only by understanding the boundaries of each conception that an understanding of what Marton and Booth (1997) meant by the widening of awareness can be reached. Though not hierarchical in the sense that one conception has more importance than another, by organising the conceptions in this way, the depth, richness and nuance of what the phenomenon may mean is presented.

Chapter summary

This chapter began with a description of my place within this study as a researcher navigating her position on the insider-outsider continuum and the process of identifying a research approach which would allow me to investigate the world of international students on their postgraduate programmes. Aligning with the view that good research must be

transparent and the belief that researchers need to be reflexive as they conduct their studies, I have described the research process from data collection through to data analysis and also offered rationales for the research choices I have made. The next chapter focuses on the findings of the data analysis and begins with a presentation of the outcome space and the four qualitatively different conceptions of graduate attributes are reported. These conceptions are then described and illustrated with excerpts from the data.

Chapter five: data chapter

Chapter introduction

In this chapter, the findings from the data are reported. Following phenomenographic tradition, these are presented in tabular form as the final outcome space (see Appendix five). As explained in the previous chapter, the outcome space, Säljo's (1988, p. 44) 'map of the territory', should be seen as a whole, detailing the structure of each of the identified conceptions on its horizontal axis, but also illustrating the relationships between conceptions in the vertical, hierarchical axis. However, for the purposes of presenting the data here in an easily read format, the outcome space table has been deconstructed and the four qualitatively different conceptions of graduate attributes, and their structural anatomy will be reported and illustrated in separate extracts.

Four conceptions of graduate attributes (GAs) were identified following the phenomenographic analysis. These were: graduate attributes as academic skills conception; graduate attributes as subject knowledge conception; graduate attributes as language teaching practitioner skills conception; and graduate attributes as the reflective citizen-practitioner conception. Each of these will now be presented in turn in the sections to follow. Each conception is presented in tabular form accompanied by a brief summary outline and illustrative quotations from the data. These are then followed by descriptions of the four dimensions of variation for each conception. To recap, the four dimensions of variation are: orientation to employability; development of attributes; place of disciplinary theory and knowledge; and perceptions of self/identity

5.1 The academic skills conception

In this conception, graduate attributes are conceived of primarily as academic skills necessary for either the completion of programme assignments, or for participation in the academic setting of lectures or workshops. Awareness is focused on the assessment activity, which is a core part of postgraduate study, and the need to pass assignments to successfully complete the programme. Understanding and application of the disciplinary theory and knowledge appears to be secondary to the perceived need to demonstrate subject knowledge transmitted through course delivery in a way which is acceptable to the academy.

Table 3 ***The anatomy of the academic skills conception***

The structure of awareness		
External horizon	**Internal horizon**	
Assessment activity	**The Focus of Awareness**	**Elements missing from the focus of awareness**
	Successful completion of programme, passing assignments	Disciplinary knowledge

Dimensions of variation		**Stage**
Orientation to employability	Attributes are study-oriented, unrelated to language teaching	Pre-employment
Development of attributes	Models, templates, instruction from others	
Place of disciplinary theory and knowledge	Disciplinary knowledge is secondary to academic forms and norms; Knowledge is to be acquired and replicated in appropriate academic form	
Perceptions of identity	Non-expert, student identity	

5.1.1 Orientation to employability

In this conception, GAs seem to be viewed more as required attributes for the postgraduate student which need to be developed and deployed during the programme, rather than those of a graduate about to enter a workplace setting to practise the profession of language teaching. Attributes identified by participants related directly to skills associated with study at postgraduate level such as reading academic journals, producing academic writing, thinking critically, and learning to evaluate source material for assignments.

Acquiring these attributes seems to be more atomistic rather than holistic tending towards a somewhat mechanical approach to navigating a postgraduate programme. In this conception, attention is paid to the conventions of the academic environment which are new and unfamiliar, with considerable effort made to learn new study behaviours and understand how to be successful in getting good grades to pass the programme assessments. In the extracts here, this effort to adapt to the different academic skills is visible as participants learned how to read more strategically for their assignments:

Extract 1Elsa

> I need to read a large amount of articles about these courses or about this topic that we need to write in our assignment. So that is one of the problems that I think I need to adapt with when I come to here, reading a lot of […].

Extract 2 Jill

> Before I.... I need to ...write the assignment or a dissertation, I need to read a lot of literature. Yeah. So, when... how... how should I ...how can I find out the related literature and how can I, like, group them and identify whether is really related to my research and how can I abstract? How can I get the key points of the research that I need? This kind of knowledge or skill is what I never learned in my university before.

Central to their awareness as they discuss GAs is the need to develop these skills in order to pass assignments with good grades and, ultimately, to successfully graduate with their Masters degree. There is also a belief, illustrated in extract two, that these are not skills which they have already developed as part of their undergraduate studies. In extract three, disciplinary or subject knowledge is noticeably absent and reduced to the status of 'information', secondary to the need to present it in a way that fulfils the programme requirements:

Extract 3 Alison

> And basically, even if you take part in a course, there's not much else to do other than just be present at lectures and tutorials and choices to get the information that you need to write your paper. And that's the most important thing if you want to focus on getting a good grade.

Extract 4 Jill

> I think the... this programme, most of us enter this programme for a degree and also knowledge. Right. But I have to say, the support from...the support for assignment writing and dissertation writing can be limited, and sometimes I feel that we don't know what the teachers want. So how can I get a higher score? Sometimes I just spend an effort to finish one of my assignments, but the result can be disappointing.

In extract four above, there is an explicit reference to the feeling of confusion about what is required as well as an obvious frustration about the obstacles in the way of achieving the main objective of obtaining a degree. Subject knowledge is mentioned, but not explicitly in relation to the professional practice of language teaching.

5.1.2 Attributes development

In this conception of attributes, development of these skills is often perceived as challenging with participants reporting that these are unfamiliar ways of learning. Moreover, for some students, these attributes are underdeveloped because they are viewed as being a different set of skills from those they developed during their undergraduate degrees in their home countries. This is illustrated clearly in the following extracts where there is a clear comparison between their previous learning experiences and the academic context they now find themselves in:

Extract 5 Pablo

> So, I think that's kind of a... maybe the image of a successful person in this field that I have. And maybe the pressure or the expectation that I put on myself or that I think is expected from me because I need to be like that. And I need to be writing like this and producing this kind of work.

These next extracts make the comparison between their postgraduate experience in the UK and their home context even more explicit and emphasises the necessity to conform in order to satisfactorily meet the criteria for their academic assignments, even if the ways of doing the assignments do not come naturally:

Extract 6 Alice

> And the third point is learning adapting to the academic model in western world because as students in Asian countries... I suppose the way of doing...finishing academic assignments or books is pretty different from the western world and at this

point, we need to learn the way of critical analyses in a western way and to make our teachers understand our ideas.

Extract 7 Hare

Maybe... here...if we back to China maybe we think we can manage the study, like it's not that difficult for us. I can use my own language and I can develop my own logic. And also, I'm not sure if the academic criteria are not that strict, we don't need to read so much critical thinking things. We just need to develop like...state our own opinions, what I think. […] And here we think... it's strange, like strange environment. We are not very familiar with [it] and the academic criteria is so strict with essay.

Extract 8 Pablo

And also this, and also the ability to read quicker like the skim [reading]. I couldn't do this before. Everything I read was in depth and I used to read everything like if I'm given a list of things to read, I would read everything, and I didn't know other ways but because this Masters started differently. And I have less time for things. I feel like I'm forced to develop some qualities that I didn't have because I have to approach work very differently because I don't want to do it superficially.

Compounding the difficulty of developing these attributes is a consciousness of time pressures to reach the appropriate academic standard within the span of a one-year postgraduate programme. The lack of time is a common concern:

Extract 9 Carmen

[…] but I only have one year, so I have to learn hard to pass the courses.

Extract 10 Yoki

Because it is a really short period time. I know it's one year but it's really short. It's like half a year. So, it's not a lot of time.

In addition to their awareness of how to master the necessary skills, there is also an awareness of how to develop them. These academic skills attributes are seen as being achieved through following instructions from tutors and following prescriptive guidelines. The importance of the programme teachers is apparent and there is a perception of the course teachers in the role of the expert or master:

Extract 11 Dora

I attend this programme. I, you know, I realize there is a totally oh, you know, totally different education system. In another world, everything is different. You need to be, you know…you need to write an essay. And the essay structure is totally different from our essay. But I read this and then the teacher gave me steps to write it, you know, for essays, introduction. It's like a kind of, you know, form that you follow, too. But when I write the essay after that I think about, OK, here, why [do] I need to write this kind of essay?

Extract 12 Brad

> Like sometimes the tutor says something, but I say something, and the tutor says something else and then it's just like, I don't know, gives or builds an idea on what I said and then it's like contrasting and questioning and is like, wow. Yes, this is what I should be doing as well in essays, or this is what I should be... the way I should be approaching things.

5.1.3 Place of disciplinary theory and knowledge

Disciplinary knowledge appears to be secondary within the academic skills conception of graduate attributes and somewhat overshadowed by the need to conform and meet the norms of the academic conventions of a UK HEI. Demonstrating that they have handled the disciplinary knowledge in an appropriately academic form seems to take precedence over the content of their spoken or written output:

Extract 13 Yoki

> And the presentation as well. Actually, we have done a lot of presentations back in China when I was learning in college or in high school. But that kind of thing, it felt like face job, a face work like, before we would focus much more on making conclusions. However, now when we are thinking about the presentations, we will focus more on the critical part, like how to question the authors or the researchers and also the implications. Yes. Implications in the presentation and also in the essays... assignment.

Extract 14 Carmen

> And another thing is we have gathered some basic knowledge about how to do research or how to read research papers, which is very important for us because we are doing the dissertation now, if I... if we don't have the critical review courses or the 'Sources of Knowledge' courses, I won't know how to do it. I will be panicking now, but I don't think I'm anxious.

Knowledge in this conception is about what they need to know in order to produce an assignment which meets the expectations of the academic school. Little attention is paid to the content of the knowledge or how it might relate to their future professional practice.

5.1.4 Perceptions of professional self and identity

Identity aligns with a perception of self as a student in this conception. Moreover, although this is a postgraduate programme, the student identity does not emerge as an experienced scholar. As noted above, the academic skills which are being discussed are often depicted as new and very much under development. Previous undergraduate degrees are not considered to confer much advantage as they begin the postgraduate programme as explained here:

Extract 15 Carmen

> I think some...most of them, I started from zero. Like critical thinking. I don't think we... in undergraduate period or before I think I never heard it. Maybe in some universities teachers may tell their students to be critical, but I don't. I just...in the test, in the assessment, we just received all the things and write it down. So, I think be confident. I used to be confident.

Extract 16 Julie

> And now we have in [institution], we have courses like conceptualising research and sources of knowledge. And it's really a systematic way to understand literature and academic articles and research tools. That's why I think it's, yes, totally new to me. Yeah. So, something that I didn't do well in the undergraduate degree.

Nonetheless, this student identity is not necessarily viewed entirely negatively, and despite the associated struggles, the discovery of a new, more academic orientation can be a positive experience. Learning research skills is viewed affirmatively:

Extract 17 Zfich

> I think some qualities like, well, some qualities like being…well, it's hard to say. I have to think about it. But in terms of the identity change in academic, and in terms of an academic sense, a kind of identity change, it's the first time that I've experienced because I didn't have that kind of feeling before.

For some, the experience of studying at postgraduate level in this context has been enthusiastically embraced as their understanding of what it is to be a student has changed, and their conception of their student identity has also changed. Zfich expresses it thus:

Extract 18 Zfich

> And I was also inspired by this topic because a very great experience is that I was treated like a researcher and not a student. And I think this kind of building up some confidence or contributing to new identity, maybe because I used to bill myself as a student and students should listen to what teachers said and take notes and doing all kinds of stuff in the classroom. But now what I'm doing is not really listen to teacher but having my own thinking. And like, doing this is just like really do research and we can critically evaluate some articles and we can say, well, it is a good article, it's good research and we are also… we can make our own decision like evaluation or we can judge ourselves.

In some cases, this new academic identity has encouraged some to think about furthering their academic development by undertaking doctoral studies, something which had not been part of their career plan:

Extract 19 Brad

> And then the second way, how I would like to apply this is maybe I would like to do a PhD in the future. Actually, being here has inspired [me].

To summarise, in this conception, graduate attributes are experienced from the perspective of a student rather than as a prospective language teacher. Attributes are articulated in terms of academic language and literacy skills such as reading strategically, learning how to structure an essay, or how to do an academic presentation. The development of these attributes is deemed essential, in order to achieve their clear objective of successfully completing the programme. They are not viewed as tools which may benefit a language teacher. Whilst the development of these attributes is not without challenge and they are viewed as difficult to master, the accompanying development of an academic identity is novel and also welcomed by some.

5.2 The subject knowledge conception

In this conception, the meaning given to graduate attributes is the acquisition of a body of knowledge. The horizon of awareness only extends hypothetically beyond the Masters programme, and the purpose is to acquire a body of subject knowledge. The application of this body of knowledge is not contextualised within a specific language teaching location, and employability is no more than an imagined future. Knowledge tends to be unquestioned and static. It is acquired from others who are perceived as more expert than the student. Competence as a language teacher can be demonstrated by the eventual academic qualification, in the form of the Masters degree.

Table 4 ***The anatomy of the subject knowledge conception***

Dimensions of variation		**Stage**

Orientation to employability	Attributes are oriented to subject knowledge, employability is hypothetical	Pre-employment
The structure of awareness		
External horizon	**Internal horizon**	
Development of attributes Masters programme	Lectures, workshops, expert others	
	The Focus of Awareness	**Elements missing from the focus of awareness**
	Body of disciplinary knowledge	Application of knowledge to defined language teaching contexts
Place of disciplinary theory and knowledge	Knowledge is immutable and embodied in certification; knowledge equates to teaching competence. Knowledge is evidenced through ability to define key concepts and theories.	
Perceptions of identity	Novice, pre-professional teacher	

Subject knowledge is perceived to be the return on undertaking study and the hallmark of a graduate. The extracts below illustrate this quite clearly:

Extract 20 Jill

> Because actually the primary purpose of my study is to get a Master's degree to help me handle that job.

Extract 21 Elsa

> I think this programme… most of us enter this programme for a degree and also knowledge.

The theories and concepts which constitute the subject knowledge are at the centre of the awareness but viewed in isolation from professional application. Understanding this knowledge seems to be limited to being able to define it and explain it within an academic context, for example, when participating in a programme workshop or reproducing it for an assignment. This conception is also premised on the idea that there is only one way of understanding ideas and that there is a correct answer which needs to be found and understood. The acquisition of subject knowledge is visibly important to the students on the programme and is conceived of as a priority in consideration of the attributes to be developed from their programme:

5.2.1 Orientation to employability

The relationship between the knowledge and deploying it in employment in a defined language teaching setting remains theoretical in this conception. The disciplinary

knowledge is viewed in an abstract manner: where employment is associated with disciplinary knowledge, it tends to be viewed as a hypothetical, more abstract future, lacking concrete examples of language teaching practicalities or considerations of its appropriateness for the context:

Extract 22 Karry

> First of all, is to get like, equip myself with the knowledge, with the essential knowledge to be a language teacher, and then it would inform our future practice... And also, this, for example, […] when I was a language learner, when I was in secondary school and they just teach like a PPP model or more like grammar translation teaching. And now it's… I feel like I was changing my mind and maybe I will use more a communicative approach if I will work as an English teacher.

We can also see this more abstract perspective when motivations for doing this programme are being discussed. The nature of the theories and concepts they are learning are not interrogated closely but rather are seen to be an answer to whatever practical puzzles may arise in the course of practice, without much consideration of real-life scenarios in context:

Extract 23 Annie

> From my perspective, first of all, is the academic development because when we choose this programme, it means that we want to learn the professional knowledge, the academic, like the academic books, the lectures that we couldn't, or we haven't read and been taught before in our undergraduate. Like gain the knowledge in-depth or in a broad way.

Extract 24 Elsa

> But I... I believe that, so when I become an English teacher, also to learn this theory is, yeah, although I didn't learn, my colleagues and my boss will order me or ask me to learn about it, in order to know more about our students, you know, like the.... motivation to how to, yeah, how to deal with students' motivation during their English learning. I think this theory is actually useful in... have a better understanding about our students.

5.2.2 Development of attributes

In this conception, the view of the development of subject knowledge as a GA is that it happens through the more conventional organisation of learning of a Masters degree programme. That is to say that there is an expectation that this disciplinary knowledge is acquired through attendance at lectures, seminars and workshops, seeming to align with a more traditional transmission view of teaching and learning.

As seen above, acquisition of the subject knowledge is prioritised in this conception and understood as an essential attribute of being a language teacher, as emphasised here where separating graduate attributes from the disciplinary knowledge base is queried when looking at the definition of graduate attributes:

Extract 25 Coke

> I don't think they should be separated. I think knowledge base is also very important parts. I think it's the most important part for the Masters study.

Moreover, not only is it an important attribute, it is also differentiated from other more generic attributes as explained here by this student:

Extract 26 Ann

> When it comes to what I talked before, independent thinking and critical thinking, I think that's general graduate attributes that every postgraduate student is supposed to have. And when it comes to specific programmes like us in [a] language education programme, we are supposed to have some teaching skills that could be different from those in, like, sports management. They don't have to have these attributes.

This is equated with a mastery of subject knowledge, viewing the disciplinary knowledge as an incontrovertible, defined canon to be learned as is illustrated here where its acquisition is quantified:

Extract 27 Alice

> I suppose I have developed around 60 percent because I found that, based on the features of the taught program and also the final assignment of each course, it seems that there is not so much need to fully understand what the teachers have taught and you just choose one topic for your assignment. You can just focus on one topic and ignore the rest parts which don't have connection with your chosen topic.

Not being able to demonstrate a full command of the disciplinary knowledge is foregrounded in this conception when programme assessments are discussed. Although the student above can see benefits to understanding one subject in more depth, being asked to write one essay on one topic from a taught course, rather than being asked to demonstrate everything you know about a specific topic is central to their awareness of graduate attributes. The extract above continues:

Extract 28 Alice

> But also because of the limited time and the heavy workload so I couldn't, and I don't have the ability to do this ...all the concepts, all the theories and the

> concept I have learned. And it's also a good choice. But it seems that you have just focused on one topic in each course. And it's hard to say so...so I say I probably get 60 percent of that academic development.

5.2.3 Place of disciplinary theory and knowledge

It can be seen that assessments are considered as a means to demonstrate acquisition of the knowledge rather than a way to develop it. Being able to do this aligns with their understanding of what it means to be a professional language teacher. In this view, knowledge seems not to be something which can be constructed or redefined. Rather, it appears to have an immutable form and is to be found mainly in authorised, sanctioned sources, for example, in journal articles or directly from lecturers or those perceived to have authority as this extract below illustrates. Evaluating knowledge and reconstructing it with your own contextual insights, even when this is the expectation, is unfamiliar and troubling:

Extract 29 Ann

> If I approach my own thinking into [the assignment], even I'm, actually most times I write my own thinking into the essay, I kind of feel afraid because I don't know if I was right or wrong [...] I'm not famous people in this field, but the result is that every time I put my own thinking to the essay, I will get higher marks.

The prominent role of subject knowledge, as defined by others, in being competent to practise professional language teaching is further exemplified here. When this student realises that, compared to English language teaching, she has found little theory to inform her future practice as a teacher of Chinese:

Extract 30 Dora

> But there is not too much stuff or not too much theory about Chinese language learning. So, actually, this, I feel like a little bit disappointed because probably it means there is not too much teaching resources and the Mandarin language is not like English language that has such long history. But when I realized, OK, there is not a theory about Mandarin teaching, it’s like I don't have too much foundation. I still can't just borrow ideas from different articles.

Drawing on the knowledge of more experienced, local teachers is offered as a solution to the lack of theoretical underpinnings but, interestingly, still seems not to be seen as the ideal or viewed with much enthusiasm or conviction that this is as desirable as having acquired knowledge straight from a book or a lecture within the context of the Masters programme:

Extract 31 Dora

> I still need to maybe depend on the local teacher's behaviour. Yes, it feels like ok. […] But since I don't have such theory, I probably need to, you know, borrow, borrow more stuff from the real Chinese teacher because the experienced teacher can solve our problem. Also, there is no theory behind their way. Yeah. So, I feel this is I cannot acquire about the Mandarin teaching.

Whilst the local teachers may have the experience, this seems to be viewed as a deficit model of language teaching competence, and not having acquired this theoretical subject knowledge runs counter to the expectation of attributes which are developed through being a graduate of a specific programme. Academic theory is privileged over context-informed experience.

This conception becomes more evident when students discuss the need for them to adjust to different views of conceptualising how knowledge is acquired during the Masters programme. Their experience of how teachers teach on their Masters programme does not align with their own expectation of how they will learn the subject knowledge in their classes at university. For those students, this means being told 'the right answer' as illustrated by Dora below:

Extract 32 Dora

> I think for our Asian students, the teacher means authority […] But also give us a model, we are eager to get the right answer. Not right. We are eager to get the, you know, the answer from the teachers […] because we think a teacher's behaviour, teachers talking are the perfect, are the correct. So, in the beginning, we have such, you know, ideology, we have some habits. So, in the beginning, not only me, I also ask other classmates, we have gossip about a different teacher's […]. Yeah. We have gossip like that, always saying, "oh, this teacher, he or she talked nothing in the class".

The subject knowledge conception is also revealed as they share the strategies they deploy in order to overcome this perceived lack of direction from their lecturers. Interaction with their classmates in workshops is an opportunity to better understand the theories and concepts being talked about in their lectures albeit driven by the sense that there must be a correct answer which they have not heard:

Extract 33 Anna

> Some questions, there are no specific answers or there are not only one answer for question. I mean, it's maybe, I don't know if it's due to cultural differences, but I was eager to find out one answer as a student and for a teacher, we also are taught to, I don't know to give the students the only one [answer]

Anna continues:

> I think during the workshop we can hear from others, from other students […] I was used to thinking or to answer in a right or standard way but actually it is different from my own experience.

Their strong desire to acquire and understand this knowledge as it is presented to them, and their conceptualisation of it as an important graduate attribute is further underlined by the choice to use their first language to fully grasp key ideas:

Extract 34 Alice

> And more importantly because we are Chinese, there is no language barriers.

Despite their English language competence, using their first language may be seen as a safety net which supports their acquisition of the disciplinary knowledge. This conceptualisation of graduate attributes as subject knowledge is framed in the frustration they experience when their expectation of their lecturers as transmitters of this knowledge is thwarted by what seems like an inadequate the mode of instruction:

Extract 35 Dora

> Yes, we learned nothing. Oh, we pay so much money and learn nothing.

In this conception of graduate attributes, development of knowledge is done by the expert other: here, the peer collaboration is not so much viewed as a means of deeply and critically interrogating a subject. Rather, it seems to be borne from anxiety to understand the conceptual essentials.

5.2.4 Perceptions of professional self and identity

As suggested by the approach to knowledge acquisition, identity here sits between that of being the student and being a professional language teacher and may be described as a pre-professional identity. Acquisition of the subject knowledge is seen as a pre-cursor to becoming the competent language teacher that they envision and is often viewed through a future lens, even when the participant has already acquired some language teaching experience, as can be seen in the extract here:

Extract 36 Jill

> […] I am really interested in this career and I aspire to be a language teacher. So, I think if I just take this programme I would be more professional in teaching. I have been a language teacher for three years and I think from the comments from my students and my boss, I think I did a really great job in my career life. But actually, sometimes I just was in a panic when students questioned, ‘what’s your major?’ And I would sometimes

> not give a direct answer. I just said 'oh yes'. Because I don't want to tell them that I am a student from a biology major.

The function of the programme is viewed as providing the requisite knowledge base in order to practise language teaching. In this conception, the living language classroom with real students is not foregrounded and teaching situations are viewed in a more abstract way. Focus is on the imagined self as a professional language teacher. This relates to their view of what a competent language teacher knows and is able to do. Without the requisite body of knowledge, their identity as a language teacher is not felt to be fully developed.

5.3 The language practitioner skills conception

The structure of awareness		
External horizon	**Internal horizon**	
Language classroom	**The Focus of Awareness**	**Elements missing from the focus of awareness**
	Being work-ready (to teach)	Critical application of knowledge to context and purpose

Foregrounded in the language practitioner skills conception of graduate attributes is the ability to perform the job of being a language teacher by carrying out the specific tasks expected of a language teacher in the classroom with students. Knowing how to teach students to achieve linguistic competence in the chosen language is an attribute which students expect to have acquired once they have graduated from this specific programme.

Table 5 ***Anatomy of the language practitioner skills conception***

Dimensions of variation		Stage
Orientation to employability	Attributes are practical teaching skills, professional competence to be demonstrated and deployed in the language classroom	Employment
Development of attributes	Practice, experience	
Place of disciplinary theory and knowledge	Knowledge transfers from the theoretical, to the language classroom	
Perceptions of identity	Professional language teacher identity: employment-oriented	

5.3.1 Orientation to employability

In this conception of attributes, developing the practical, technical skills of a language teacher is clearly linked to work settings with an orientation to employment: being a work-ready graduate is in the foreground of their awareness. This can be viewed from two perspectives: firstly, from a very practical standpoint of being successful in finding work and being ready to navigate recruitment processes; and secondly, once a language teaching position is secured, the focus shifts to being able to perform the role in the classroom.

If we consider the first perspective, significance is attached to the need to demonstrate competence for the posts they are applying for. Being a graduate is considered to be evidence of that as explained by this student:

Extract 37 Pablo

> So, majority of people that I knew went into Higher Education, I would say 90 percent of the people that I know went to university to, or more even, to get a job, to be able to get a job.

Degrees are viewed as indispensable in preparation to secure employment. Pablo describes what they thought the bachelor's degree would bring:

Extract 38 Pablo

> I thought that after I finished these four years of my Bachelors, I will be kind of a professional, like I will have a profession, or I will have abilities and skills that would be helpful in a particular profession.

The same motivation for undertaking a Masters is also articulated here:

Extract 39 Jill

> […] actually, the primary purpose of my study is to get a Master's degree to help me handle that job. As for skill, actually, my previous major is not related to language or education at all. My previous major is biology. Yeah. [Oh?] But I am really interested in this career and I aspire to be a language teacher. So, I think if I just take this programme, I would be more professional in teaching.

The belief that being a graduate implies being in possession of desirable attributes comes more sharply into focus when attention turns to the specifics of recruitment. There is an awareness of the selection criteria and processes which will determine whether they are deemed employable as language teachers. One participant talks about the interview process, noting the importance of qualifications and teaching competence:

Extract 40 Alice

> And also, the teaching ability and the professional certificate is important. As for the teaching ability, for the teacher interviews, you'll need to have a mock class, and it's the essential part to evaluate the results of your teaching and where you should go for teaching.

From this, we can see that, in addition to the essential professional certificate, the practical classroom skills are prized and being able to demonstrate this during the recruitment process is key to securing a language teacher position in one of the more sought-after schools in their region.

This conception of graduate attributes, signifying work-readiness, also emerges when participants evaluate the extent to which they feel the programme has prepared them for jobs as language teachers. For example, when lamenting her lack of improvement in her own English level, this participant worries that this will be problematic during her job search:

Extract 41 Elsa

> I think it's also can be a problem when I find jobs, you know, if I want to find jobs in public school. And I think the speaking abilities that I now ...I have now is enough for me to, you know, to cope with the interview or something like that. But if I want to find some jobs in private school, they prefer someone with some light American accent or a British accent. I have Chinese English. I didn't have, like, a beautiful American accent or British accent.

Understandably, linguistic competence is salient and foregrounded as a must-have attribute for a language teacher, with some varieties, sadly, enjoying more prestige than others.

5.3.2 Developing attributes

In holding this teaching skills conception of graduate attributes, practice is prominently placed. As participants seek to enhance their employability, teaching practice experience is frequently in the foreground. Irrespective of a positive or negative evaluation of their own readiness for the language classroom, the conceptualisation of attributes as practical teaching skills emerges consistently:

Extract 42 Ann

> We have learned a lot of teaching skills from this programme and as we graduate, we will put into practice these skills like how to teach listening, how to teach reading. These skills can be transformed from our programme courses into our real classes.

Although confident in the development of this necessary attribute, the participant above does not indicate much consideration of how those skills may be transformed in the future teaching post. Missing from her awareness is a critical application of knowledge to that context. Other classmates are less optimistic about the development of teaching skills, and more critical of this aspect of the programme:

Extract 43 Annie

> I need more experience opportunities for me to try to use some theories I have learned from the programme. I know that […] we had the, how you say, the micro teaching. I think not enough for us because micro-teaching... because it's micro and just ten minutes for two people and every time I just said five minutes and it is done and I have finished and for my partner and actually what I learned more just... I learned more from my volunteer job than school. So, I think we need more practice opportunities to have real teaching experience for us to think about deeper, about the theories and the practice.

Extract 44 Brad

> Well, I always complain about micro-teaching and I always yeah, I think this is a good moment to say that. I think that maybe practical skills, yes, more practical skills. Yes. Yes. That's what we need as well. More practical skills, because I think that even though we're giving micro teaching, that it's not it's not really... in the classroom observation. I mean, maybe what I gained from that is like I'd realize, OK, this is reality. And now I don't know if I can actually apply all I have learned. So now that... now that I say that, I think […] more practicality, if that's the word, I'd like to have an opportunity to actually use it. It's like the micro teaching was good. I really liked it. But I think that at the time was like, too short then and I understand. Yeah. It was too, it was too micro! It was in pairs. So, yeah, so basically five minutes. Basically, what we do in five minutes is just explain what a class would be like and not really develop it. So yep. Yeah. I think that we need that, we need more practice.

In some cases, this examination of practice leads to questions about the purpose of universities, outside the realm of the programme itself. Though their conclusions may vary,

these two extracts reveal a more important question about the nature and purpose of a Masters programme. The first illustrates the feeling that a university programme may not need to be only academic:

Extract 45 Pablo

> So, I know we were just wondering if maybe why not have a more practical focus on universities if there's a demand for it? If that's what people need? […] Maybe, maybe it would be more practical to some extent.

In this extract, the participant discusses her choice to do a Masters over a more practical qualification such as the Cambridge CELTA:

Extract 46 Alison

> And so I spoke to quite a few of my classmates about the CELTA and they were interested in… in doing the course because it's, you know, much more practical when you want to learn English. It teaches you how to do it. And I just…that's one thing that I thought before I started this, that because it's a Masters programme […] It's better to do this than the CELTA if you want to teach English. But now I realise that, no, it was completely different. I had different expectations.

Practice opportunities, or their lack, emerges clearly and is privileged by the participants. The approach taken to developing attributes on a Masters programme is firmly in the spotlight, underlining the view that teaching practice is a cornerstone of attribute development for language teachers. Experience is developed in practice, and, for many of the participants, this is the missing link. Practice is the key for them to unlock the theories which will allow them to feel that they are competent practitioners in the classroom.

5.3.3 Place of disciplinary theory and knowledge

In the teaching skills conception of graduate attributes, knowledge moves from being the theoretical book-bound body of knowledge to the practical knowledge required in the classroom. This can be seen from the importance assigned to practical skills in discussion and the prominence given to different elements of the course such as visits to local schools, live observations of teaching or the practical micro-teaching sessions. Seeing teaching in action, rather than simply engaging with the research literature or hearing about it second-hand in their lectures is foregrounded. Talking about the micro-teaching sessions which the students do as part of one core course on the programme, and the visits to local schools which are organised for them, illustrates that students are satisfied to see teaching in action, arguably considering this to be the most relevant part of their learning:

Extract 47 Zfich

> We also learned through doing something and we really learn much through, like, doing micro teaching and also visiting schools. And these give us more chance to...how do you say it? Also, to develop our deeper understandings, because we can only understand the theory better when we really put it into practice. We really use it.

In this conception, knowledge is what teachers do in the classroom and how they translate the theory into practice. Being able to do the job is prioritised, and disciplinary knowledge appears to only become relevant when it is integrated into the classroom practice. This can be seen in the way the relationship between the two is discussed here with the students discouraged by not being able to manage the application of specific language teaching theories or methodologies to their practice in the language classroom:

Extract 48 Hare

> Because in the theories, I have learnt a lot, like, very fast. It's very new. Like something about translanguaging. And actually, we know these theories, but we really find it very difficult to use it in our practice. And we would run across a lot of problems when we use it. Quite a lot of problems. And I think I just like... I still don't know how to, like, use these theories in our practice. And I can understand in our practice lessons, we like practise how to... like writing some plans or because of the time limits or the amount of us. So, we just get some opportunities to do some micro-teaching some things and but it's more about how to conduct a lesson. So, in this period, we don't know how to apply some specific theories into this practice, we just like draw on our past experience, like how to begin, how to teach and how to end a class. And we don't draw on what we have learnt. Maybe the problem is on us because we don't, because we haven't drawn on what we learnt.

Extract 49 Annie

> I think I just I want to use some theories I've learned from our class like TBLT or PPP teaching pedagogy. But I find I cannot use them correctly or totally? Just like when I use... I want to use, I tend to use PPP pedagogy, but actually I just use present and practice no produce because I find children at that age, they just focus on some games they have played some interesting content. But when I finish my class, I find I cannot say like... their birthday in Chinese. They just know how to say hello, goodbye, something we learned in the first class, but we have finished fifth class. So, I think maybe the produce is not reflected in my class.

Extract 50 Zfich

> I think maybe there's hardly think there's hardly no […] I mean, these courses...if the content of these courses, this can hardly be transferable, because if I'm supposed to teach English at secondary school, it's… I think it's not realistic to teach them what is methodology, what is ontology, what is epistemology?

This tension between the desire to integrate the learning from the programme into authentic classroom practice is clearly in focus within this conceptualisation. It manifests as a source of anxiety and frustration as the participants share their thoughts about what

being a skilled teacher means and how they can perform that role once in employment. This is very strongly felt by this participant who struggles to see any connections or even how to make sense of this disconnect:

Extract 51 Coke

> Well, to be honest, similar with those former question, I think I am kind of disappointed, disappointed at what I have learnt because I think it is too theoretical, too academic. It's not practical enough. But I do think there must be something that's useful for me, for example, the critical thinking. As I said, I am very careful about the information, but I think it doesn't… it's not so relevant to [...] to the occupation. So, sorry. I just can't think of much to the professional practice of the career. Because I think what I have learnt is more...it is like something very, very academic and very theoretical. And also, it doesn't fit my context.

This reveals a more extreme version of the teaching skills conception. What is interesting is that although there is an understanding of critical thinking, the idea of exercising this critical thinking does not appear to offer a solution to resolving the issue of how to make use of the theory in practice.

For others, the issue is less forcefully expressed but doubts remain as to whether they can find a way to navigate the path between theoretical concepts and their classrooms. Suggested solutions are thought to be in the design of the programme itself. For example, when thinking about the theory-practice nexus, this participant says:

Extract 52 Brad

> Like the fact that those theories sometimes were not applicable doesn't mean that they were not they were not useful, or they were useless. But I think that it's mostly about providing examples, in which or how we can apply this in different contexts, not just in a context that is not real.

Here the responsibility is passed to the course leaders to integrate more examples in their course materials. Others take a broader view of how they might find a way to bring theory and practice together:

Extract 53 Annie

> Maybe it led me to think about the practice and the theory more... how to say... I think it's really difficult for me to relate the theory with the practice. Sometimes I just want to do something like that, but the truth is a different case. Yeah. So, I don't know what the problem was. Because is it the reason because I don't have too many experience? I know how to translate that theory into practice? Or maybe I need to learn more theory?

Similarly, other participants are conscious of that gap between what is learned and how language teaching is then executed in the local setting but remain unsure how to resolve that:

Extract 54 Caitlin

> What I'm trying to say is that. I think sometimes what I ...what I'm learning now on this programme. I'm not so sure how can I apply that into that context.

Extract 55 Elsa

> So, most of our courses learn about teaching theories or learning some concepts. I think it's not enough for us to apply in our English teacher classroom because you cannot teach these theories to your high school students.

Essential to resolving this problem, is practice. In order to feel that they are competent classroom following their graduation, the lack of authentic teaching practice opportunities embedded within the programme appears as one of the main causes of their sense of feeling ill-prepared for the language classroom. As noted above, the additional elements of the programme such as school visits and micro-teaching contribute, to some extent, to their understanding of language teaching and how it is done. However, in the teaching skills conception of graduate attributes, these are not enough for them to feel like competent professionals. This leads to a consideration of knowledge development and the role of practice in achieving this.

5.3.4 Perceptions of professional self and identity

A professional identity is discursively developed in this conception, partly through an explicit articulation as they describe themselves as language teachers as shown in these extracts which are contextualised with expressions of identity.

Extract 56 Julie

> As a language teacher, I hope I can get my little linguistic competence improved in this programme.

Extract 57 Brad

> I mean, as a language teacher with the students, I think of my context where I used to teach.

This professional identity as language teachers is also discernible in their evaluation of the teaching experiences that they have had. These self-appraisals tend to be focused on less positive aspects of their practice, where they may feel they lack the necessary skills to

teach successfully. Nonetheless, the language teacher identity is still espoused and one which they can relate to. They aspire to inhabit and to practise the role of language teacher, and to belong to that community.

5.4. The reflective citizen-practitioner conception

In the reflective citizen-practitioner conception, graduate attributes are integrated and applied to the disciplinary area. Attributes such as critical thinking interact with the disciplinary knowledge base and are engaged in order to question the purpose of language learning, the role of the language educator and how language teaching is practised in context.

*Table 6. **Anatomy of the reflective citizen-practitioner conception***

The structure of awareness		
External horizon	**Internal horizon**	
Language Education as a discipline as it interacts with Society	**The Focus of Awareness**	**Elements missing from the focus of awareness**
	Purposeful personal and professional lives, societal contributions	-

Dimensions of variation		**Stage**
Orientation to employability	Attributes are oriented to how language teaching work can interact with society	Employment and citizenship
Development of attributes	Reflected practice, observation of alternative practices, collaboration	
Place of disciplinary theory and knowledge	Knowledge can be constructed, interrogated and created. Knowledge expands to include non-linguistic issues; linguistic knowledge as a carrier of other types of world knowledge	
Perceptions of identity	Whole-person oriented	

5.4.1 Orientation to Employability

Employment remains in focus in this conception of graduate attributes, but the horizon extends beyond the routine practices of language teaching and concentrates on the work of the language teacher as they interact as a citizen in society. Attention is no longer fixed solely on students' language acquisition but turns instead to ways in which this work can become meaningful, both to the individual practitioner, their students and to the wider society outside the classroom. Individuals are open to new ways of thinking about their work and of being a language teacher rather than just conforming to an accepted view of what the teacher's purpose is.

Extract 58 Yoki

> And also, you teach like day after day, it seems like it's always the same thing. So, I think to really bring you back on it, you make changes. You make the job meaningful and valuable not only for students to learn, but also for yourself. I think that's really important and for me, because if I choose to do this job as a career for decades, it's really important in that how I can live by it. How I can live my... how I can really work on it to keep it interesting and very meaningful to me.

5.4.2 Attributes Development

In this conception, knowledge is developed through exposure to, and reflection on, other ways of doing, and also by taking a critical approach to the subject of study. The language teaching landscape of practice is opened up and alternative methods are observed and explored. Watching other practitioners during school visits and partnering with peers during the micro-teaching sessions or volunteer teaching introduces different perspectives. Reflecting on how language teaching is accomplished by others and comparing it with their own experience has primacy. Boundaries between different practices become less clear as we learn here from these views about the role of interaction within the Masters programme:

Extract 59 Yoki

> Like, sometimes we do, like, team discussion. And sometimes we discuss with our partners to share ideas, to exchange ideas. Sometimes it may seem like meaningless because you ...what you speak is what you have already known, but you can really gain ideas that's totally surprising and something you have never thought about.

Extract 60 Zfich

> Because sometimes I... what I'm thinking is just very limited. And it's better for me to understand what the other people is thinking and how they will view this topic. Or maybe they can try something really, really interesting and that I might ignored before.

The experience of working as a voluntary teaching assistant in one of the university's language departments also affords an opportunity for these postgraduates to think from different perspectives:

Extract 61 Avery

> So, through the experiences, I observed the actual teaching practices of Japanese language teachers and the actual classroom interactions of the current field of Japanese language education. So, in the classroom, there are many students who have diverse background and diverse academic and cultural backgrounds and the same goes for the teachers, instructors, of course. So, the environment gave me many insights and really many impressions of how to see the world, how to see the extra interactions from many different perspectives.

In this conception, these experiences are central to development of a more critical stance towards language teaching. They are beginning to arrive at the conclusion that developing the linguistic competence of their students is only one aspect of their work. Having the opportunity to observe a different kind of language teaching has the potential to inspire a different approach to their work when they start their careers, although the challenge of this is still acknowledged. Avery also talks about the lack of flexibility in a school curriculum where the focus is on learning the language rules for exams:

Extract 62 Avery

> In language teaching, it's a bit different, like, in students' compositions or students, for example, test results. It's sometimes hard to find the space of criticality. Like the linguistic content is, sometimes, how to say having really much emphasis on that. But in higher education, it's really important to think about how to be critical even in language education, for example, with using the ideas of critical pedagogy or critical literacy or, if possible, critical language awareness, although it may require a high linguistic knowledge.

Whilst such a critical approach may not be easily applied for early-stage teachers, the appetite and the enquiring mindset is still noticeable. In this conception, what graduate attributes represent becomes more fluid and the idea that graduate attributes may be something more fixed is queried, as this explicit assertion demonstrates:

Extract 63 Ann

> I don't think it's appropriate for a school to set fixed standard, fixed criteria with a standard for graduates. Graduates have the right to become what they want to. They look up to their tutors, look around their peers, and they learn from these people as well

> as they learn from courses, and they finally decide what [they] want to be. Not everyone has to be the same.

Here, identity development is enriched by the range of influences they are exposed to, but the graduate here is reflective and critical, adopting a more agentive position.

5.4.3 Place of Disciplinary Theory and Knowledge

Knowledge is viewed not simply as the disciplinary knowledge which underpins language teaching practice in the classroom. Participants are beginning to arrive at a more complex understanding of knowledge which goes beyond that which they need to teach their language as seen here:

Extract 64 Yoki

> If it's only one way or if it's only like a passive way of learning and it can be fairly boring. It can be really boring because it felt like knowledge is knowledge but is just words, it's not ideas. It's something you can make action. You can make changes. Maybe in a political way or in a social way or in the society. So, if you are thinking critically, either in writing or in speaking or in other output, you can really make things different.

They are also beginning to recognise the potential for language teaching as a site for exploration of social norms and values, not only for themselves but also for their students. In describing her experience of the school visit organised for the students of this programme, one participant is surprised by her observation of a language class where it seems that the teacher is covering very little material:

Extract 65 Caitlin

> Because when I was listening to the English lessons. That's kind of like a Chinese in Chinese lesson. So, I noticed that the teacher was just focusing on one passage and just focusing on one question in the whole 50 minutes. That's totally... that's completely not possible in China.

Talking to the teacher afterwards, she learns what the teaching objectives were:

Extract 66 Caitlin

> […] she told me like the purpose of this class was to help them to understand the chapter, but also to help them build the compassion. I think that's really important. That's just something that never happened to me in a learning process. Yes. So that's really inspiring.

This reframing of what language teaching can be is striking and this fourth conception differs markedly from the others. The focus of awareness shifts noticeably away from the more technical conceptualisation of attributes as academic skills, subject knowledge, and language teaching practices. In addition to these, being able to query received knowledge and to reimagine its application comes to the forefront. Similarly, in the next extract, the participant notes how she has been influenced by seeing how the language being taught can be a vehicle to carry other non-linguistic content and learning objectives. She describes how a former classmate from her undergraduate programme embeds other societal issues in her language teaching materials:

Extract 67 Ann

> I have noticed that she showed her PPT and course content on her social internet. And I have noticed that she keeps teaching her student gender equality, sexual quality and avoiding sexual bias into her classes. And I think that's good and not only for us language teachers.

Integrating language teaching with wider societal issues which can influence the personal development of individuals illustrates a view of graduate attributes as transformational. That is to say that the consequence of being a graduate can transform your own thinking but can also be viewed as effecting change in those you teach. She suggests that students can focus on more than just their academic performance, saying:

Extract 68 Ann

> Yeah, you should...you shouldn’t only teach your students knowledge from books. You should have to teach something maybe about values, that comes from ...that maybe mentioned from another course I took last semester, [name of course] and we have learned about critical analysis from this course. We talked about applying into teaching, especially reading class, you should ask students to think from the other's perspective. Think about the author's bias and also think about the meaning in the whole society.

5.4.4 Perceptions of Professional Self and Identity

In this conception of GAs, identity grows and builds on the previous conceptions which are restricted to the professional identity and the associated body of knowledge. Here, identity shifts to encompass not just the practitioner identity but also a more holistic view of themselves as a citizen in society. This perspective is implicit in the previous extract in which the possibility of teaching more than just language is contemplated although the teacher identity is still at the forefront. The sense of an identity that can move beyond a student or a teacher persona is more explicit in these extracts where the participants voice their new understandings of themselves as multi-faceted beings. This can be seen in the

following extracts where the participants share reflections on feeling different as a result of the programme:

Extract 69 Zfich

> So, when I came here, I just feel like I'm really an adult […] and I could take full responsibility for my life and just decide on everything. I used to bill myself as a student and students should listen to what teachers say and take notes […]. But now what I'm doing is not really listen to teacher but having my own thinking.

Similarly, another respondent considers how what they have learned on the course will influence them once they are working as a language teacher and how it might be applied. In doing so, they reflect on their identity but also their teaching context:

Extract 70 Yiqia

> How I will use these qualities, how I will present myself, on one hand depends on me which is a new me influenced by the whole learning process. And it also depends on the environment that I put myself in.

The same participant talks about how learning on all the different courses has changed the way they see themselves:

Extract 71 Yiqia

> I mean I can gain different, new parts of me like different new identities and myself during those courses […].

For this participant, the experience of learning to manage work deadlines and tasks are an example of the ways that they have evolved, and they add:

Extract 72 Yoki

> So those are the things that work to build and reshape your personality. And it really helps actually. So, the academic skills and also your personal skills.

In this conception of graduate attributes, there is a tangible sense of identity development. From being a more passive recipient of knowledge to someone who reflects on what they have been taught and who has agency to shape knowledge.

Chapter Summary

The central question of this research was to find out what meaning graduate attributes (GAs) have for international postgraduate students on a second language teacher education

(SLTE) programme. Through phenomenographic analysis, resulting in the production of an outcome space, four different conceptions of graduate attributes, as experienced by postgraduate international students, were identified: the academic skills conception; the subject knowledge conception; the language practitioner skills conception; and the citizen-practitioner attributes conception. The fact that it is the students themselves who offer their perspectives and that they are included in such research is important: as discussed in chapter two, much is written about the international student. It is only right that their own voices contribute to the debates about teaching and learning in the HE sector. These four conceptions offer a finer-grained understanding of how these students conceive of graduate attributes (GAs) and the meanings that they ascribe to them and offer an answer to the question asked at the start of this research project. The identification of these conceptions yields rich detail about the ways that academic and professional identities are developed. In addition, a deeper understanding of their beliefs about knowledge development and construction develops. It is acknowledged that there is certainly some crossover with sectoral and institutional understandings of graduate attributes. However, what has become clear is that for this group of international students, their conceptualisation of attributes is more pragmatically focused on the acquisition of the discipline-specific knowledge and skills required to carry out their future language teaching roles. What is more concerning than the limited alignment between the institutional and student view of GAs is the articulation of the obvious challenges they experience on their academic sojourn in achieving their goals, as well as what constrains the development of GAs.

This 'map of the territory' (Säljo, 1988, p. 44) provides the starting point for a deeper consideration and interpretation of the implications for my practice. Considered reflections can contribute to, and inform, my own professional practice in the context of this programme. Indeed, it is its potential to facilitate this more critical reflection and analysis which is a differentiating feature of the professional doctorate (Wellington & Sikes, 2006)). This reflection and interpretation follows in the next chapter.

Chapter six: discussion

Chapter Introduction

It is the aim of this chapter to offer an interpretation of the findings presented in chapter five. This is underpinned by two main reflections. Firstly, that the construct of GAs is considerably richer and more nuanced than the rather flat one-dimensional frameworks (described in chapter two) that can most often be found within institutional strategy, policy and marketing documents. Secondly, and more significantly, it is proposed that the current frameworks privilege the identification and enumeration of the specific attributes but tend to neglect the graduate themselves. In the frameworks presented by institutions, the envisioned graduate is also portrayed one-dimensionally: an idealised figure, with little regard for their hinterland, pre-loaded with the necessary attributes to navigate a world of work, whatever it may encompass. It is not being suggested here that the frameworks cannot usefully orient curriculum and pedagogy to some extent. However, what is undoubtedly problematic is that the static framework on a university web page does not adequately capture the lived experience of the international graduates' own highly situated and contextualised previous learning nor their trajectory on their Masters programme. Moreover, it cannot fully account for their future professional contexts as they negotiate new identities and navigate unfamiliar practices. What the phenomenographic outcome space has offered is a more detailed picture of these international students' sojourns and an opportunity to better understand the different ways they understand graduate attributes and the meaning they give them. More importantly, it provides a foundation for discussion of what this means for practice in the HE environment.

The chapter begins with a consideration of the extent of alignment between the students' own conceptualisations of GAs and those included in institutional frameworks, with a focus on academic skills and subject knowledge. It is then argued that while there is some convergence between the two parties in their focus on these two areas, achieving competence both as a junior scholar and as a language teaching practitioner is a more complex endeavour than suggested by a GAF as they navigate their membership of multiple communities of practice (CoP). This is then followed by an explicatory account of the different CoPs which international students encounter, considering both the academic and professional spheres. The discussion then moves on to examine, through the lens of Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2015) landscape of practice, the way in which claims to competence within these different CoPs may be considered to be both constrained and enabled as students learn on their SLTE programme, and specifically the

development of GAs. The implications of the findings are considered separately in chapter seven.

6.1 Graduate attributes: searching for common ground

The quest to find out what meaning GAs had for the students on this SLTE programme began with something of an intuition that the term was not one which would have much currency for them. Indeed, as is highlighted in chapter four's methodology discussion, the conversation around the provided definition of GAs, showed that this was the case. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that, while the term *graduate attribute* itself was certainly novel for all but one of the 20 participants, the concept of graduating from the university after their programme of study with some newly acquired 'qualities, skills and understandings' (Bowden, Hart, King, Trigwell, & Watts, 2000) was still meaningful. Despite their unfamiliarity with the terminology and having no or little awareness of the existence of the institutional GAF, all, to a greater or lesser extent, were able to articulate their own conception of the attributes expected of a graduate. What is noteworthy is that there is some convergence between what the sector HE perceives of as desirable attributes and those described by the students in this study: in academic skills and in subject knowledge. This alignment is clearly highlighted in the first two conceptions and what is foregrounded in their structures of awareness as they discuss the phenomenon.

Table 7 ***Focus of awareness***

Conception of Graduate Attributes	**Focus of Awareness**
Conception 1: Academic Skills Conception	Successful completion of programme, passing assignments
Conception 2: Subject Knowledge Conception	Body of disciplinary knowledge

The focus of awareness which characterises these two conceptions is instrumental in beginning to make visible the learning trajectories of these students, showing how they experience the phenomenon of GAs. These two areas are now considered, starting with the conceptualisation of academic skills as an umbrella attribute.

The prominence given to academic language and literacy development by the students was explicitly articulated throughout the interviews in response to the question about which attributes they thought they had acquired:

Extract 73 Elsa

Well, academic factors […] that's the most [of things] I learned from this programme.

Extract 74 Alison

I think they're mostly academic, to be honest.

Sometimes students talked more specifically about particular academic skills. For example, learning to think more critically, reading sources, or being able to write academic essays were all identified, as illustrated by these extracts from the data.

Extract 75 Avery

When I heard the word graduate attributes, the idea of critical thinking came up in my mind.

Extract 76 Jill

Yeah, like the skill of academic writing.

Extract 77 Yoki

And also like your reading capabilities […] and reading extensive[ly], I think those are most important skills and good qualities that I learned.

This aligns with the various mappings of GAs described in chapter two (Hounsell, 2011; Oliver & Jorre de St Jorre, 2018; Wong, Chiu, Copsey-Blake, and Nikolopoulou, 2021), where the importance of acquiring academic skills to both understand and communicate knowledge was commonly found across frameworks. The salience accorded to academic language and literacies may at first also seem to indicate an encouraging alignment between the student and the sectoral perspective. However, as was indicated in chapter five, their acquisition presented no small challenge and it is likely that their importance can be explained by other motivations, a point which will be discussed more fully in section 6.2.

The second identified conception emphasises the importance of disciplinary knowledge for these students as they prepare for their professional lives as language teachers. That it is afforded such significance by the students and conceived of as an attribute in its own right is striking when it is compared with one of the early conceptions of GAs, as articulated by Bowden, Hart, King, Trigwell, and Watts (2000):

> These attributes include, *but go beyond* (my italics), the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed the core of most university courses.

Although here it is also accorded the status of an attribute, other graduate attributes are visibly highlighted, and perhaps even promoted over the subject-specific knowledge (indicated by my italics). It may be argued that, in contrast to the collective conception of these international students, the role of subject knowledge and its relationship to GAs has been rather underplayed in the sector's frameworks, at least in their earlier articulations. This may simply be because the acquisition of subject knowledge has been viewed as a given, something which will happen with or without being included or accorded special status within a GAF. It is also only fair to recognise that, as described in chapter two, the understanding of GAs and how they may be developed has evolved with calls made for them to be more embedded and integrated within the subject content (Jones, 2009; 2013). Jones (2013, p. 62) rightly laments the influence of policy on pedagogy 'without a careful consideration of the contextual basis within which it [the policy] is positioned'. Nonetheless, even in this more nuanced argument, there is a seeming inevitability of knowledge acquisition as an outcome of a university degree. Moreover, there is still a lack of focus on the students themselves and what they bring to this context from their previous learning. It may well be possible for desirable attributes to be embedded and developed within the subject knowledge and the disciplinary context. However, this supposes that this content is first easily accessed, understood, and applied by those international students who find themselves here, at the intersection of academic literacy and subject knowledge attributes. As the resulting conceptions of GAs described in the previous chapter would suggest, the taken-for-grantedness of disciplinary knowledge development and acquisition does not entirely hold up to scrutiny.

Adopting Säljo's (1988, p. 44) characterisation of the outcome space as 'a map of a territory', a picture has emerged instead of a future graduate located within a complex topography of, at times, conflicting academic and professional practices, which reach across and beyond the boundaries of their UK Masters programme. It is worth a reminder here that the outcome space, as well as showing the range of variations in conceptions of the phenomenon, can also be understood as a nested structure on its vertical axis, with each conception related to the other. It is therefore important to keep in mind that these are the collective conceptions of the targeted group. Through their descriptions of these attributes as they are experienced on this SLTE programme, and their accounts of their efforts to

develop them, a nuanced and multidimensional relation between GAs and international postgraduate students is revealed.

The demands of their high stakes international Masters sojourn require them to re-examine the learning which has moulded their identity thus far and necessitate navigation across a landscape of both familiar and unfamiliar practices. As they traverse different academic and professional communities of practice (CoPs), beliefs about what it means to be, not only a competent postgraduate student but also a competent language practitioner, are shaken. Academic study habits and ways of being a student, developed over several years no longer seem wholly applicable. Previously held, tacit, assumptions about the nature of language teaching and learning surface and are called into question. As they participate to various degrees in each of these communities, and make tentative claims to competence within them, developing graduate attributes is undoubtedly a demanding enterprise for these international students.

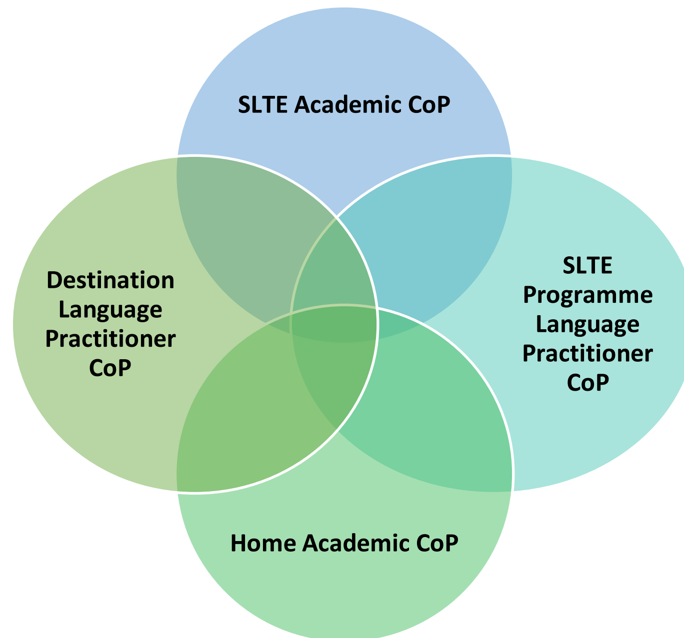
Through identification of their different conceptions of GAs, what becomes clearer is the existence of multiple, overlapping Communities of Practice (CoPs), where the academic meets the professional. Within these different CoPs students are trying to find their place and grappling with a dual identity as a student but also as a language teacher. Compounding this complexity is that, for this group of students, these academic and professional CoPs may also be considered to have a dual aspect. That is to say, participation in an academic community in a UK HEI sits alongside membership of an academic community in their home locations, acquired over time in other study contexts such as their undergraduate degrees. Moreover, this duality is mirrored in the professional communities in which they participate: the home community of language teachers but also the community of language teachers as it is constructed through their learning on the Masters programme. In the following section, these different CoPs will be described, leading into a discussion of both how this multi-membership locates international students in a complex and textured landscape of practices but also how it interacts with the acquisition and development of GAs.

6.2 Communities of practice

The following diagram represents, at a macro-level, the different CoPs in which international students find themselves participating, to varying degrees. As can be seen, each circle represents a CoP: two academic CoPs, one which represents their home academic CoP, and one which represents the SLTE programme academic CoP. Similarly,

there are two language practitioner CoPs, one which represents the CoP of language practitioners which is discursively constructed through the SLTE programme, and the other which is the CoP which they are projecting themselves into as future language practitioners.

Figure 1 ***The landscape of practices***



By presenting the CoPs as overlapping, it is intended to illustrate that these are not entirely separate with no common ground between them. Rather, there are likely elements of each community which share common characteristics and continuities between them. In CoP terms, these represent the ideas of engagement in a mutual enterprise, with some shared repertoires and practices. The following section will now focus on the ways in which international students try to develop competence in these communities in more detail, beginning with the academic sphere.

6.2.1 Becoming competent in the academic community

The identification of an academic skills conception of GAs suggests that pursuing a postgraduate programme as an international student, even one which is arguably vocationally oriented towards professional language teaching, seems to indicate a constraint on being work-ready. Indeed, in the academic skills conception of GAs, students are much more focused on the present and immediate need to navigate an academic culture which can often seem quite alien. Their efforts may often be concentrated on academic

acculturation rather than on future employment as a language teacher. At its most extreme, this need to acquire new study skills is about academic survival rather than intellectual development. To meet all their course requirements and complete the programme successfully so that they might graduate, cognitive energy is directed towards learning how to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in a way which meets the academic expectations of UK HE. The act of graduating and obtaining the degree appears to be prioritised over consideration of any workplace attributes that may have been developed in the process. A partial explanation for this focus on academic matters could be related to the investment and sacrifices which international students have made to reach this stage, meaning that failure comes at a price. Most obviously perhaps is the financial cost of an international education: exorbitant tuition fees for a Masters degree programme are well documented and yet international students are still motivated to undertake their Masters study abroad and may often see this as a way to enhance their career prospects by developing subject knowledge in their field (Wu and Hammond, 2011). Undoubtedly, at the foreground of these concerns to conform is the cost to employment value in a competitive market if professional competence is not evidenced in the acquisition of a good degree outcome.

The need to acculturate to the academic norms within such a short space of time cannot be underestimated. Gu, Schweisfurth and Day (2010) found that adapting to the new academic culture seemed to be more challenging than the cultural or social acculturation of studying abroad. Similarly, in Quan, He and Sloan's (2016) study, time was a salient factor in students' academic adjustment to their PG study. Acknowledging that previous academic experiences from their home countries influence the ease of transition to a new academic context, they identified that the adjustment stage could continue into the second semester. The most likely consequence, a point picked up by Wu and Hammond (2011) is that so-called academic sojourners (Brown & Holloway, 2008) orientate to achieve short-term goals. It is therefore argued that adapting to academic norms becomes a key focus of the transition to PG study leaving little space to consider the development of other attributes believed to stand them in good stead on entering the job market after graduation. Arguably, this transition is exacerbated by the condensed nature of a PG Masters degree in the UK: semester 1 typically focuses on assessment-heavy core courses, successful completion of which is required to progress to the all-important dissertation stage. Wu and Hammond's (2011) study reports that students experienced difficulties writing essays in English which was reflected in unsatisfactory grades. This is echoed by the students in this study who strive for higher marks (see extracts 2, 3 and 4) and in the findings of Gu, Schweisfurth and Day (2010, p. 14) whose study found that 'worrying about failing exams

and essays remained a constant concern for the large majority' of their respondents. This suggests that there is little time or energy left for reflections on the development of those other graduate attributes envisioned by those who design and plan for them. The condensed nature of the one-year Masters' programme where there is a very short time to develop skills to reach the required academic standards can only exacerbate this issue. Moreover, it indicates a need for more consideration of how HE works with students whose academic skills have been developed outside the UK context, a point which will be developed in due course. In this environment, it does not seem so surprising that students on this SLTE programme hold a conception of GAs as academic skills.

What is clear is that without mastery of academic norms in the UK HE environment, students find it challenging to access the disciplinary knowledge. Acquiring this is perceived as being essential to finding employment as language teachers but is also viewed as being the hallmark of competence. Before they can begin to consider developing professional competence, they first need to feel competent as junior academic scholars and able to communicate their understanding of the discipline. Arguably, this is true of any student embarking on an academic programme of study, regardless of their educational or linguistic background. The aforementioned studies do not specifically refer to international postgraduates on similar hybrid academic-professional programmes. The transition to this level of study can present difficulties for any student and, indeed, universities nowadays invest heavily in provision which aims to help students to develop their academic language and literacy skills. EAP language and literacy courses delivered by language and study skill centres exist in most universities. However, academics' and students' awareness of their existence can vary meaning that postgraduate students may often miss out on opportunities to develop competence in the academic skills which they are expected to demonstrate in their work during their Masters programmes. In addition, even where there is awareness of such provision, students may perceive engagement with it, through attending classes and producing additional writing tasks, as taking time away from the assignment workload of core courses. It seems inevitable that where students face choices between assessed coursework which will determine their progression to the next phase of their programme and optional work, they will opt to focus on their programme assessments. It becomes something of a catch-22 situation: the academic language and literacy provision is available to support their academic acculturation, or their participation in the academic community of practice but the pressures of coursework and assessment for these new members of the academic community can prevent students from taking advantage of it.

More problematically, the nature of EAP is not always well understood in the wider HE sector. Such provision may sometimes be seen, by both students and their programme tutors, as remedial. It can be viewed as a solution to the so-called deficits of the international student rather than an opportunity to develop attributes expected of a graduate. This is reflected in the view of GAs identified by Barrie (2007, p. 445) whereby for some academics, GAs such as this were not considered to be part of 'usual' university teaching. Attributes related to constructing academic discourse recognised by the UK academy were viewed by some of the academics in Barrie's study as not being 'within the purview of mainstream university education, or the responsibility of university teachers'. In other words, this suggests that helping international students to participate in their academic discipline's discourse community was not considered to be part of their work. Where this still holds true, it arguably creates a considerable obstacle to the development of a professional identity and participation in a professional community of practice. At the centre of the students' awareness in this conceptualisation of GAs is the need to first be a competent participant in the academic community of practice. Collaboration between subject specialists and EAP specialists can go some way to easing this transition for students where courses are developed in partnership, allowing for the academic GAs to be developed within the context of the specialism, as advocated by Jones (2009, 2013) but is still not the norm in UK HE.

The additional pressure on international students, who have to make multiple adjustments in their postgraduate studies to conform to the norms of the academy, is undeniable. The apparent intention of GAs, from the institutional perspective, is to develop a mindset of intellectual curiosity. This is believed to equip the graduate with thinking skills which can be applied to the different contexts and situations they find themselves in following their graduation. However, the workload and effort which is required to develop competence in the practices of the academy and a junior scholar identity cannot be underestimated and this becomes apparent from the way participants speak about their ability to construct the academic discourse of their community. Moreover, it can create a barrier to developing the subject knowledge of language teaching which will now be discussed.

6.2.2 Becoming competent in the language teaching community

As discussed in chapter three, definitions of competence can vary depending on perspectives and contexts, but also on how it has been interpreted by a particular community. As illustrated by its identification as one of the main conceptions of graduate attributes, the salience of disciplinary theory and subject knowledge was a key dimension

in all the conversations with the students. The acquisition of this body of knowledge was central to their imagined identity as competent, and therefore employable, language teachers. Wenger's (1998) construct of imagination, as a mode of belonging to a community, is useful here to describe how participants visualise their place in the community of professional language teachers.

What is noteworthy is that the acquisition of this body of knowledge as an attribute often seemed rather disconnected from a clearly specified context of language teaching practice. This perspective is at odds with the social learning theory of landscapes of practice articulated by Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015, p. 13). At the core of their theory is that professional knowledge is not only to be found in written artefacts:

> As important as the books undoubtedly are, they are only part of the story. They are too dead to constitute the full body of a living practice. From a social perspective we see the real 'body of knowledge' as a community of people who contribute to the continued vitality, application, and evolution of the practice.

In this more limited conception, the body of knowledge required of language teachers sits more statically within an authorised canon of knowledge delivered in lectures by more expert others. When this knowledge is not transmitted in the way that they expect, there is obvious confusion, with some turning to classmates for peer support to compensate for this lack of input from those deemed to know more. Some are unequivocal in their expression of disappointment as was seen in extract 35 where the student felt that nothing had been learned at great expense. In this conception, language teacher competence is inextricably tied up with knowing theories and there is a firm belief that there are correct answers for all language teaching puzzles. This does not align with the notion that, as community members, they have the authority to make a contribution to the way practice develops as suggested above. This type of engagement, as a mode of belonging to the academic community, is harder to recognise as what Wenger (1998, p. 173) described as 'active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning'. Wenger was proposing here that negotiating meaning involves something being agreed between different parties where there may not initially be an entirely mutual or shared understanding. Aligning with Wenger's original premise, collaborators in the more recent volume (2015) agree that practices and their meanings are negotiable. Writing about the management of multimembership when the individual does not recognise the practices of a community, Kubiak et al (2015, p. 65) claim that:

> […] people do not simply acquiesce to group norms but talk back and challenge practices.

This seems a somewhat bold assertion and the extent to which it can be applied holistically to all situations is questionable. It also seems to be premised on assumptions about the power of the individual which needs to be challenged when applied to the academic context for international students. As was noted in extract 32 (see p. 105), the sense of teaching staff having and providing the correct answers is difficult to shift and the extent to which students felt able to 'talk back' and exercise their autonomy is questionable. This has implications for how academic staff work together with international students as there is then a tension within the different parties in the SLTE programme in the UK HE sector, which merits further discussion.

The belief that there is a defined body of knowledge which is close to immutable does not sit comfortably within the academic domain of UK HE where knowledge, and its applicability to different contexts, can be questioned. A healthy ability to reflect critically is widely believed to be a desirable graduate attribute across multiple institutional frameworks, and yet for those holding the subject knowledge conception, it is mostly absent. This conception of GAs also lacks consonance with the espousal of the socio-cultural turn in the wider SLTE field, discussed in section 2.3.3, having more in common with Schön's technical rationality (1983). Moreover, the subject knowledge conception has some commonality with Leung's (2009) description of sponsored professionalism where competence is regulated by professional qualifications and bodies which set out standards to which a practising professional should adhere (see section 2.3.6). It is here that the tension between perspectives is arguably strongest. For Wallace (1991), the fundamental flaw of what he called the applied science model was its lack of sensitivity to context which seems especially pertinent in this case. Students of the programme will return to their home countries to join their language teaching communities of practice. If, as is suspected, they view their UK Masters degree as a de facto language teaching qualification, there are important issues to reflect on.

Firstly, for those who feel they have not sufficiently acquired the body of knowledge, there is a sense that they cannot effectively participate in the language teaching community of practice, or at least participate independently with confidence. As was shared by some students, future employers will expect them to know the best theories for language teaching (see extract 24) and if this theory is absent, then they may need to depend on the experience of local teachers. As noted in 5.3.2, experience seems to be a second-choice

option when theory is not available, such is the revered status of knowledge. However, this leads to a second issue: for those language teacher educators on SLTE programmes who align themselves with the more socio-cultural turn, there is a reluctance to force their ways of being a language teacher onto their students. For those mindful that their own knowledge and experience of language teaching relates to a very specific context, privileging certain theories does not align with their own practice values. Moreover, presenting them to students without providing opportunities for them to problematise these theories and concepts for their own contexts, to reflect critically, is equally unpalatable. And yet, following the data analysis, it has become even clearer that Wallace's reflective practice model (1991), a cornerstone of SLTE with potential to provide a framework to support this group of students in applying theory to practice, is perhaps more problematic than thought. As was discussed in chapter two, the concept has become so ubiquitous as to be criticised for being nothing more than a 'slogan' (Noffke and Brennan, 2005, p. 58). This now has a louder ring of truth to it when applied to what was shared during their interviews.

As it is conceived of by Wallace (1991), the model presents a cycle of practice and reflection which, it is proposed, will lead to professional competence. However, as depicted by Wallace, practice itself should be informed by input from two areas: received knowledge and previous experiential knowledge. In adopting the reflective practice mantra within SLTE programmes, it is arguable that SLT educators have not enough given enough consideration to what either of these aspects really mean for cohorts of international students. Considering first the received knowledge aspect, it may be argued that less attention has been given to the experience of students as they try to access and navigate the academic community of practice. For some, such uncertain claims to competence in the academic community severely constrain the ability to access the theoretical material. Whilst Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) have rightly argued that professional knowledge does not only reside in the theoretical literature, they do not appear to be suggesting that it can be discounted. Therefore, to be able to question knowledge surely means first understanding what that knowledge claim is and what it means for those who have created it. With a limited mastery of the essential academic skills, access to that knowledge is severely compromised and, as a result, so is the ability to reflect meaningfully and critically with peers on its application.

The second area, previous experiential knowledge, presents its own challenges. Whilst acknowledging that some international students have professional language teaching experience, many have little or none. Therefore, the work of reflection, for a number of

them, appears to entail drawing on several resources from their own previous histories and prior experience of language teaching and learning. As noted in chapter two, Johnson and Golombek (2011, p.1.) emphasise that these schemata, though ‘deeply ingrained’, have often been previously ‘largely unarticulated’. Without more formal language teaching experience, the practices of this destination CoP are often imagined on the basis of their own experience of language learning and observation of their own language teachers, what Lortie (1975) referred to as the apprenticeship of observation. Whilst this offers some foundation for reflection on practice, it is not their own lived teaching experience and so arguably does not offer the same richness for reflection. Moreover, following Wenger (1998), engagement is about the ways that members perform actions which are central to the community’s practice. Although imagination may be an element of belonging to a community, there is also a need for engagement in the form of practical experience. Such practical teaching experience is highly valued by students as evidenced by the identification of the third conception of graduate attributes: the language practitioner skills conception. In this conception, the focus is on being work-ready for the language classroom. Being in possession of a repertoire of practical teaching skills is a desirable attribute which contributes to the formation of a professional language teacher identity.

To meet this need, in common with many SLTE programmes, students on this Masters, have the opportunity for micro-teaching practice where they can try out language teaching techniques with peers. Such activity can certainly enhance the development of teacher-learners, especially where it forms a substantial part of their programme. In this case, opportunities for any kind of teaching practice are necessarily limited. It was apparent from the data that what is offered, though appreciated and deemed important, was not felt to be sufficient. For some, it seemed that the shortage of access to more authentic teaching practice left them feeling inadequately prepared for the recruitment market they intended to enter. This in line with the findings of Papageorgiou et al (2019) whose survey of ELT Masters students reported that when asked to choose between microteaching practice and teaching practice in an environment which more closely replicated their future teaching context, their preference was for the latter. This is not an easy problem to resolve and raises practical issues in the context of the SLTE programme with large numbers of international students intending to teach several different languages in a variety of contexts. Opportunities to observe language teaching, along with micro-teaching practice have a role to play in developing competence as a language teacher. Nonetheless, in the context of a landscape of practices, the competing demands on the international student may mean that such interventions are potentially less impactful. Additionally, with the focus of awareness limited to being work-ready and able to perform the actions of a

competent language teacher, the conceptual horizon is limited to the language classroom. This leaves little space for the development of a more holistic language teacher as envisioned in the reflective citizen-practitioner conception of graduate attributes.

6.3 Knowledge and knowledgeability as graduate attributes

It is evident from the hierarchy of the outcome space that knowledge, how to access it and how to apply it, is at the forefront of the horizon as students consider graduate attributes. Even within the academic skills conception, though the focus of awareness was fixed on the acquisition of academic skills, this was motivated by the desire to acquire the knowledge which they believed was necessary to becoming competent language teachers.

The phenomenographic outcome space (appendix five) clearly illustrates the variation in the degree of belonging to multiple communities along the vertical and the horizontal axes. By providing an articulation of the internal horizon of each conception, the analysis reveals what is and what is not in the students' focus of awareness. The presence or absence of particular elements in each conception can be seen as indicative of the depth of engagement, imagination or alignment with the objectives of different communities. The fourth dimension of variation, that of perception of identity, is probably the most obviously illustrative in this respect as it reveals that these students are engaged in quite complex identity work as they negotiate different perceptions of their academic and professional selves: a non-expert student identity grappling with academic conventions in an unfamiliar academy; a novice pre-professional self, attempting to acquire the disciplinary body of knowledge of the language practitioner; a professional language teacher identity seeking the technical skills to practise their profession; and finally, and arguably the most ambitious of all, the reflective citizen-practitioner seeking to make meaning of the practices they encounter within their work.

Encompassing the previous three conceptions and illustrating the widest focus of awareness in relation to the phenomenon of graduate attributes, the reflective citizen-practitioner conception seems to most closely embody the graduate vision portrayed by most institutional GAFs. Aligning with Bowden, Hart, King, Trigwell, & Watts (2000), this conception describes a graduate in possession of attributes which transcend the 'disciplinary expertise', and include: an ability to reflect more critically on the language teaching practices they observe, however limited they are; and an ability to make meaning for themselves, in collaboration with others, as they develop their professional identities within and beyond the SLTE programme. Holding this conception of graduate attributes

demonstrates the development of a mindset which values the construction of knowledge with others and shows appreciation of the complexity of translating language teaching theory into Kumaravadivelu's (2001, p. 538) 'pedagogy of particularity'. In this way, it resonates strongly with one of the fundamental premises underpinning the construct of knowledgeability within a landscape of practice. Wenger-Trayner's (2015) social theory of learning posits that there is considerable scope and potential for learning at the boundaries which lie between different communities of practice. The juxtaposition of knowledgeability and knowledge, and their relationship to each other, is fertile ground for exploration. Although the outcome space provides a helpful overview of the terrain with its clearly delineated, defined and tabulated presentation of conceptions, it is not the whole story. If knowledgeability, the knowing about other practices whilst not necessarily being able to claim competence, can become an asset for international students, then it requires deeper consideration of how to promote this within an SLTE curriculum. For this study, making sense of the students' conceptions of GAs is contingent on understanding how international students participate in these communities and how their academic and professional identities are formed.

6.3.1 Negotiating multimembership

What becomes apparent on close reading of the data, and what is encapsulated in the four identified conceptions, is that many students are constantly engaged in a dynamic, and sometimes deeply challenging, process of digesting what is being taught on the programme and trying to fit it to their existing schemata of what it means to be a student in this context. In addition, because of the vocational nature of the programme, their views of what it means to be a language teacher are also called into question. Visibly, this can be a bumpy and stressful process which involves learning about what is acceptable to the present community they find themselves in, in order to try to participate successfully within those parameters. Simultaneously, as they work to integrate their previous knowledge with their current study, they are also projecting into the future, imagining themselves as language teachers, and working out how to integrate the new knowledge in their destination professional community of practice. This navigation of multiple communities, each with their own practices, places considerable demands on these students and contrasts somewhat starkly with institutional GAFs and their rather homogenous, arguably simplistic view of their graduates and their professional destinations following graduation.

As discussed in chapter three, Wenger consistently argues that it is how one participates in a community which is central to the development of an identity and to experiencing a sense of belonging in that community. It is now recognised that managing multi-membership of academic and professional CoPS can present challenges even for the most experienced of professional practitioners (Fenton-O'Creevy, Brigham, Jones, & Smith, 2015). In Fenton-O'Creevy et al (2015), participants navigating between professional and academic boundaries are categorised in different ways according to the extent of their participation. So-called 'tourists' (p. 44) have low levels of participation and 'sojourners' who, with their higher levels of participation, do not necessarily aim at:

> [..] assimilation within the community but at accommodation to the practices of that community and its regime of competence in order to function effectively within and beyond the community.

What differentiates these authors 'sojourners' from the international student sojourner is that, unlike those described here, are not engaged in practice-based education in the same way as part of their programme. As was described earlier, opportunities for authentic practice are mostly absent from the study programme. Moreover, for these international students, 'identification with the academic community' (p. 44) may well be 'partial and provisional' but it must surely follow that for those international students on the periphery of multiple, and some unfamiliar, communities, navigating these and accomplishing the work required to participate legitimately, the stakes are raised even higher.

Inevitably, the extent and degree of engagement, imagination and alignment will vary for each community member. Wenger argues that the sense of belonging waxes and wanes in line with the depth of engagement, imagination and alignment. In other words, the individual may not always enact each of them equally. For example, it is possible to be engaged in the practices of the community but not necessarily aligned to its goals. Conversely, the individual may simply follow the rules of the practice in order to achieve the goals, without necessarily understanding why they are doing it, described as 'an unengaged alignment' (Kubiak, Cameron, Conole, Fenton-O'Creevy, Mylrea. Rees, & Shreeve, 2015, p. 65). This is worth bearing in mind as it provides a helpful means to articulate what processes are at play within the context of a postgraduate programme such as the one being investigated here.

This then raises questions for the practitioners who are working with these students. The point raised by Fenton-O'Creevy, Dimitriadis and Scobie (2015, p. 41) is of the utmost importance for practitioners to reflect on:

> If learning is not just about 'learning to do' but is also, importantly, about 'learning to be' then those who have a role in supporting learning need to pay explicit attention to supporting identity work'.

Studies such as this one, which focus on the student voice and which try to listen to the unfolding narratives, are but one step towards creating the kind of learning conditions which support students in their identity work. However, in order to support this identity work, it is not enough to just 'pay explicit attention'. Practitioners also need to imagine what this kind of support looks like and work towards integrating it into their curricula. There are undoubtedly ways that practitioner can achieve this. These will certainly vary between individuals, and also across disciplines and institutions. The extent to which individual practitioners can fully address this certainly requires further consideration. The political, economic and academic landscape of UK HE means that there will undoubtedly be constraints and limitations to what can be achieved. Nonetheless, despite this, it is also an environment which sustains the kind of scholarship into teaching and learning which has produced this study. Conducting this research and arriving at these conclusions outlined above provides a starting point to 'pay explicit attention' and to consider how my own practice has been impacted by these findings. The next section begins with some reflection on the scope for impact from undertaking a professional doctorate before going on to outline how this research project has informed, and transformed, my practice on the MSc programme but also as an EAP practitioner. The section concludes with consideration of the extent to which the individual's own learning from a professional doctorate can lead to institutional change.

6.4 Chapter summary

It has been argued that by focusing on the attributes deemed essential for the 21st century graduate to be able to operate successfully in the construct of the unpredictable, unknown workplaces of the future, these frameworks do not adequately capture the specific characteristics of the graduates who are supposed to develop them. Nor do they consider the different aspects of identity which are in development during the study period. In focusing on an end-product, that is to say the complete and skilled, marketable, graduate, there is little attention paid to the identities in development throughout their degree

programme: neither their international student identity nor the language teacher identity. It is acknowledged that some care is taken by institutions to identify different, and important, attributes which it is believed will serve these graduates in their professional, and to some extent their personal lives, as employees within the supercomplexity (Barnett, 2000) of the contemporary workplace.

However, in the everyday practice of teaching these students, this un-nuanced, arguably rather superficial, graduate vision becomes rather problematic. What is proposed here is that HE itself is a site of considerable complexity for international students. In the market-driven need for institutions to differentiate themselves, GAFs are a mechanism that allow institutions to claim their graduates will stand out in the crowded HEI market, by ascribing an aspirational set of attributes to them. Within the frameworks, the international student graduate is overlooked, as is the academic programme, which itself is a key locus in a landscape of academic and professional practices. This consequently places demands on the international graduates of this programme, and may constrain the development of any attributes, institutionally sanctioned or otherwise. The negotiation of meaning of the practices of a quasi-hybrid academic-professional programme within a UK HEI and making bids for membership within it requires visibly effortful work as well as considerable resilience on the part of the individual students. Additionally, it also places demands on the academics setting the curriculum. It is certain that SLT educators attached to such programmes want to create space for, what Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015, p.23) refer to as, meaningful moments within this very complex landscape of practice.

In this chapter, I have tried to capture this complexity and to unpack some of the challenges which are faced by international students on short postgraduate programmes. In the following, final chapter of this dissertation, attention is turned to some of the implications that these findings will have for my own practice as I also navigate my membership of different communities of practice in my own professional life.

Chapter seven: implications for practice

Chapter introduction

As previously articulated, one of the main purposes of a professional doctorate is that it brings together the academic and the professional spheres in a way that allows the practitioner to contribute to the theory and practice of their particular area of work by researching a question of professional concern. It is this relevance to a profession which differentiates it from the PhD pathway more traditionally associated with an academic career combining teaching and research, though the latter is often privileged and attributed more prestige at the institutional level. It was also this practice-focused aspect of the professional doctorate which was one of the main arguments which persuaded me to follow this route. Although to an external observer, my employment within the HE sector may have suggested the PhD route would be more appropriate, my dual roles within different departments of the university, and indeed within two very distinct communities of practice, encouraged me to seek a means of professional development which would contribute to my work in both of these areas of practice: as an academic working on a postgraduate programme but also as an English for Academic Practices (EAP) practitioner. The chapter which follows will focus on my own critical reflections of how the EdD has

informed my own practice in both these areas of my work but also how this academic pursuit may have potential to contribute to the wider work of the institution. As this research is focused primarily on the work I do on the Masters programme, the chapter begins by looking at the implications of this research project on my practice in that area.

7.1 Practice implications for the SLTE programme

Working on my dissertation during the COVID-19 has meant that my practice as it is enacted on this programme has been rather more reactive to circumstances than might otherwise have been the case. As with everyone who works in education, energies and time have been focused on the challenges of moving existing content online rather than reflecting more deeply on the content and design of the course in light of this research. However, we have since returned to teaching in-person. This provides a valuable opportunity to reconnect with the students and to begin to consider what the findings of this research mean for the way I move forward as a language teacher educator.

In chapter three, I discussed the influence of the sociocultural turn in SLTE which privileges and legitimises the practitioners' own knowledge. Pivotal to this is the belief that there is a need to first recognise and name that knowledge in order to transform one's own beliefs and knowledge about teaching. This knowledge, ideally, is constructed through a cycle of experience and reflection. One of the issues which was highlighted in that discussion is that the students on this programme often have little teaching experience to draw on and may be more reliant on their experience as learners rather than teachers. It is worth repeating here Johnson's (1997) view that SLTE programmes need to create space in which those learning about teaching can reflect on their language learning and teaching experience. As the findings have indicated, students can find it difficult to make connections between the theories they are reading about and the practices that they are more familiar with from their own teaching and learning context.

As a solution to the lack of teaching experience, this has been a practice that I have adopted. Workshops are typically preceded by pre-reading suggestions and tasks to prepare which are then discussed when we meet in person thus 'creating space 'as proposed by Johnson. These spaces are then used to discuss the tasks with opportunities to clarify meanings. A regular question prompt within the workshops is to consider how the approach or method in question could be adapted for 'your context'. In doing this, it was my belief that this was adequate as an acknowledgement of local practices which would allow for reflection on their own learning. Giving this opportunity to the students,

exhorting them to engage critically with the theories they were learning, and, perhaps somewhat patronisingly giving them ‘permission’ to reject these ideas or, at least adapt them for their teaching environment, seemed to me to exemplify this sociocultural turn, whilst also developing knowledgeability. The realisation that this may not be sufficient began to dawn first when considering some of the data from the interviews, and the practice now seems problematic for different reasons. One of the issues relates to the sense that drawing only on their learning experience rather than their experience as teachers probably does not seem to be an adequate source of knowledge. As indicated in the data analysis, knowledge, as an attribute, is experienced as being done through instruction from others considered more expert than them. This view of knowledge does not clearly align with a belief which values the teacher’s own experience.

Another significant realisation is that simply providing the space for discussion is not sufficient. Asking them to consider the adaptations they might make for their teaching context falls short because often there has not been adequate time to fully reflect on or interrogate that context. Assuming that because they have experienced a language teaching context as learners, they will be able to integrate this into their meaning making of an unfamiliar language theory now appears disappointingly lacking, and an impoverished version of knowledgeability. As Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015, p. 19) realise ‘it is difficult for communities of practice to be deeply reflective unless they engage with the practices of other communities.’ It therefore seems logical that if students have identified themselves as having only peripheral membership of both professional language teaching communities (the home community as language learners, and the destination community as postgraduate students) then deeper reflection of the type expected in the UK HE context understandably presents no small challenge. The frustration that I feel from the teacher educator’s perspective will almost certainly be experienced more keenly by the students as they navigate the Masters programme. The question which then emerges from this realisation is how the created space can be exploited more meaningfully and usefully.

Drawing once again on the concept of a landscape of practices offers one way to address the need to provide more scaffolding for students to be able to fully exploit their previous experiences as language learners. Until now, the focus and the larger share of course time has been on working with students to enter the ‘home’ community of practice, as the community to which the students are trying to claim membership. However, what has been missing in the delivery of the course is the necessary work to investigate and surface the practices of their other community of practice. A superficial memory recall of how they experienced the teaching of a foreign language as a learner does not support an

investigation of the ways in which they engaged, imagined, and aligned themselves as modes of belonging to that community. What is being proposed here is a more robust task or sequence of tasks which will allow students to return to the more familiar language classrooms. The discussion space then becomes a place where the practices of the other community can be described and further investigated. Taking into account the previous problem of the time available on one-year Masters courses, the challenge of including this type of work without losing the core content should not be overlooked. However, it is arguably not simply about adding extra tasks to course workshops. Rather, it is about re-imagining the existing content and starting from a point which actively acknowledges the learners' probable future teaching contexts, and which creates space to describe and name its practices. Some of this work may also be done pre-programme preparation as a kind of pre-course task.

7.1.1 Reflecting on reflection

However, adaptations to course content alone may not fully address some of the challenges that students experience in unpacking more abstract theoretical knowledge which they encounter in their lectures and readings on the programme. Although the course designers and teachers are doing the work of preparing useful materials and tasks for students to engage with, there is still a risk that the onus is on the learner to make the connections. Of more concern, is that simply making somewhat mechanical adjustments to material does not entirely capture an important element of the landscapes of practice framework, namely that it is the space between the different communities which are prime sites for learning to take place. The addition of some tasks which allow for exploration of different practices can provide support for students to strengthen their membership claims but there is a need to consider the role of the educator in this situation. Adopting the proposal that boundaries between communities of practice can be learning assets (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) seems to offer an altogether more democratic and inclusive kind of pedagogy, and one which makes the teacher educator-teacher-learner relationship closer to a partnership. Learning can then be envisaged more as a two-way enterprise rather than simply flowing in one direction. For the teacher-educator, this requires truly reflective practice, of the kind defined by Dewey. For Dewey (1933), the authentic reflective practitioner should be in possession of three distinct qualities: open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, and responsibility. In order to consider the boundaries between communities as learning assets, then it feels that it should be incumbent on the teacher-educator to stay true to these three qualities. Rather than students being the ones to adopt or adapt, there are also possibilities for the academic SLTE community of practice to

reflect on its own practices. This could be achieved through more opportunities for practice-sharing among the programme staff.

7.2 Practice Implications for English for academic purposes

Throughout this process, I have reflected on my dual identities within the academy, both as an SLTE teacher educator but also as an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) practitioner. Being engaged in the everyday practice of EAP and working within that community of practice is developmental as a practitioner but there can be a risk in communities of practice that they function as an echo chamber. Taking a meaningful step outside this and viewing practice as it is seen by others is important. Whilst the focus of this enquiry has been on the practices of the former in the context of the Masters programme, the identification of the academic skills conceptualisations of graduate attributes has also provided fresh insights and an impetus to reflect anew on this aspect of my work at university. This research has served to remind me that the focus of EAP practice, academic language and literacy is viewed as a graduate attribute by both the institutions but also by the students in this research rather than simply a means to an end. Having this confirmed through the research process and being reminded of its salience within a Masters programme and its potential beyond study in students' professional lives affords an opportunity to examine EAP from a wider perspective. Observing this EAP work through the lens of landscapes of practice raises several interesting questions about the nature of EAP provision in the academy which are worth further reflection and conversation.

It is perhaps important to first clarify that the perspectives of the participants in this research as they have recounted their challenging transitions into the academic discourse community of their chosen discipline have not been entirely surprising. The issues and struggles with different aspects of academic language and literacy experienced by students whose first language is not English are already well known to university-based EAP practitioners, though the accounts of the students in this study bring this more vividly to life. Succinctly, these challenges are the main reason for the existence of such units within HEIs whose primary purpose is to work with students to develop their ability to understand but also to construct academic discourse. For any student, whether English is their first language or not, being able to communicate their subject knowledge and being able to claim competence within their disciplinary community is heavily dependent on their mastery of this discourse. Furthermore, even before knowledge can be communicated,

what is obvious but perhaps sometimes overlooked by the wider university, it first has to be understood. Being able to integrate and deploy the knowledge base of their discipline requires these students to be able to access this knowledge through spoken and written text. It is this work on academic language and literacy which is the focus of EAP courses which are offered in many, if not all, universities. It is also the area which merits further discussion here. The specific academic literacy issues the students experience once they are on their programme are not new. However, considering the way that EAP courses are delivered from a fresher landscape of practices perspective seems to confirm the direction towards more subject-specific EAP, commonly referred to as English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP). This is an approach which has become increasingly common in HE EAP.

To better understand this movement towards ESAP, it is first helpful to highlight what is probably a rather hidden connection between EAP provision and understanding of graduate attributes. As the previous research has often concluded (see literature review chapter), if GAs are conceptualised as generic rather than specific, then the process of developing these in students often falls short. Jones (2013, p. 601) does not equivocate on this:

> […] notions of graduate attributes succeed when they are conceptualised as integral to the 'community', for example, when they fit with the disciplinary and departmental culture, with the epistemic frames and with teaching practice. However, if they are considered external to this they are treated as peripheral and largely ignored.

This is significant for EAP courses which can be delivered in two ways: as a pre-sessional course prior to entry to the university or as in-sessional provision taking place at different points, and in different formats throughout the academic year for students already enrolled on their programme of study. This latter format of in-sessional provision aligns with Jones's view of how GAs can be developed and key pedagogic trends in EAP have emerged in response to this. For example, Sloan and Porter's (2010) influential and widely-used contextualised, embedded and mapped (CEM) model of EAP development is premised on the belief that competence in the academic discourse of the disciplinary community is achieved through language skills being taught within the disciplinary context, embedded within the academic programme rather than being an optional extra, and the EAP provision being delivered at the time of need, mapped to the appropriate point in the syllabus. This is an approach which has been widely adopted in the sector, and particularly for development of in-sessional EAP provision which takes place throughout

the academic year. Where EAP practitioners work in collaboration with subject specialists, there is much potential for students to gain a deeper understanding of the practices of their discourse community and the knowledge base of their subject.

In comparison, if Jones's success criteria are used to evaluate academic literacies development within the pre-sessional format of EAP provision, then some issues become apparent. By their very nature in terms of timing and delivery, the traditional, intensive EAP pre-sessional course seems less likely to meet the needs of international students. Typically taking place over the summer months prior to the start of the academic year, pre-sessional courses are arguably seen as peripheral to the main university activity, and given the timing, are 'largely ignored' by other members of the academic community outside the EAP centre and whose involvement in these is negligible. It would certainly be misleading to imply that there is a wilful intent on the part of the wider university community to marginalise their EAP colleagues by ignoring pre-sessional courses and, by extension, their future students. Given their own workload and commitments, it is not so surprising that pre-sessionals are not really in their focus of awareness. It is also important to reiterate that the EAP community, cognisant of its own expertise in areas of linguistic knowledge such as discourse and corpus analysis and persuaded by an ESAP approach, is keen to collaborate with colleagues in other disciplines to develop EAP content which contextualises their disciplinary knowledge base as can be seen in the more specialised in-sessional provision. However, this kind of collaboration is not always straightforward even when more time and resource is available throughout the academic year. The willingness to cross boundaries to collaborate can be challenging to operationalise in the current HE environment with different factors at play.

Firstly, the sense for the EAP practitioner of being on the periphery is not entirely unfamiliar. Often perceived as being on the margins of academia (Ding and Bruce, 2017) because of their physical and academic location within universities where they are seen as a service rather than an academic school, the work involved in the development of academic literacy and language can sometimes suffer from a lack of visibility within institutions. The consequence of this is that in the landscape of practices of HE, the demarcation between our communities of practice can still be quite firmly entrenched. This means that collaborative provision between EAP and subject specialists has often been dependent on the building of personal relationships through informal, chance encounters at university-wide events rather than the result of whole-university initiatives or inclusive pedagogic networks which can nurture and inspire fruitful collaborations where the centrality of academic literacies for students is acknowledged.

A second factor which may account for the difficulty in moving the pre-sessional courses from the periphery of university activity to a more central position is the perceptions of this kind of provision. Successful completion of pre-sessional EAP courses, which take place before students enter their programmes, frequently form part of the entry requirements for students to be able to join their programmes. Consequently, these courses are of considerable monetary value to HEIs. They provide a pathway for international students seeking to convert their offers into places on programmes at the university of their choice but whose language ability presents a barrier to entry. As numbers of international students hoping to undertake degree programmes has increased over the years (though whether the global COVID-19 pandemic will have a longer-term impact on these figures remains to be seen), so the work of EAP centres such as the one I work in, has expanded. Inevitably, this can sometimes place EAP centres and their staff in a rather uncomfortable position, often seen by other academic colleagues as somehow complicit in the economic forces which shape HE in ways which do not align with their views of what a university education is for.

Packaging the graduate attributes associated with academic language and literacy into a pre-sessional format undoubtedly places some obstacles on the boundaries between the EAP CoP and other disciplinary CoPs in the HE landscape of practices. This is not a call to abandon pre-sessional courses. Whilst it is difficult to deny that they are inextricably bound up in some of the more unpalatable neoliberal practices of 21st century HE, they also serve an important purpose by providing space to partner and include international students as they work to access and participate in knowledge construction within their disciplinary communities. To fully take advantage of this potential to create a more intentionally international and inclusive space, then it seems clear that more boundary crossing between the EAP and other disciplinary communities is necessary. The implication of this is that EAP practitioners and centres need to continue to identify ways to bring the value of their skills and expertise into the strategic discussions, which is not an easy task for a profession which can often suffer from a crisis of confidence. Stepping into the institutional spotlight and seeking to influence the practices of other academic colleagues requires some consideration.

7.3 Institutional implications

Having considered the ways in which the findings of this research have influenced my own practices, this final section turns to reflections on what implications there may be at the institutional level as a consequence of the individual learning accrued from this research.

The discussion begins with a consideration of the challenges of evidencing institutional impact before offering a personal reflection on how my institutional contribution, whether as an EAP practitioner or as an academic teaching on a Masters programme, might be made.

The potential for impact on the individual's practice as a result of pursuing a professional doctorate are arguably more easily demonstrated than changes in institutional practice or policy. The challenges of measuring and demonstrating impact and influence at any level are not inconsiderable. Nonetheless, through the process of research, careful reflection and subsequent discussion of key findings, evidence of changes to personal practice as an outcome of the programme can be, at the very least, transparently recorded and documented in the candidate's final dissertation, in such a way that any claims made can be considered and questioned by the audience who choose to engage with it. The nature of the professional doctorate is such that, as noted by Boud, Fillery-Travis, Pizzolato and Sutton (2018, p. 917) that impact is, to some extent, 'planned' into the research project. As I have tried to do in the preceding discussion, the doctoral student can document the smaller individual amendments and adjustments to practice which have been influenced by their research findings. However, in the closing stages of an EdD, it can be harder to demonstrate that one's own contribution may have potential to influence practice on the wider, institutional scale. Moreover, it may also seem somewhat presumptuous especially for those afflicted with a strong case of imposter syndrome. Boud, Fillery-Travis, Pizzolato, and Sutton (2018), in their work on how professional doctorates may influence the workplace, point out that while there is emerging literature on the relationship between the individual and the influence on their own practice, there have been fewer studies on the organisational impact of an individual's learning. In their discussion, they make several important points about the possible connection between the potential of the individual's learning to effect changes in the organisation. Notably, they consider (2018, p. 916) that for the individual's learning to fulfil that potential, it needs to:

> as a minimum […] fit with and magnify an existing and urgent organisational purpose; it must fit with or build upon signature learning practices that are in existence and finally, the graduate in question must be organisationally placed to influence and communicate across existing boundaries.

Considered in context, these three suggested requirements provide a useful framework for reflection and assessment of whether my own learning from this research may, in time,

feed into the practices and policies of the wider institution and will now be considered in turn.

Firstly, in its broadest sense, it seems hard to argue that a study which has focused on student learning through the lens of GAs does not fit with 'an existing and urgent organisational purpose'. Whilst there are several aspects of the modern approach to HE which can draw critique, at its core, students and their learning must be at the heart of the academy and should be the constant raison d'être the institution, and I would argue, should always be pressing. As has been argued in the preceding chapters, this espoused purpose can sometimes be hard to discern in the more strategic discourses such as those which are wrapped around GAs. Even when such professions of commitment to the student experience of learning and teaching may seem to be nothing more than lip service, it is arguably harder to ignore evidence-based arguments for change such as those recommended in this study which, in alignment with the idea of magnification, place the spotlight onto a strategically and financially important group within the student body, namely the international student.

Secondly, the focus on GAs remains relevant in relation to aligning with 'signature practices'. By choosing to investigate an aspect of academic practice which was already in existence, at least theoretically, it seems conceivable that this research can contribute to wider institutional policy on GAs. Currently, there is an expectation that GAs are an integral component of academic programmes. Indeed, within my own context, it is an institutional requirement that GAs are included in the formal descriptions of degree programmes which can be found within both university and student-facing systems. The institution expects academics to develop, embed within curricula and communicate these GAs to the students on their programmes. The extent to which this may be described as evidence that these are signature practices remains unclear and, in fact, was not the purpose of this investigation. Therefore, it is not possible to say with any certainty that practices which develop the institution's GAs can be described as 'signature'. However, the policy and strategy around GAs remains visible and therefore holds promise on this level of alignment.

The third suggested criterion is perhaps the most problematic one as it requires an accurate and honest assessment of my position and place in the organisation, and with that my ability to share my findings across boundaries to influence practice. A number of factors, practical, professional and personal, are at play. In practical terms, my institution is very large with just under 15 000 members of staff. Commensurate with that number, there are

several different ways in which a member of staff can make their voice heard: through membership of numerous committees, teaching and learning fora, working groups and governance structures at programme, school, college and university level. While engagement in these activities is possible, the voice of a lone practitioner may well be lost among others, especially if those other voices hold more sway. From a professional perspective, my main academic affiliation is one which perhaps does not enjoy the same status as other disciplines. As was discussed above, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) practitioners can be less visible within the academy, sometimes perceived as service providers rather than specialists of their discipline, and often homeless in terms of their academic location. EAP units have a history of moving between academic development units, information and Library services, academic schools from languages, to applied linguistics via education (Hadley, 2015). Suffering from a sectoral identity crisis which often filters down to the individual practitioner, a sense of agency and empowerment within the neoliberal HE environment can often be absent (Ding and Bruce, 2017), becoming what Hadley (2015, p. 39) describes in strong terms as 'pedagogic service personnel divested of scholarly status, relegated to the Third space, and redefined as auxiliary educational service providers'. Inevitably, this leads to doubts about how the individual's own learning may be articulated and heard in the right fora. In colloquial terms, getting a seat at the right table can be the first challenge in seeking to be an academic influencer. Added to the practical and professional constraints, there are also personal considerations to keep in mind. In order to use individual learning to advance practice beyond the immediate sphere of professional practice, the individual has to feel empowered by their personal situations. Academic grade and title, professional experience and qualifications can undoubtedly contribute to a sense of empowerment but may not always fully equip the individual to claim competence or legitimacy.

The preceding discussion seems to point to a sense of inevitability that the individual learning which has occurred as a result of this research may not easily translate into influence at an organisational level. However, it is the consideration of these dual constructs of competence and legitimacy which provide the impetus for understanding how this study has shaped my own perceptions of my status and agency, and how it may, in the future, contribute to the reconceptualization of meaningful graduate attributes for international students. Having identified the complex landscape of practices which they need to negotiate has led to a realisation that, as a practitioner, I too am located within a landscape of practices, throwing into sharp relief the different communities of practice I am working within. This will now be elaborated on.

7.3.1 Participating in an HE landscape of practices: the practitioner perspective

The process of considering the way that my practices have been influenced by undertaking this research has been instructive and informative in different ways. As described above, the study has helped me to identify approaches to developing course materials and my interactions with international students on this particular Masters programme. It has also clarified areas of EAP practice which are troublesome, specifically in how it is packaged. However, one of the more unexpected outcomes, given that the focus was always on the students in the study, has been how the research process has afforded me the opportunity to reflect on my identity, not only as an SLTE educator or an EAP practitioner but also as a member of the wider HE institution. Applying the same conceptual framework to my own professional practices has provided a language to support a surfacing of my participation and claims to membership in different communities. Previously the boundaries between the two different communities felt rather rigid. As an experienced second language teacher and second language teacher educator, I felt secure in my claims to competence within that community as I participated fully in it. Yet, despite this knowledge and experience, membership of and participation in the academic community as a member of staff on a postgraduate programme has often felt, at best, peripheral. Undertaking this research has led to a realisation that being given access to this academic community because of competence in a certain domain confers some legitimacy but that this was never fully experienced or accepted because in other ways, there has not been full access to all the practices of that academic community. Wenger (1998, p. 100) says:

> To open up a practice, peripheral participation must provide access to all three dimensions of practice: to mutual engagement with other members, to their actions and their negotiation of the enterprise, and to the repertoire in use.

This now resonates as I continue to negotiate my identity in the HE environment. Working on one course in the first semester of this postgraduate programme, combined with the fact that my main affiliation is with a different academic school from the one which owns this programme likely means that my participation will probably always be peripheral rather than full. Being able to articulate it in this way has been somewhat liberating. Prior to embarking on this EdD programme, this sense of not belonging has always been troubling. The decision to embark on the programme was, in part, about gaining a qualification which would confer the legitimacy I felt was lacking as an academic because I did not have a doctorate.

Undoubtedly, there remains some truth in this, and it is not an entirely superficial exercise. The academic rigour involved in pursuing this qualification has multiple benefits. It has expanded my understanding of the wider field of education and different areas of its knowledge base. Crucially, it has also given me insights into the external forces and drivers which shape and influence the environment I work in. Moreover, it has equipped me with research skills which will allow me to investigate my own practices, a benefit which is often cited as one of the main justifications for undertaking a professional doctorate (Boud, Costley, Marshall and Sutton, 2019).

However, employing Wenger-Trayner's concept of knowledgeability and applying it to my own practice has provided a different, more empowering way of looking at this multiple participation in other communities. Wenger-Trayner's (2015) assertion that 'we cannot be competent in all the practices in a landscape' is perhaps obvious but also reassures. This does not mean that the practitioner simply gives up trying to be competent. Rather it allows for recognition of the fact that in the complexity of the current HE landscape, there is considerable activity and that for the practitioner, there is work to be done to navigate the boundaries of the different communities in the landscape. The significance of this is that it is this work which contributes to the growth of knowledge and the richness of experience of the practitioner working on these boundaries.

For Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015, p. 23), knowledgeability is realised when 'this complex experience of the landscape, both its practices and their boundaries' is deployed to become 'a meaningful moment of service'. That there is potential to create something with meaning is, in itself, an encouragement and a motivation to contribute to the organisation. It provides a more optimistic perspective on how I may be 'organisationally placed to influence and communicate across existing boundaries' (Boud, Fillery-Travis, Pizzolato, & Sutton, 2018, p. 916). Rather than seeing my role as confined to that of an expert in my specific field of SLTE, with yearly forays into other practices, the accumulation of experiences across the boundaries of different practices, can be perceived as an asset (Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 18) which has potential to create new perspectives and spaces for innovation. Reconceptualising my identity and its practices in this way has triggered a shift in mindset and has encouraged me to seek out and identify what such 'meaningful moments of service' may look like in my own workplace. While these may yet be unknown or even unimagined in the long-term, there are immediate institutional opportunities to test out the concept of knowledgeability. The university has recently launched its strategy for the coming decade, at the heart of which is an ambitious curriculum transformation project. One of the underpinning principles of the initial review

phase is to include both staff and students in the discussion and there is an active call to contribute to the dialogue and co-creation of a future curriculum. A main priority for the project is to draw on the experience of members of the university community whether through membership of working groups, contributing papers or posts to the institutional academic blog. Ultimately, responding to such an invitation and offering a reflection from my individual perspective, may not be considered the most meaningful or impactful of 'moments of service', and it may not lead to an immediately measurable change to the new vision of graduate attributes for this university or impact on its organisational practices. Nonetheless, the shift in mindset which encourages this kind of individual participation in the wider university community represents a tangible change in my own professional practice. It is a mindset which holds promise.

7.3.2 Concluding remarks: limitations, contributions and future directions

At the outset of this research project, I set out to better understand what graduate attributes meant for the international students I work with on a postgraduate SLTE programme. I wanted to place my students at the centre of the investigation and to create opportunities for them to share their perspectives on the study path they had chosen and how it related to their future employment as language teachers. Adopting a phenomenographic analysis to investigate this has provided an opportunity to briefly enter the lifeworlds of this particular cohort and revealed a rich range of understandings. The unpicking of variation in those conceptualisations confirmed my initial sense that a limited alignment in objectives between international students and their chosen institutions is not, on its own, an adequate or secure foundation for fruitful learning partnerships between academics and students, nor does it promote knowledgeability. The students' nuanced and complex conceptualisations of competence also served as a useful reminder to pause and reflect on my own understandings of Wenger's community of practice construct. Community of practice is a term which is often reached for rather easily in academia and beyond and sometimes invoked as if it were something that can be brought into existence by simply naming it thus. The reality, as revealed by the study, is somewhat different. I am reminded that all participants within each community have a role to play and that learning is reciprocal, with the more experienced members also being shaped by the practices of the new members. Navigating a landscape of multiple practices, as we have seen, presents challenges for both the international student and the academic staff teaching them but also opportunities.

However, in addition to the benefits, outlined above, that this study has had on my own practices, it is important for future research that its limitations are also made visible. As

detailed in chapter four, the phenomenographic path was not without its obstacles and the analysis stage was especially labour intensive for the lone researcher. At times, during the analysis, it felt that my initial attempts to sort the data into categories would have benefited from being discussed with others: much of the existing phenomenographic research has been undertaken by teams. Understandably, a doctoral study needs to be completed by the efforts of the individual, but I was, arguably, overly concerned with making sure that it was my own work. In hindsight, the research design could perhaps have included a stage where those tentative interpretations were discussed and 'sounded out' with a colleague. Alternatively, it might have been possible to have a follow-up stage in the research which allowed the participants not only to revisit their transcripts but also to engage with the initial categories although this may have meant pushing at the limits of the word count of the EdD dissertation.

Nonetheless, despite these limitations this research contributes a clearer description of the terrain in focus. It has revealed a small area of previously uncharted territory in the landscape of practices in second language teacher education. Among the existing research into the experience of international students, there has been relatively few studies on those undertaking postgraduate studies in SLTE, and specifically, from a communities and landscapes of practice perspective. The study highlights two different dimensions of the landscape for international students: the academic and the professional, revealing how the navigation of these intersects with the development of graduate attributes. The study also adds to the existing body of literature by giving these students a voice within a research area which is often investigated from the practitioner's perspective. Interviewing twenty international students and hearing their thoughts and reflections also goes some way to redressing the balance of power in HE. In an environment where international students may sometimes be placed in a discourse of deficit, this study has allowed them to participate in the conversation. From a methodological viewpoint, the study also offers an additional detailed account of how to conduct phenomenographic research. This perhaps counters one of the criticisms of phenomenography, highlighted in section 4.2.1, namely, that there is a lack of clear description of phenomenography as a research approach. This study provides valuable information for future researchers wishing to adopt a phenomenographic research design, and how to manage the analysis.

For future research, not dependent on the single, doctoral student, there is potential to adopt phenomenographic methods and work alongside colleagues and students to further inform how we design and plan second language teacher education programmes in ways which capture the diversity of those communities in the landscape. Obtaining a more

detailed picture of how students on a postgraduate SLTE programme envision themselves as future language teachers affords educators rich opportunities to develop more meaningful programmes of study. One possible avenue for further research could be to replicate the same study with future programme cohorts as a means to discover whether the conceptualisations of graduate attributes which were identified in this study remain the same. It would be especially interesting to see if interventions resulting from this study, such as including more curricular space for exploration of the different academic and professional communities in the Masters programme, have an impact on the ways in which the students experience the development of graduate attributes. A second possible research project could be to conduct a similar study with colleagues and to explore with them what graduate attributes mean for them in the context of this particular Masters programme.

For second language teacher educators, there is much to be gained from increasing their understanding of the attributes that their students hope to have developed when they graduate with their Masters degrees. Furthermore, working in partnership with students to learn more about their future language teaching contexts and the attributes which they prioritise is an important step towards an SLTE pedagogy which authentically embraces and embodies the sociocultural turn. The inclusion of their perspectives should be integral if programmes are to support the development of graduate attributes which will allow them to fulfil their functions as competent, professional language teachers once they have graduated, whatever professional contexts they may enter.

Appendix one: participant information sheet

College of Social Sciences

Research Project: Graduate Attributes

Researcher: Lindsay Knox

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide if you want to participate, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Take time to decide whether you want to participate. If anything is unclear or if you need more information, you can contact me at l.knox.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this.

Introduction

My name is Lindsay Knox and you know me as one of the tutors on the Professional Practice course on the MSc Language Education at the University of Edinburgh.

In addition to being your tutor, I am also currently studying at the University of Glasgow and I am in my fourth year of a Doctorate in Education (EdD). This research project is my final dissertation. I would like to interview a number of students who are currently studying on the MSc Language Education.

I have prepared some information to help you decide if you would like to participate.

What is your research project about?

My topic is graduate attributes. This term is used within Higher Education to talk about the skills, personal attributes and values which graduates might be expected to have acquired or developed during their studies. I am particularly interested in the perspectives of international students like you who have decided to do a post-graduate programme which is vocationally oriented towards the language teaching profession.

I hope that by doing this research, I can gain more insights into the expectations of students who choose to study on this programme and to better understand your motivations and needs. I hope that the findings will help us develop the course syllabus in a more collaborative and consultative way.

Do I have to participate?

No. This is completely voluntary and does not form part of your degree programme. Non-participation will have no impact on your course work or assignments. It is entirely your choice to participate or not and there is no expectation on my part that you will.

How might I benefit from participating in this research?

I think there are a number of reasons why you may find participating beneficial. Firstly, the interview process will give you an opportunity to reflect on your own academic development. At this mid-way point of your programme, it may be helpful for the next steps of your study or for future employability to think about the skills and attributes you are developing. The process of answering questions in the interview may offer a useful guide for your own reflections.

Additionally, as you approach the dissertation phase of your degree, this is also an opportunity to participate in a real research project. Taking part will give you hands-on experience of the research process e.g. informed consent, interview procedures etc. which may help you when you start to plan your own research for your dissertation.

Finally, you may also like the opportunity to practise speaking English outside class and to have an extended conversation with an English speaker.

What do I have to do?

If you decide to participate, then I will invite you to meet with me at a time which is convenient for you. I would ask you questions about the topic (graduate attributes). I have prepared questions but sometimes I will ask you unplanned questions in response to what you say. Although it is called an interview, it is really more like a conversation. You don't need to do any preparation. You just need to be ready to tell me (in English) a little about yourself and about your perspectives on graduate attributes. I will interview each person myself and the interviews will be recorded using two small voice recorders. I may also take notes as we talk.

I would like to take part but I am worried about my English and how I express myself. Can I participate?

Of course, you can participate! As your course tutor, I have no concerns about your level of English or your ability to express yourself. The questions are not difficult, there are no correct answers and you will be talking about a very familiar topic i.e. yourself. The

conversation is also a partnership so where meaning is not immediately clear, we can work together to clarify exactly what you want to say. Additionally, once the recording has been transcribed, I will send the transcription to you for verification. If you want to clarify something you have said, you can do this.

I would like to participate but I am a little anxious about telling you what I think. What if I have a negative perspective about some aspects? Will it affect my academic work?
I am very interested in everything you have to tell me whether it is 'negative' or not! The purpose of my research is to find out more about what students on this programme experience when they study with us. Your opinion is valid whatever it is because it is what you think.

Importantly, it will have **no effect** on your academic progress. As you know, research needs to be ethical and, as a researcher, I need to follow guidelines to make sure that I treat your data confidentially. I will be using the University of Glasgow's PGR Code of Practice and also the BERA Guidelines for Educational Research (fourth edition, 2018) which has very clear guidance on privacy, data storage. You may wish to consult this document which you can find here https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018-online#consent

Where and when would the interview happen?
We would meet in a room on the Holyrood Campus of the university in late February/March. The interviews will take around 60 minutes although this may vary.

If I participate, how will you keep my personal information safe?
The interview recording will be stored securely on the University of Edinburgh's *datasync* storage. The recording is only available to me and will not be shared with anyone. Once the data is uploaded and has been transcribed, the original recording will be deleted from the voice recorder and the data will be stored on my University of Glasgow *onedrive*. Transcriptions will be seen by my supervisors and examiners. However, you will not be identifiable within the data as it is presented in the transcriptions, the dissertation or any subsequent output e.g. journal articles. Participants will not be referred to by name but will be assigned a pseudonym. Personal data will be destroyed by the end of the research project (July 2022) and the research data will be kept for ten years in accordance with University of Glasgow guidelines.

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to *unless* evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

What will you do with the data?

This research is for my doctoral dissertation. Once this has been successfully completed, I hope that my findings will inform the pedagogies employed on the MSc programme. It is also possible that I may write it up for a journal article in the future.

What happens if I change my mind about participating during or after the interview?

This is not a problem. If you decide during or after the interview that you do not want to participate, you just need to tell me. You can contact me by email at any time to do this. If the interview has already taken place, the recorded information would be destroyed immediately and none of the information would be used.

This project has been considered and approved by the College of Social Sciences' Research Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow. If you have any concerns about this project or how it has been conducted, you should contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston at Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix two: informed consent form

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Title of Project: Graduate Attributes: International Students' Conceptualisations of Graduate Attributes on a Second Language Teacher Education Programme

Name of Researcher: Lindsay Knox

Consent Form

I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent / do not consent (delete as applicable) to interviews being audio-recorded.

I acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be returned to participants for verification.

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

I acknowledge that there will be no effect on my grades arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be pseudonymised.
- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- Personal data will be destroyed once the project is complete.
- Research will be retained in secure storage for ten years for potential use in future academic research
- The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.
- I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.
- I understand that other authenticated researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form

I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant: (Signature) Date

Name of Researcher: (Signature) Date

Appendix three: interview questions

Preliminary rapport-building questions	o Thank participant for coming o How have you been? o How are you getting on this semester? o Which option courses are you taking?	
Set-up	o Go through purpose of interview/reminder of topic o Go through informed consent o Choose a pseudonym o Give opportunity for questions/clarifications	
Opening scenario		

	- Elaborate on topic/define concept of graduate attributes - What do you think graduate attributes are? Can you give some examples?	Use broad definition, can rephrase as 'think about a job you have done where you learned new skills (hard and soft). what different skills or attributes might a graduate have in comparison?
Follow-up questions	- Tell me about the skills/attributes you think you are developing during this MSc programme - How are you developing those? - Which elements of the programme do you think specifically develop those attributes/skills? - What attributes do you think you will need if you pursue a career as a language teacher at home?	**Probes** - Could you explain that further? - What do you mean by that? - Could you give me an example? - Why do you think that?
Wrap-up	- Thank participant for helping with research - Give opportunity for questions - Remind them of next steps - Restate the terms of the informed consent	Let them know that the transcript will be returned to them to check

Appendix four: data analysis template

Based on the outcome space in Zou, T. (2018) Community-based professional development for academics: a phenomenographic study, *Studies in Higher Education,* 44 (11), pp. 1975-1989.

REFERENTIAL MEANING	STRUCTURAL ASPECT (THE STRUCTURE OF AWARENESS)						
Participants have the following conceptions of GAs	EXTERNAL HORIZON Perceptual boundary (graduate attributes)	INTERNAL HORIZON		DIMENSIONS OF VARIATION			
		Focus of awareness	Elements missing from the focus of awareness	**Orientation to employability**	**Development of attributes**	**Place of disciplinary theory and knowledge**	**Perceptions of self/identity**
Conception 1							
Conception 2							
Conception 3							
Conception 4							

Appendix five: final phenomenographic outcome space

REFERENTIAL MEANING	STRUCTURAL AASPECT (THE STRUCTURE OF AWARENESS)							STAGE
International students on PG SLTE programme hold a (n)	EXTERNAL HORIZON Perceptual boundary of graduate attributes	INTERNAL HORIZON		DIMENSIONS OF VARIATION				
		The focus of awareness	Elements missing from the focus of awareness	**Orientation to employability**	**Development of attributes**	**Place of disciplinary theory and knowledge**	**Perceptions of self/identity**	
Conception 1 Academic skills conception	Assessment activity	Successful completion of programme, passing assignments	Disciplinary knowledge	Attributes are study-oriented, unrelated to language teaching	Models, templates, instruction from others	Disciplinary knowledge secondary to academic norms Knowledge is to be acquired and replicated in appropriate academic form	Non-expert, student identity	Pre-employment

Conception 2 Subject knowledge conception	Masters programme	Body of disciplinary knowledge	Application of knowledge to defined language teaching contexts	Attributes are oriented to subject knowledge, employability is hypothetical	Lectures, workshops, expert others	Knowledge is immutable and embodied in certification, knowledge equates to teaching competence. Knowledge is evidenced through ability to define key concepts and theories.	Novice, pre-professional teacher	Pre-employment

Conception 3 Language practitioner skills conception	Language classroom	Being work-ready	Critical application of knowledge to context and purpose	Attributes are practical skills, professional competence to be displayed and deployed in language classroom	Practice, experience	Knowledge transfers to the language classroom	Professional language teacher identity: employment-oriented	Employment
Conception 4 Reflective Citizen-practitioner attributes conception	Language Education as a discipline as it interacts with Society	Purposeful working lives, societal contributions		Attributes are oriented to how language teaching work interacts with society	Reflected practice, observation of alternative practices, collaboration	Knowledge can be constructed, interrogated; it expands beyond language; knowledge as a carrier of other world knowledge	Whole-person oriented	Employment and citizenship

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