An analysis of PGCE models: Key stakeholder perceptions from the secondary phase

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Abstract
The aim of this research was to explore the two most popular PGCE models now in operation, for which there is little research to-date, from the perspectives of key stakeholders from the secondary phase in two higher education institutions (HEIs) in England. Research was undertaken in an HEI offering both the level 6 Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and the level 7 Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), and in an HEI offering only the level 7 Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Findings highlight the perceived advantages and disadvantages inherent in each model, which could be used by providers to reflect on their chosen model and further improve student satisfaction, the student experience and retention. Overall, findings suggest that the level 7 only PGCE model is essentially a one-size-fits-all model, which may not be appropriate for everyone, and a differentiated approach via offering the PGCE at both level 6 and 7 is suggested as the most effective model to support and extend trainees' development. Findings also show some associated implications for HE initial teacher education (ITE) tutors in areas such as workload, which could be used by HE senior managers to reflect on different PGCE models.

Keywords
ITE; PGCE; models; level 6/ honours level (H level); level 7/ masters level (M level).

Background
By 2000 the 'original' level 6 Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) was the most popular means of entering teaching in England. In comparison with other ITE programmes, this original PGCE remained remarkably stable in its long history (McNamara 2009, in Chapman and Gunter, 2009) and was very successful (Sewell, 2008). The Bologna Declaration (1999), however, stipulated that awards bearing 'postgraduate' in their title should have a significant amount of study at M level. Consequently, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) advised that the level 6 award should be called the 'Professional Graduate Certificate in Education' and the level 7 award should now be called the 'Postgraduate Certificate in Education', thus allowing the PGCE acronym to remain for both awards since providers were anxious about losing the title of a well-known award (UCET, 2008). Consequently, a few providers re-validated programmes at level 7 when the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) was introduced in 2004, believing their trainees were operating at this higher level anyway. However, it was not until the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) called for providers to register with the Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR) from 2007 whether their PGCE was at H level and/ or M level (i.e. FHEQ level 6 and/ or level 7) that the remaining providers reviewed their level 6 Postgraduate Certificate in Education and re-validated this as the level 6 Professional Graduate Certificate in Education and/ or validated a level 7 Postgraduate Certificate in

Education. However, these changes created some confusion for some prospective trainees, who wondered whether they now had to study at M level for employability (Barker, 2007). Also, schools were largely unaware of the level 7 PGCE, which may have undermined the qualification somewhat, since trainees have a high regard for their school-based mentors' opinions (Hobson, 2002).

Subsequently, UCET conducted a survey which found that 77% of providers were offering PGCEs at both levels, 18% were offering the PGCE at level 7 only and 5% were offering just the level 6 PGCE (Barker, 2007). Therefore, the level 7 PGCE became firmly established predominantly by offering this award alongside the level 6 PGCE.

Some providers offering both awards allow trainees to choose the level at which to study the PGCE, although there may be a bias within institutions towards one level. Choice is an important issue for students, since those who embark on study with clearly-defined personal reasons and are presented with choice have a more meaningful engagement on programmes (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Also, giving students responsibility for decisions regarding their studies aligns with Knowles' (1990) theory regarding andragogy, which may be especially important for these adult learners who have limited ownership of their learning due to professional requirements.

Overall, the level 7 PGCE has brought ITE in England more in line with some of the highest performing school systems such as Finland, where the notion of a masters level teaching profession is considered to be a contributing factor to its success (Tryggvason, 2009). In general, demand for masters degrees has increased in the United Kingdom (UK) (Tobin, 2011), although postgraduate study may no longer carry the weight it used to due to increasing numbers of postgraduates (Tobin, 2010).

The two PGCEs
Most providers now offer PGCEs at both levels. Perhaps they see this model as ensuring their wide marketability; or they see this model as supporting the progress of some trainees more effectively and extending the progress of others, enabling them to move on more quickly from the 'plateau' (Maynard, 2001); or they see the level 7 PGCE as bringing a new challenge to tutors, since intellectual challenge, in general, is significant in HE lecturers' job satisfaction (Rhodes *et al.,* 2007); or they may not be confident that all trainees can meet level 7 demands. Jackson (2009) found that the level 7 PGCE was not suitable for everyone, but found that trainees felt it was important to have a postgraduate qualification. Graham-Matheson (2010) also found that the level 7 PGCE was not appropriate for many in her institution. Furthermore, Graham-Matheson (2010: 7) found there to be 'a negative effect on students who only … get a professional certificate' and concerns for trainees who struggle with M level work or feel they have 'failed' if they did not achieve level 7 credits.

Trainees undertaking the level 7 PGCE are studying education i.e. a new subject for them, and at a higher level than their bachelor's degree. As any PGCE is a demanding programme, student integration – 'a product of the interaction between students and their … environments' (Brower 1992: 441) - needs to be considered in particular, since this is linked to drop-out (Bennett, 2003, in Rhodes and Nevill, 2004; Thomas, 2002), and retention in ITE is problematic (Whitehead and Postlethwaite, 2002). Retention is important and there could be problems regarding student integration for trainees undertaking different awards, so programmes need to be managed carefully. This may also be particularly important for

secondary trainees since secondary teachers have strong subject allegiances (Smethem, 2007). Tinto's (1975) model of student integration focused on the two spheres of academic and social integration and has subsequently been developed by Thomas (2002) who added three further spheres, namely democratic, support and economic. It is suggested that the social, academic, democratic and support spheres are particularly important in this context to ensure student integration.

Although the 'original' level 6 PGCE was successful, Sewell (2008) concludes that the level 7 PGCE is now most appropriate for the changing demands on teachers and that trainees should be able to work at level 7 with support from tutors. However, people have different levels of academic preparedness and different priorities and so some trainees may not be ready to or may not want to study at level 7, reinforcing Graham-Matheson's research (2010) that trainees prioritise the professional standards above the PGCE. Also, there have always been trainees more able to connect with M level study (Jackson, 2009), which suggests that the level 7 PGCE may not be appropriate for all trainees and reinforces the importance of choice. In addition, many trainees question the benefit of theory (Grove-White, 2004, in Davies, 2004) and Jackson (2009) found that although trainees at the start of the level 7 PGCE considered the linking of theory and practice to be beneficial in principle, in practice they thought the reality had not lived up to their expectations by the end of the course. This may mean a failing in ITE which needs to be addressed or maybe identity transformation inevitably depends on socialisation with the work culture and professional integration, which could be added as a further sphere to existing models of student integration pertinent to postgraduate trainee teachers. Also, there are many teachers who do not have M level qualifications, but are excellent practitioners (Hoyle and Wallace, 2005), so M level study may not necessarily be the only pathway to becoming a 'good' teacher.

Sewell (2008) suggests that the level 7 PGCE is perceived to be confined to assignments, but stresses that 'M-levelness' should permeate throughout programmes. However, this may be difficult when offering the PGCE at different levels. Sewell (2008) comments that basing eligibility to the level 7 PGCE on assignment grades where both PGCEs are offered is typical of how providers are managing the situation, but that wider criteria could be applied, such as trainees' progress on placements. On the one hand, this seems appropriate, as some trainees may need to feel that they are making good progress in all aspects of the programme before taking on level 7 study – i.e. trainees may need to feel that their overall progress is good (relating to self-esteem) before being able to fulfil their maximum potential (self-actualization) (Maslow, 1943). However, although the PGCE is an academic and professional course, admissions criteria for other M level programmes are not based on practice, so it may be unfair to include other criteria.

Research aim
To explore two PGCE models – one in an HEI offering both the level 6 PGCE and the level 7 PGCE, and one in an HEI offering only the level 7 PGCE - from the perspectives of key stakeholders from the secondary phase in England.

Research design
Working within a largely interpretivist paradigm most data collected were qualitative. However, mixed methods were employed, enhancing the validity and generalisability of data (Denscombe, 2003). Most data were collected via interviews and focus groups, but questionnaires were used to gain responses from large trainee cohorts. Commensurate with

this approach, a case study was used to explore key stakeholders' perceptions. The analysis of qualitative data consisted of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/ verification (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Data were collected from tutors and trainees from secondary PGCE programmes across two HEIs. Purposive sampling was used to ensure the research was undertaken in a representative sample of 'new' HEIs with established and very successful PGCE programmes within the same region and which were operating the level 7 PGCE for the first time from September 2007, but in different formats. The scheduling of data collection was an important factor and data were collected at the end of the year, which meant that respondents had a significant amount of experience regarding the PGCE model.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of the issues from members of staff responsible for the teaching and/ or management of PGCE programmes. Six members of staff were interviewed from each HEI across the range of secondary subject areas, since respondents may have differing perspectives based on their subject specialisms. Interviews were recorded and took approximately one hour.

Questionnaires were piloted, amended and then disseminated to all trainees undertaking the secondary PGCE in each HEI (97 trainees in HEI 1 and 118 trainees in HEI 2). An overall response rate of 73% was achieved - 71% and 75% of trainees responded from HEI 1 and 2 respectively.

Focus groups were then undertaken to gain trainees' collective opinions and trainees chosen from across the subject areas for the reasons indicated above. Within HEI 1 two focus groups were established – one consisted of six trainees from the level 6 cohort who were eligible for the level 7 PGCE but chose not to undertake this, and the other focus group consisted of six trainees who were eligible and chose to undertake the level 7 PGCE. Due to trainees' responses to the questionnaire from HEI 1 it was deemed unnecessary to establish a focus group for the trainees who had not been eligible for the level 7 PGCE – see responses in the section below. Within HEI 2, which only operates a level 7 PGCE, one focus group was established of nine trainees. The focus groups were recorded and took approximately one hour. Focus groups are obviously a useful way of discovering 'insights that might not otherwise come to light' (Denscombe 2003: 169), but they also proved very effective in gathering data from trainees with a potentially limited level of understanding of the issues being researched, but who were essential key stakeholders.

This research is limited in that respondents were only from the secondary phase and primary phase respondents may have different perceptions. Also, the sample of trainees undertaking the level 7 PGCE in HEI 1 was naturally smaller than the sample undertaking the level 7 PGCE in HEI 2, due to HEI 1 offering the PGCE at both levels. Furthermore, the changes to the PGCE had only been operated for one year at the point of data collection and clearly perceptions may have changed over time.

Permission to undertake the research was gained from each HEI. Information was given to respondents regarding the research being undertaken and they were given every opportunity to disclose their thoughts within a safe environment. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured.

Findings and Discussion
(i) Tutor perceptions of different PGCE models
In rank order, the following themes emerged:

- different qualifications can be divisive (5 tutors: HEI 1);
- additional work for tutors and trainees (4 tutors: HEI 1);
- concerns regarding some trainees' ability to operate at level 7 (3 tutors: 2 from HEI 1 and 1 from HEI 2);
- staff enjoyed working at a higher level (3 tutors: HEI 1);
- need for staff development to operate and assess at masters level (3 tutors: 1 from HEI 1 and 2 from HEI 2); and
- different workload for tutors and trainees (2 tutors: HEI 2).

The divisive nature of different qualifications was only raised in HEI 1, where the PGCE was offered at both levels, and was an emotive issue for some tutors interviewed. Tutors considered that:

> *'The disadvantage of the level 7 Postgrad course is that it created the level 6 Prof Grad course. It's a bit like grammar schools creating secondary modern schools. Trainees with the Prof PGCE felt they'd come out with second best, although tutors tried to dispel this.'*

> *'My initial thoughts were this is dreadful – like the old CSE/ O level differences.'*

Perceptions that different PGCE awards can create divisiveness also concur with literature (Barker, 2007).

Additional work for tutors and trainees created by the level 7 PGCE emerged as an issue for most tutors in HEI 1. One tutor considered that '*There was an increase in the academic work.'* Workload emerged again in that some tutors from HEI 2 perceived that the level 7 PGCE had created a different type of workload for tutors and trainees. A typical response was:

> *'M level isn't more work. It's just **different** - it was integrated well.'*

As indicated above, the issue of workload created by the level 7 PGCE for trainees is contradictory (Sewell and Lakin, 2008, in Sewell, 2008; Domaille, 2008, in Sewell, 2008), although this has been confirmed for tutors (ESCalate, 2007; Graham-Matheson, 2010). However, existing literature regarding workload has focused on the level 7 PGCE per se and not within the context of the PGCE model. Evidently, there is dissonance in these findings, so it is suggested that offering the PGCE at both levels creates additional work for tutors and trainees, whereas providing the level 7 only PGCE creates a different workload. Therefore, tutors perceive that they are working harder where both awards are offered. Whatever the reasons for tutors' perceptions, this needs to be considered further because it may be damaging for areas such as staff morale and retention.

Although tutors in both HEIs were keen to offer the level 7 PGCE, they were also concerned about some trainees' ability to operate at level 7. A typical response was:

> *'Team members were wary due to the calibre of the students and concerned some wouldn't get through'* (HEI 1).

Graham-Matheson (2010) also found that tutors were concerned about trainees who might struggle with level 7 work or feel they had 'failed' if they did not achieve level 7 credits, although Sewell (2008) feels that trainees should be able to work at level 7 with support. However, there are variations in students' preparedness for level 7 study, some trainees have different priorities and also some trainees may not want to study at level 7, supporting these findings.

Staff enjoyment only emerged from tutors in HEI 1 (which offered both awards and had a minority of trainees undertaking level 7 study), although tutors felt they now had additional work. Nevertheless, this is consistent with research that intellectual challenge is significant in HE lecturers' job satisfaction (Rhodes *et al.,* 2007). One tutor reported that *'tutors really enjoyed level 7'*. So, working at level 7 may create additional work but these findings may also indicate that this is beneficial in areas such as tutors' self-esteem, retention and career progression.

The need for staff development emerged from both HEIs. One tutor considered that *'Tutors didn't know or felt they didn't know how to teach writing at masters level'* (HEI 2). This may indicate there was still further work to be done in both HEIs to embed the level 7 PGCE, although this is not surprising as data were collected at the end of the first year of operating the level 7 PGCE.

(ii) Trainee teacher satisfaction levels
Based on questionnaire responses, table 1 below shows trainee teacher satisfaction levels regarding the level of their PGCE.

Table 1: Trainee teacher levels of satisfaction regarding their PGCE.

	Very satisfied	**Satisfied**	**Not satisfied**	**No opinion**
Level 6, HEI 1	35%	61%	4%	/
Level 7, HEI 1	70%	30%	/	/
Level 7, HEI 2	12%	62%	13%	13%

The highest satisfaction levels were found in HEI 1, which operated the PGCE at both levels. The cohort reporting the highest satisfaction were trainees who chose the level 7 PGCE in HEI 1 and the least satisfied were trainees undertaking the level 7 PGCE in HEI 2 which only operated this award. It is fully acknowledged that satisfaction levels are dependent upon a wide range of factors. Furthermore, it should be highlighted that trainees were asked to comment on their satisfaction regarding the level of their PGCE and not on the programme in general.

(iii) Trainee teacher perspectives of different PGCE models
Level 6 cohort, HEI 1

Results from the questionnaires showed that 96% of trainees were positive about the level 6 PGCE, concurring with reports that the original PGCE was very successful (Sewell, 2008). Illustrative quotations are below:

> *'It was what I came here to do.'*

> *'I was satisfied with the workload and level to which I was completing the work although worry about chances in the future. Have I disadvantaged myself?'*

Although comments are positive, the latter comment also indicates that some trainees may feel their level 6 PGCE was of a lesser value. This aligns with Graham-Matheson's (2010) research showing a negative effect on students undertaking the level 6 PGCE.

Questionnaire responses in Table 2. overleaf show the reasons given for deciding not to take the level 7 PGCE.

Table 2. Reasons given for deciding not to take the level 7 PGCE.

Reasons given for deciding not to take the level 7 PGCE	%
Perceived additional work at the start of the course	17%
Demands of the school-based experience	17%
Feeling that professional practice was more important	14%
Consequences of failing level 7	13%
General course demands	12%
May not be important for employability	11%
Lack of information about level 7	6%
Uncertainty regarding level 7 transferability of credits to other HEIs	3%
'Other'	3%
Discouragement by tutors	2%
Participating in the first year of a new award	2%

In the 'other' option, all respondents gave ineligibility as the reason. Workload - the most common reason for not taking the level 7 PGCE - was also raised by tutors and is discussed above. Trainees also considered that the level 7 PGCE had involved extra work, but focus group responses showed that this had been minimal, and trainees concluded that there had been no real reason not to take the level 7 award, if eligible. Furthermore, concerns regarding the demands of the school-based experience show trainees prioritising the professional standards over the PGCE, as Graham-Matheson (2010) found.

The following perceptions also emerged from the focus group: (i) choice was highly valued, (ii) concerns regarding the assessment criteria, (iii) theory at level 7 had no benefits, (iv) divisive nature of two PGCE awards, and (v) feelings of isolation if trainees were the only one from their subject who opted for level 7. The following comments were made regarding choice:

> *'Having the choice and being able to select according to your own career path and life position is really important.'*

> *'They need to make their own decisions.'*

Choice has been shown above to be important for students to have a meaningful engagement on programmes (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Regarding assessment criteria, one trainee commented:

> *'As I only got 56% I didn't have the confidence [to undertake the level 7 PGCE]. … There should be other assessments of how we're doing before deciding who does level 7 and wider criteria, like school mentors' opinions.'*

Trainees were required to gain 55%+ in the first assignment to be eligible for the level 7 PGCE and many did not have sufficient confidence to opt for the level 7 PGCE if they only achieved 55% or marginally above this, or did not feel sufficiently confident in the 55% pass rate as an accurate measure to support their decision. The results of assignments is typical of how providers are basing eligibility to the level 7 PGCE, although Sewell (2008) also considers that wider criteria could be applied. However, this has disadvantages as indicated above. Also, it must be acknowledged that academic and professional skills are not inextricably linked. The failure of trainees to see the benefit of theory is consistent with literature (Grove-White, 2004, in Davies, 2004; Jackson, 2009). A typical comment was '*More in-depth theory has no benefits to practice'.* Again, the divisive nature of different qualifications emerged and is discussed above. This cohort felt that their level 6 PGCE was of a lesser value than the level 7 PGCE, which is supported by literature (Graham-Matheson, 2010). A typical comment was *'Possibly put teachers at a disadvantage if other institutions offer level 7 only'.* Finally, some trainees felt isolated if they were the only one from their subject who opted for the level 7 PGCE, finding themselves in sessions away from their subject peers and isolated from the social integration developed within subject areas. One trainee commented that *'sometimes only one trainee in the subject doing level 7 so no peer support, which made some feel isolated'*. It is perhaps not surprising that trainees felt this way because secondary trainees spend much of their time in subject areas during a PGCE course and secondary teachers are known to have strong subject allegiances (Smethem, 2007), but it may also indicate that the level 7 PGCE needs to be organised differently within some HEIs for student integration purposes.

Level 7 cohort, HEI 1
Questionnaire results showed that all trainees were positive about the level 7 PGCE, which may align with Sewell's (2008) view that this is now most appropriate for the changing demands on teachers. Questionnaire responses in table 3 below show the reasons for deciding to take the level 7 PGCE.

Table 3. Reasons given for deciding to take the level 7 PGCE.

Reasons given for deciding to take the level 7 PGCE	%
Eligibility	25%
Level 7 credits could be transferred towards a masters degree	18%
Perceived enhanced career opportunities later	18%

Perceived enhanced employability	14%
No financial cost	14%
Encouragement by tutors	11%
'Other reason'	0%

The following perceptions also emerged from the focus group: (i) choice between the two PGCEs was valued highly, (ii) there had been a small amount of additional work, (iii) some schools were unaware of the level 7 PGCE, (iv) it is important to have a postgraduate qualification, and (v) a compulsory level 7 PGCE would be less special. Again, choice between the two awards was the main reason for high satisfaction and is discussed above. Illustrative comments are overleaf:

> *'Level 6 should still remain an option.'*
> *'Not everyone will benefit from this.'*

The latter comment may also indicate that some trainees in the level 7 cohort felt themselves to now be an 'élite'.

Although all trainees were positive about the level 7 PGCE, they acknowledged that *'It does involve a small amount of additional work, but we chose to do more work'*. Also, despite feeling that some schools were unaware of the level 7 PGCE – which may have undermined the qualification due to how highly trainees typically regard their school-based mentors' opinions (Hobson, 2002), trainees felt it was important to have a postgraduate qualification, which concurs with Jackson's research (2009), although they also considered that a compulsory level 7 PGCE would be less special. This contradiction may again indicate that the level 7 cohort felt themselves to be an 'élite'. Comments are below:

> '*Not sure some schools know about it [the level 7 PGCE].'*
> *'I wanted a **postgraduate** qualification*.'
> 'So many level 7s may make it less special and saturated.'

Level 7 cohort, HEI 2
Questionnaire results showed that 74% of trainees were positive about the level 7 PGCE. However, this is lower than for the level 7 cohort in HEI 1. The following perceptions emerged from this focus group: (i) a lack of awareness that the PGCE could be at any other level than at level 7, (ii) schools are largely unaware of the level 7 PGCE, and (iii) the level 7 PGCE may lead to most teachers having masters degrees, which will then be less special.

The first two points reinforce the confusion surrounding the changes (Barker, 2007). Trainees commented that:

> *'It was the only one [programme] I was really aware of.'*

> *'The teachers that I spoke to were … unaware that it [the PGCE] was masters level.'*

Also, as for the HEI 1 level 7 cohort, these trainees felt that the level 7 PGCE may lead to more teachers having masters degrees and will become less special. One trainee commented that *'Everyone is going to have a masters and it's going to be worthless'*. Certainly the demand for masters degrees has increased (Tobin, 2011) and postgraduate

study may no longer carry the weight it used to (Tobin, 2010). However, the difficult economic climate and increased undergraduate fees could start to reverse the trend for postgraduate study anyway.

Conclusion

Table 4. has been produced to highlight the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the two most common PGCE models.

Table 4. The perceived advantages and disadvantages of different PGCE models.

	Advantages	**Disadvantages**
Both PGCE awards	High levels of trainee satisfaction. Personal choice highly valued by trainees. Staff enjoyment.	Divisive culture can emerge. Additional workload for tutors. Small amount of additional work for trainees undertaking the level 7 PGCE.
Level 7 only PGCE	Highly aspirational Providers can more easily ensure that level 7 study permeates throughout the whole programme.	Not all trainees are ready to/ want to undertake M level study, so is this a one-size-fits-all model through which trainees are forced?

The highest satisfaction levels emerged from the cohort who undertook the level 7 PGCE in HEI 1 and it is important to note the higher levels of student satisfaction in HEI 1 where the PGCE operates at both levels, supporting this model. However, it must be reiterated that trainee satisfaction levels are regarding the level of the PGCE and not the programme in general. The high levels of satisfaction in HEI 1 also appear to mirror the staff enjoyment found in HEI 1, which may indicate other issues, such as particular strengths in the culture of this HEI. Also, although student satisfaction and staff enjoyment are important, the quality of trainees' practice is also clearly important. Furthermore, the two HEIs supported trainees differently regarding level 7 study. HEI 1 trainees undertaking the level 7 PGCE were taught discretely from their subject groups and perceived that they had received regular additional taught sessions from the start of semester 2, whereas HEI 2 trainees were taught together as a whole cohort and perceived that they had received one taught session towards the end of the programme. Therefore, the nature of the support and information given to trainees across the two HEIs may have been very different and may have been a contributing factor in satisfaction levels too.

Although M level ITE is aspirational. The level 7 PGCE, when operated as the sole award, is essentially a one-size-fits-all model, which may not be appropriate for everyone. Therefore, a differentiated approach to ITE via awards at different levels is suggested as an effective strategy to support and extend trainees' development. It must also be recognised that level 7 qualifications may not be the only pathway to becoming a good teacher. However, Finnish schools are repeatedly described as the best in the world, with Finland's masters level teaching profession considered to be a contributing factor (Tryggvason, 2009). Overall, by only operating the level 7 PGCE some providers may be forcing all trainees to meet M level criteria, although some may not be ready to or may not want to. Therefore, it is suggested that it may be better to set trainees up for success in what is a professionally and

academically demanding programme, by allowing them to choose the level at which to undertake ITE. In turn, this could allow for greater differentiated support for trainees, offering a more effective student experience. However, providers offering the PGCE at both levels need to address the disadvantages inherent in this model by careful management of student integration strategies. Also, providers will clearly still need to base their decision around the model most suited to their trainee intake.

It has been established that the level 6 and level 7 PGCE model is the most popular, but what is not known is the number of trainees exiting with which award. From professional experience it appears that most trainees may now be undertaking the level 7 PGCE now that this award has become established, but this was not the case in HEI 1 at the time of data collection in 2008. In the absence of these data and due to the number of years the level 7 PGCE has now been operated, it is acknowledged that perspectives may now have shifted if the level 7 PGCE has now become the 'norm' and that further research in this area would now be appropriate.

Finally, this research could be used by providers to re-consider their PGCE/ ITE model and further improve trainees' practice, student satisfaction, the student experience and retention, by attempting to exploit the advantages and minimise the disadvantages inherent in different models. For example, this research has shown choice to be key to student satisfaction levels within different PGCE models and reinforces that one-size-fits-all models, in which trainees have limited choice and limited ownership of their learning, are contrary to the andragogic model for effective adult learning (Knowles, 1990) and may not meet individuals' needs. This research could also be used by HE senior managers to reflect on the demands of working at different academic levels alongside professional standards and the associated HE ITE tutors' workload pressures, in order to enhance the staff experience.

Acknowledgements

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