

'Stuck Places'

Are there **threshold concepts** in learning to teach geography?

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The Trainees

**Postgraduate Diploma in
Education (PGDipEd)
Secondary Geography**

**120 credit, Masters level
course of
Initial Teacher Education**

**Optional progression to MEd
Teaching Studies (60 credit
dissertation
after NQT year)**

**Strong focus on reflection and
'continuous professional
dialogue'**

Aim:

**To explore the 'stuck places' of
a group of trainees, through the
eyes of the trainees, their
mentors and their tutor**

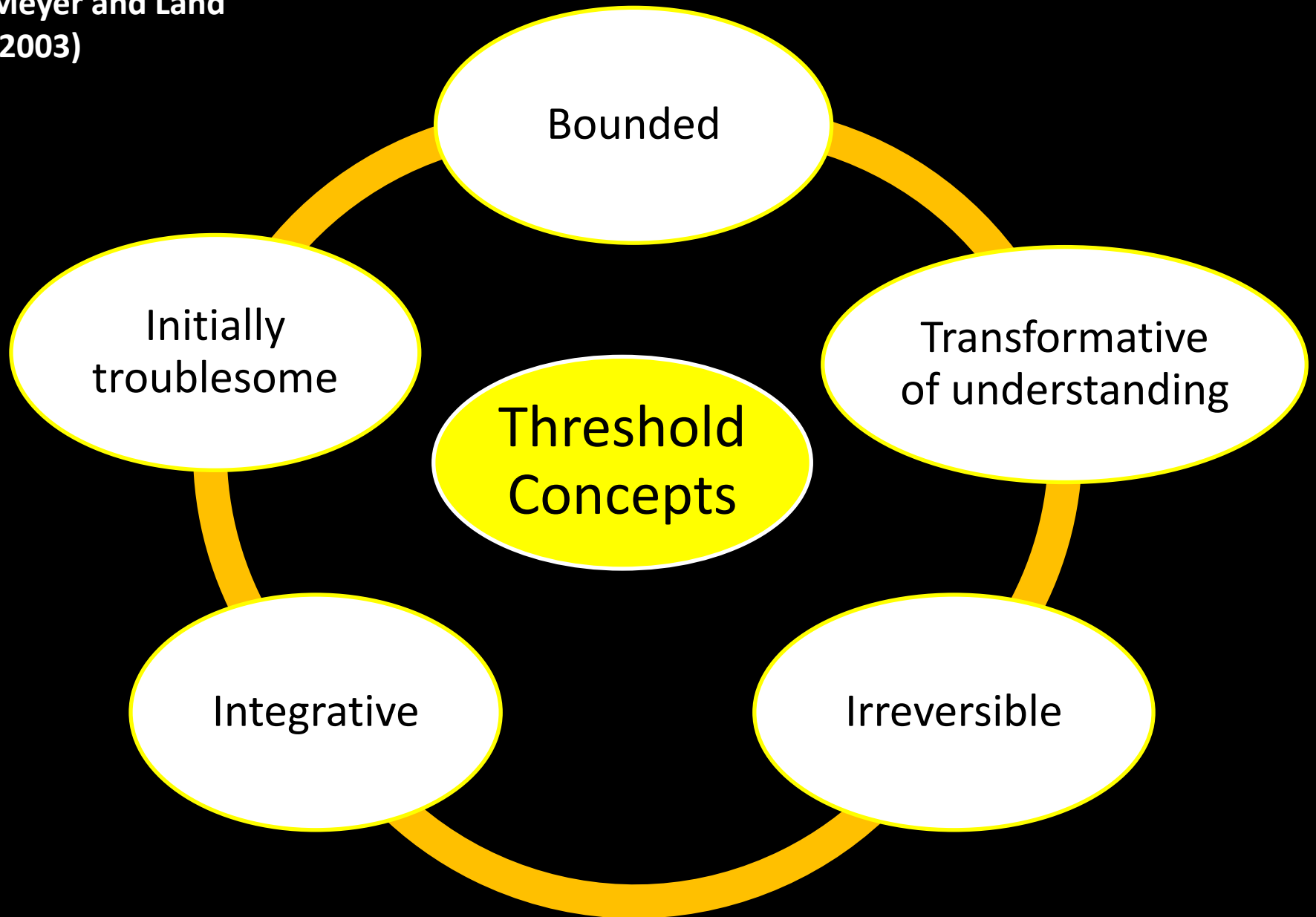
The Mentors

**Many are ex-trainees and MEd
completers. All have been
trained by the University as
mentors for beginning teachers**

The Tutors

**One full time and one 0.1
(Paul Weeden)**





Where were/are **trainees' stuck places?**

Some informal findings

I'm confused by some of the language being used [by mentors, tutors or other trainees] **70%** (16/23)

I don't know how to teach [concept/process/theory/topic]

39% (9/23)

Post-16, physical and dynamic processes, or 'unfamiliar geography' such as BTEC T&T

Pupils [some or all] are confused by the language I'm using

30% (7/23)

Using geographical terminology in a pupil friendly way

What has **changed** for trainees?

I feel like my knowledge [of something] has changed **70%** (16/23)
(Subject knowledge, school culture, how to lesson plan)

I feel like my understanding [of something] has changed **65%** (15/23)
(How to manage pupils effectively, why to lesson plan,
'interconnectedness of the subject' and how to use this with pupils)

I've learned how to do something by observing someone else do it

78% (18/23)

- **Observing a range of teachers (25%)**
- **Behaviour management (25%)**
- **Observing other trainees (13%)**

I've observed someone else doing something but can't replicate it

35% (8/23)

- **Behaviour management**
- **Pace**

THE CONCEPT

LIMINAL SPACE

THE THRESHOLD

**New
knowledge**



**New
understanding**

eureka

Crossing the threshold: An example of a small lightbulb



Starter: Write a definition of a landscape.

Philip: It's when your paper is this way round, not this way.

Mr Wright: So – who can tell me what a landscape is?

In the lesson debrief, we discussed a) why the starter activity had proven to be problematic and b) the missed opportunity of Philip's answer. **If this could be interpreted as a lightbulb moment for Mr Wright, what might the threshold concept be in this instance?**

Mr Wright: Well, yes, but that's not very geographical. Who else has an answer?

Why is this important?

Teaching is a craft and it is best learnt as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman. Watching others, and being rigorously observed yourself as you develop, is the best route to acquiring mastery in the classroom

(DfE, 2010)



Is this true?

School-led training ▶

Find out more about options for teacher training based in schools, including School Direct.

University-led training ▶

Find out more about options for teacher training based in ~~higher~~ education institutions.

So what's next?

- Spring 2015: **Continue pilot studies** (extend to Physics PGDipEd, plus other subjects as available)
- Summer 2015: Ethics approval and **selection of methods**. Integration into course documentation and tasks
- Autumn 2015: **Data collection begins** with 2015-16 cohort (n=21)
- Autumn 2015: Begin to track 2014-15 cohort (currently n=24) as **NQTs**

For your consideration:

I would like to extend (some) data collection to a number of institutions. Is this something you could be involved in?