Challenges and Opportunities: Developing learning and teaching in ITE across the UK

A selection of conference papers presented on 19th May 2005 at St Martin’s College, Lancaster
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St.Martin’s College, Lancaster
The ESCalate ITE project at St.Martin's College aims to give support and advice on pedagogy, curriculum enhancement and staff development in relation to teacher education. We work to identify and disseminate good practice through publications and conference and workshop events, and liaise with other organisations involved in teacher education. Present priorities include e-learning, bridging the gap between university and school-based learning, the 'Every Child Matters' agenda, supporting new teacher educators and the review of Professional Standards for classroom teachers. We would love to hear from you concerning any of the issues raised in this booklet, any of the present priorities and, in fact, anything to do with Initial Teacher Education and the interface with schools. You can contact us by e-mail using this address: escalate@ucsm.ac.uk.

All of ESCalate’s work can be accessed through the website www.escalate.ac.uk
In May 2005, the ESCalate ITE team at St.Martin’s College, Lancaster hosted a one-day conference for staff working in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). The aim of the conference was to explore a range of current challenges and opportunities for those who support learning and teaching in UK Initial Teacher Education and it provided the opportunity to consider these challenges, learn about innovations and share ideas with colleagues across the sector. This booklet draws together a range of papers which were presented in workshops throughout the day and will be of interest to all staff in schools and Higher Education Institutions concerned with Initial Teacher Education.

The types of knowledge required in becoming an effective teacher are complex and wide-ranging. This means that student teachers and those who support their learning need to explore questions about the nature and the interconnectedness of knowledge and how it relates to external experiences of the world. ITE programmes need to take into account a large number of interconnected determinants that impact upon student teachers’ development, each of which need to be recognised, anticipated and woven into programmes. The papers in this booklet present a lively and varied digest, ranging from courses offered to prospective students, to guidance for teacher educators’ induction, to specific ideas for short-term placements, to the impact of new technologies. They offer refreshing ideas to encourage experimentation and stimulate advancement in ITE practice. As the review of Professional Standards for classroom teachers is underway and the government promises ‘a new dynamism’ in schools in the White Paper ‘Higher Standards: Better Schools for All’, published in October 2005, Initial Teacher Education must look to initiate this dynamism through the range and inspiration of its practice.

Steven Hutchinson explains the Open University’s involvement with Initial Teacher Education and the popularity it enjoys amongst aspiring postgraduates as a way into teaching for those whose personal circumstances demand a less conventional route.

Keira Sewell, Kate Cleary and David Howard’s paper on the development of a Masters level Postgraduate Certificate in Education at Bradford College is of great interest to those involved in similar projects. The explanation of the resolution of difficulties and the description of implementation and future plans are thorough and instructive.

Peter Boyd, Lily Baker, Kim Harris, Chris Kynch and Emma McVittie report on an ESCalate funded project which they undertook at St.Martin’s College to investigate the transition that schoolteachers make when they take up posts in Higher Education establishments. They present an informative discussion of the needs of these ‘cross-over’ colleagues.

Jean Murray’s research study at Brunel University was originally commissioned by ESCalate. The research poses some challenging questions for those involved in the induction of New Teacher Educators in Higher Education and points the way to improvements in practice.

Des Hewitt at Derby University addresses the challenge for teacher educators to prepare their students successfully for schools in challenging circumstances. A successful project of short-term school placements gave students the possibility of working in one of these schools, thus widening their experience as well as enhancing partnership links.

Adrian Copping and Sandra Eady organised high intensity placements for trainees at St.Martin’s College where professional dialogue and reflective practice were highlighted and creativity outside frameworks encouraged. The initiative was heralded by schools, pupils and students and this is an inspiring project for all those interested in the development of critical reflection.

Ray Potter and Deborah Roberts’ paper on Desktop Video Conferencing demonstrates the enormous future potential of this technology to facilitate communication and meetings. The ideas generated seem boundless and the potential to free up time and money exciting and inspirational.

Pat Jeffries considers the implementation of technology in Higher Educational institutions and outlines findings from a case study of final year Computer Science undergraduates. The findings are extremely beneficial for all those interested in developing e-learning and e-teaching strategies to enhance their practice.
1. Content, structure and methods: learning to teach with the Open University flexible PGCE programme.

Steven Hutchinson: The Open University

Summary

The Open University (OU) first became involved in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in 1992 and, since that time, over 5000 teachers have entered the teaching profession through this flexible route into teaching. For around 50% of students, this is the only route that they consider: in many parts of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the unique blend of distance learning materials backed by local tutor support in nearby partner schools is the only way to achieve a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). This paper describes the structure, content and methods used by the OU on its PGCE course and draws attention to the contribution that this sort of provision can make to widening participation in Initial Teacher Education.

Keywords

Flexible teacher training / Modular teacher training / Needs Analysis / The Open University / Open University school-based mentor / Open University modules / Open University Individual Training Plan (ITP) / FirstClass / Standards for Qualified Teacher Status (England)

Flexible Provision

In February of 1999, The Secretary of State for Education asked the TTA (1999) to develop ‘proposals for the structure, coverage and introduction of new modular postgraduate teacher training’ in response to a Green Paper (DfEE 1998). The new courses should address the need to increase social diversity within the teaching profession and make an important contribution to teacher recruitment.

The modular specification that resulted from this request contained the following elements:

- A Needs Analysis;
- An individual training plan;
- Self-standing modules with clearly defined outcomes in relation to the QTS Standards [...] with associated assessment;
- Flexibility for trainees to combine modules in different orders;
- Flexible start and finish and assessment times with full and part time options;
- Training closely linked to school experience;
- Guidance and support in relation to progress against the training plan and towards the QTS Standards.
- A final synoptic assessment

Individualised programmes, resulting from a Needs Analysis process should recognise prior learning and use this in order to identify the amount of training needed to gain Qualified Teacher Status.

The Open University, with 500 allocated places each year in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, is the biggest provider of flexible Initial Teacher Education. The following section describes the course in more detail.
Content, structure and methods: learning to teach with the Open University flexible PGCE programme.

Critically important is the way that these Key Issues are then developed by ‘in-school’ activities, written in the School Experience Guide. Each Level of the course is linked with a period of school experience:

- **Level 1**: 4 weeks in Secondary School A which can be taken flexibly, on a daily basis, where necessary. At the end of this school experience successful students will be able to plan, teach and evaluate a single lesson;

- **Level 2**: 7 weeks in a Secondary School A and 1 week in a linked Primary school. Three of these weeks can be taken flexibly and successful students will be able to plan, teach and evaluate a sequence of lessons at the end of this experience;

- **Level 3**: 10 weeks in Secondary School B. Two of these weeks can be taken flexibly and at the end of this Level, successful students will be able to plan, teach and evaluate extended sequences of lessons to the full age and attainment group.

In these activities (figure 3 provides an example from the linked Level 1 School Experience Guide), themes and ideas are located in the school or department setting and student teachers are asked to use the experience of the setting to reflect on course ideas and to use course ideas to reflect on the setting. The close interplay between the course materials and the school placements is a key principle underpinning the course structure.

At the end of each Level of the course, student teachers produce an assessment portfolio, with detailed activities set out in the Assessment Guide for each level.
This extract (figure 4) from the Assessment Guide for Level 1 illustrates the way in which ideas initially raised during module study, which are then taken up in school are finally assessed at the end of the level.

Students starting the course

Students apply to the PGCE course all year round and, as long as there is a local partner school which can support them, they can start the course. There are six course start points every year. Mentors are briefed and trained at the point of registration on a one-to-one basis by the student's personal OU tutor, who also assesses students in school and through the portfolio, and the Needs Analysis process starts immediately.

The results of the Needs Analysis process are contained in an Individual Training Plan (the ITP). This stipulates the amount of training that each student must complete in order to present for summative assessment at the end of the course. Developed in the context of a two-week placement, the ITP details:

- The modules that a student teacher must complete;
- The formative assessments that a student teacher must complete;
- The number of weeks that a student teacher must spend in school;
- The number of schools in which the student teacher must have placements;
- The amount of personal subject knowledge for teaching which must be covered.

Many students (48%) complete the full course, but a small minority (5%) have extensive prior experience and can complete the course on an 'Assessment Only' basis.

The Needs Analysis process

The Needs Analysis has six steps and is comprised of the following elements:

- Web-based audits;
- A telephone tutorial with a personal tutor;
- School-based experience with in-school support by a mentor and school co-ordinator;
- A school visit and individual tutorial from the personal tutor;
- Reports from the tutor and school on attainment;
- A portfolio illustrating evidence of achievement.

In addition, student teachers use the computer conferencing and e-mailing software, FirstClass (figure 6), in order to keep in regular contact with their tutor and with other student teachers.
An audit of prior teaching experience leading to achievement of the Standards for QTS; What Level am I?

The Standards for Qualified Teacher Status form the outcomes for all Initial Teacher Education courses in England that lead to the award of Qualified Teacher Status. The Open University PGCE has developed descriptive statements of student teachers at each level of the course based on each area of the English Standards.

Student teachers reflect on whether they are already able to meet the broad teaching outcomes for each level: can they already show evidence that they have successfully taught a single lesson, or sequences of lessons, or extended sequences of lessons across the age and attainment range.

Student teachers are then asked to look at the detailed descriptions which sit beneath each of the Standards headings in turn:

- Professional values and practice;
- Knowledge and Understanding;
- Planning, expectations and targets;
- Monitoring and assessment;
- Teaching and Class Management.

Figure 7: Professional values and practice at Level 1

An audit of module content

Regardless of the level of entry to the course, student teachers are asked to assess their relative strengths and priorities for development in each of the Key Issues. Figure 8 illustrates a Module audit.

An audit of personal subject knowledge

As part of the QTS Standards, student teachers ‘have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject they are trained to teach’ (DfES, 2002). The Open University subject knowledge audits focus on the identification of strengths in relation to the student curriculum, providing supporting information for self-development. In addition, the OU requires student teachers to start to use this knowledge in their teaching, setting out a series of related professional tasks, moving to a consideration of knowledge as pedagogical content.
Student teachers are then asked to complete an audit of their personal subject knowledge. Figure 9 shows part of the audit that relates to Music and ICT for music student teachers. Claims are made on the basis of familiarisation with each of the concepts or skills and are supported with further reading.

Different subjects have different ways of supporting student teachers. Science student teachers, for example, are engaged with the content through a related ‘question bank’. Figure 10 illustrates some supporting questions.

After the audits have been completed

The student’s personal tutor is able to see the audits being completed on line during the early part of the Needs Analysis and, once they are completed, the student and tutor have a telephone tutorial. During this conversation, the claims made by the student teacher are explored and probed and the student is offered a provisional route through the programme:

- Route 1 – complete the full course (about 48% of all students follow this route);
- Route 2 – start at level 2 of the course (about 31% of all students follow this route);
- Route 3 – start at level 3 of the course (about 16% of all students follow this route);
- Route 4 – Assessment only (about 5% of student follow this route).

Each route has its own different two week placement and the student teacher’s claims are further tested by the mentor and tutor in the classroom setting.

The tutor visit during Needs Analysis broadly establishes a pattern which generally speaking is followed during each school visit by the tutor at each level of the course, except for Level 3 where the tutor visits twice. The pattern is:

- Lesson/activity observation with mentor;
- Joint feedback and assessment;
- Student tutorial;
- Mentor development session.

OU tutors and mentors submit their reports from these visits, and at the end of the Level through an on-line reports site.
Meeting its objectives

The Open University's PGCE programme was developed specifically to provide a route to PGCE and QTS for those who ‘due to geographical isolation or personal commitments, were unable to access conventional routes for ITT’. (Harris and Shelton Mayes, 1997) With an average age of 35 years and over 70% of OU PGCE trainees remaining in either full or part-time employment during their programme, the Open University has been able to make a significant contribution to widening participation.

The information gathered by the University (Bird and Hutchinson, 2004, figure 12) at the point of application is helpful in illustrating why this might be the case. The ‘ability to study in your own time’ is considered to be very important by 77% of applicants to the OU PGCE; the opportunity to study at a distance is considered by 56% to be very important, and the flexibility provided by local school placement is considered to be important for 61% of applicants. When the programme was planned it was anticipated that many applicants would be attracted by the part-time nature of the course. 52% of applicants state that this is very important, but, for 36%, the full-time option, with the ability to complete within a year, was very important. It appears that for most of our student teachers, many of whom have domestic or personal commitments or are still in part-time or full-time employment, attending a conventional face to face course in Initial Teacher Education is not possible. For these student teachers, attending training institutions, often distant from their home, for teaching sessions is particularly problematic.

The main reasons given by trainees for choosing flexible training are: they have family commitments which preclude full time training, standard training routes would lead to financial difficulties or they prefer to study via distance learning and have control over the length of their training.

It is significant that 51% of applicants to the OU PGCE had not considered applying for any other PGCE course. This is in line with Ofsted’s (2003:10) finding that: Overall, the flexibility to structure a course around other commitments, such as family needs or a career change, was a significant factor for a substantial number of trainees who would not otherwise have been able to train as a teacher.

An important element of the new Flexible provision is the availability of individualised training routes which take account of previous experience, enabling students with appropriate prior experience to follow shorter courses of training, or to follow an assessment only route to Qualified Teacher Status. This aspect of the training was considered very important by 58% of applicants to date, and many applications have come from mature applicants who have experience of teaching overseas, of working as unqualified teachers in the UK, or of working in schools in other capacities.

A course which is responsive to individual circumstances and which is sensitive to personal needs, as well as taking prior experience into account, makes considerable demands on University systems and on the development of partnerships. A supported, open learning approach to Initial Teacher Education is ideal for students who are geographically isolated or who live in areas of the UK without other HEI provision or who have pressing personal or family needs. Finding school placements in some subject areas for students with limited mobility or flexibility in some parts of the country has been a significant problem for the Open University; our current partnership of over 1,000 Secondary schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland sometimes struggles to meet the subject and personal needs of many applicants to the profession.

Developing and extending this national partnership, working collaboratively with other HEI providers, so that we can meet the needs of all applicants and students on the OU PGCE Programme, is a significant challenge, but is more than counter-balanced by the number of successful partnerships which do manage to take these factors into account.
Conclusion

The Open University’s blend of supported open learning materials, coupled with placements in local schools, supported by school-based mentors and local tutors who are part of a national tutor team continues to provide opportunities for those student teachers who are unable to attend face to face institutions. As part of the broad mix of ITE provision in England, the OU course has become established over the last 15 years as a viable and high quality route to PGCE and QTS, with a recent Ofsted inspection of all subject areas, including an inspection of Management and Quality Assurance processes, endorsing this claim.

Most importantly though, it makes a significant contribution to the Open University’s mission to provide significant and potentially life-changing educational opportunities to anyone that wishes to take the challenge.

Biographical notes

Steven Hutchinson is Director of the PGCE at the Open University. Prior to his appointment to the Open University in 1997, he taught Music in Secondary Schools in Birmingham and West Midlands.

Bibliography


Mayes, A. S. and B. Young (1999) A new generation of teacher education programmes to contribute to global solutions to teacher shortage and quality: international collaboration between the Open University (UK) and California State University (US) (ICDE, Vienna, Austria).


Footnote

1. The OU has developed a supported, open learning route to Qualified Teacher Status through flexible PGCE courses in the following Secondary subjects:

- Design and Technology;
- Geography;
- Mathematics;
- Modern Foreign Languages (French, German and Spanish);
- Music;
- Science.

Challenges and Opportunities: Developing learning and teaching in ITE across the UK.
2. Developing a PGCE at M level – some lessons learned

Keira Sewell, Kate Cleary, David Howard: Bradford College

Summary

This paper explains the reasons behind the decision taken by the Department of Teacher Education in Bradford College to develop courses in Initial Teacher Education at Masters level. It is of interest to anyone considering or involved in similar developments and to those concerned with the continuing professional development of teachers. It outlines the reasons behind the decision and explains the development of the programme, including how difficulties were resolved and what kinds of consultation took place. The positive outcomes of the implementation are discussed, noting also valuable lessons that have been learned. Finally, future plans are presented to show what the next steps will be.

Keywords

M level / reflective teachers / pedagogy / consultation / resolution of difficulties / critical thinking / continuing professional development.

Development

1. The Department has run PGCE courses in both Primary and Secondary Education for a number of years and has an intake of approximately 120 students across full-time, flexible and Primary French and Spanish routes. The decision to develop the courses at M level was underpinned by two main factors:

- The clear message being given from the Teacher training Agency (TTA) that future teacher Continuing Professional Development (CPD) would only be funded at M level. This course was therefore designed to articulate onto existing Masters Awards delivered by the Department and new awards in development as response to gaining further PDP (Personal Development Plan) funding.

- The desire of the course team to extend thinking in Primary ITT beyond the Professional Standards required for QTS and to educate critically reflective teachers who could consider best approaches to Primary pedagogy underpinned by a broad and comprehensive understanding of theory and research in this area.

2. Development of the programme took approximately one academic year (September 2003 – June 2004) and involved the following processes:

- Agreement of principles for re-validation with teaching staff;

- Consultation with academic standards units (University and College) to consider best approach;

- Consultations with partnership schools;

- Consultations with students (both present and future cohorts);

- Consultations with External Examiners;

- Development of first draft and discussion with teaching staff;

- Final draft prepared and consulted on with teaching staff;

- Writing time – definitive document, programme specifications, module descriptors and critical appraisal paper reviewing current course;

- Validation;

- All students offered places for September 2004 entry were written to, informing them of the changes and of the support offered to students.

Consultations with teaching staff and the academic standards units proved to be the most challenging. The first because they each put forward a valid case for increasing the number of sessions, the second because the development of an academic award with recommendation for a professional qualification does not fit with the usual structure for course development.

3. Difficulties with the award were resolved by separating out the assessment for the two elements, although the course development team maintained the links between the two by clearly establishing the relationship between professional practice and theory and research in this area. The model below was therefore used for development.

Under the current regulations, students are required to gain a minimum of 40% in 40 credit points and 35% in 20 credit points in order to be awarded a Postgraduate...
Professional Standards – QTS

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<tr>
<th>Professional Standards – QTS</th>
<th>Academic Award - PGCE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Standards: 'Qualifying to Teach' (Assessed through school placements)</td>
<td>Primary Pedagogy (20 credit points – Level M)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills Tests in English, Mathematics and ICT</td>
<td>Assessment and Evaluation in the Primary Curriculum (20 credit points – Level M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking in a Specialist Subject Area (20 credit points – Level M)</td>
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Certificate in Education. However, students will need a minimum of 50% in each assignment order to articulate the PGCE onto the Masters programmes. Additionally, the programme has been validated so that students unsuccessful in school can obtain the academic award of PGCE only. In a similar way, if students do not achieve the minimum marks required in the assignments, they can be recommended for QTS only.

Education and Professional Studies (EPS) drives the content of each term and underpins the foci for the assignments. For example, the focus of all work, including that undertaken in schools, is Primary pedagogy which includes learning and teaching theories. All students attend key note lectures in EPS and develop the issues raised in smaller group seminars with the support of a tutor. School based tasks and focused reading develop these ideas further and enable students to relate theory to practice and to engage in critical debate about the ideas raised.

4. Difficulties relating to the number of teaching sessions allocated to each subject area were resolved in the following ways:

- Acknowledging the fact that we over-teach PGCE students and that by providing them with the skills of critical thought and evaluation we would prepare them to effectively learn more independently. This also had the added benefit that students could pursue areas of development identified through audits of knowledge and understanding independently;
- Removing specific contact sessions for a specialist subject area and providing more flexibility for students to pursue particular areas of interest in their chosen specialist area through the third assignment with tutorial support from appropriate tutors experienced in this area;
- Developing school based tasks which enabled partnership schools to be involved in the training of students;
- Providing focused reading designed for discussion during sessions, thus transferring the ownership of learning more firmly to the students.

5. Module study days were also incorporated into the programme, heavily weighted towards the first two terms of the course, designed to support students in developing specific study skills required for M level academic work (e.g. academic referencing, critical thinking, reading and writing, structuring assignments, carrying out literature reviews, using research tools such as electronic databases of journals, etc.). These took the form of taught sessions, seminars and tutorials.

6. Consultations with schools demonstrated that they were largely in favour of the developments and found the idea of critically reflective teachers exciting. However, they expressed concern that the College would still prepare them for teaching the full range of Primary subjects. The course team ensured that all National Curriculum (NC) subjects would still be covered, even if Foundation Subjects were only covered at an introductory level.

7. Consultations with the current cohort of students indicated that they had mixed views. Some were disappointed that they had not been given the option of this route, whilst others were relieved! Consultations with the future cohort of students demonstrated that many were nervous of commencing study at this level and anxious about their achievements. To address this, the course team offered two study days (one in July and one in September) to introduce students to the study skills required for this level of study.

Implementation

The course commenced in September 2004 and students have now completed two of the assignments and are beginning their second block placement in school. To date, retention is at 98% with those students who have withdrawn doing so on health grounds or issues relating to finance. All but one student is on course to gain a PGCE and be recommended for QTS. Feedback from partnership schools and students has been positive. However, during the year, the course team has learned a number of valuable lessons.

1. Study skill support is essential to ensure students meet the rigours of writing at Masters level. However, it proved important that not all days were fully timetabled as time must be provided for students to meet with tutors, access the library and have time to think!
2. All elements of the programme must include development of critical thinking skills in order to enable students to engage fully with the programme. This required us to review the focus of sessions in subject areas and an agreement from all teaching staff that their elements would include the following:

- Development of students’ knowledge and understanding of a subject area;
- Development of students’ understanding of pedagogical approaches to this subject area;
- Development of students’ critical thinking skills in this area; to include reflection on current pedagogical approaches, misconceptions and research and theory.

3. The provision of focused texts is an essential element in introducing students to the reading of academic papers. Students are also sent a reading list of key texts prior to commencing the course.

4. Students were required to come out of their school block placements for one day each placement to attend tutorials for their academic assignments and to reflect on progress in the Professional Standards. This has proved extremely useful and schools have been very accommodating in enabling this to happen.

5. The provision of a personal tutor and a Higher Education progress file has proved effective in supporting students in reflecting on their progress in all elements of the course. Tutors meet regularly with students and will construct references and support the CEDP (Continuing Education and Professional Development) at the end of the course. There are plans to develop the HE progress file in the future.

6. A small team of module tutors was established (7 in total) to support students in writing the assignments. Many of these tutors already contribute to the Masters programmes delivered in the Department and teach on a range of subject areas delivered within the programme. Each student is allocated a tutor for the first two modules although other tutors are involved in the final assignment, depending on the subject area being addressed. These tutors are responsible for developing, monitoring and reviewing the modules including the assignments, marking assignments and providing tutorial support for students. This has proved extremely successful as moderation is easier and a shared understanding of the requirements for M level work has been established, consistent information is provided to students, meetings between these tutors are easier to arrange and students are likely to meet these tutors again should they articulate onto Masters Awards delivered in the Department.

7. The use of a Virtual Learning Environment (WebCT) has proved extremely successful in supporting the course. The Information and Communications Hub contains copies of all course documentation and students and tutors can communicate on an individual basis or through the discussion forum. To date, this site has received 220,000 hits since September.

8. The development of generic marking criteria to support specific assignment criteria for each HE level (1-4) and each grade boundary has proved useful to both students and staff. Students are very aware what markers are looking for and understand more clearly now the progression through levels.

Where to now?

1. Review and evaluation of the current course is already underway through consultations and surveys with schools, students and teaching staff.

2. The Department is currently developing Masters and Postgraduate Diploma awards which provide a clear route for articulation for this award. These complement the current Masters in Education and will be focused on teaching and practitioner research.

3. The Department is currently in the process of re-validating the Secondary PGCE awards at Level M in line with this award for implementation in September 2005.

4. The course has already impacted on the ways in which Undergraduate programmes are delivered in that further attention has been paid to developing students’ critical thinking skills from Year one and students are more conversant with the requirements of different levels of awards.

5. Further development work is intended on the HE progress file.

For further details, please contact Kate Cleary – k.cleary@bradfordcollege.ac.uk

Please turn over for biographical notes.
Challenges and Opportunities: Developing learning and teaching in ITE across the UK.

Biographical notes

Keira Sewell started her career teaching science in a Secondary school and then became Advisory Teacher for Cross-Phase Science in Calderdale. From there she went to Bradford to be Advisory Teacher for Primary Science. In 1993 she moved to the Teacher Education Department in Bradford College to teach science education and aspects of teaching and learning on a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses. In 2001 she took up the post of Curriculum and Staff Development Co-ordinator within the Department. She has since moved to Southampton University to teach science education and to undertake research in the area of pedagogy and curriculum.

David Howard taught for sixteen years in a range of Primary schools in London, York and Leeds. He was a deputy-headteacher for 5 years in a Leeds Primary school. In 2002 he moved to the Teacher Education Department in Bradford College to teach mathematics education and aspects of teaching and learning on a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses. In 2004 he became deputy-course tutor for the postgraduate Primary course within the Department.

Kate Cleary started her career teaching history in a Secondary school. She then became Advisory Teacher for Cross-Phase Humanities in Calderdale. From there she went to Bradford to be Advisory Teacher for Cross phase History. In 1993 Kate moved to the Department of Teacher Education in Bradford College to teach history, ICT and aspects of teaching and learning on a variety of ITE courses. She has also been Year Leader on a range of programmes. In 2002 she became the Course Tutor for the PGCE Primary programme.
Summary

This paper reports on an Escalate funded project which is investigating the journey of school teachers as they are appointed to become university based teacher educators. The findings suggest that a very varied range of experiences exists during transition to their new role even within one case study education faculty. The study identifies tensions between the ‘professional’ and ‘academic’ systems in the teacher education partnership which make it a particularly challenging workplace for new teacher educators.

Keywords

Teacher educator / Professional learning / Activity theory / Boundary-crossing

Context

This paper reports on investigation of the experiences of new teacher educators within one education faculty. The case study is based on a large and successful education faculty with high employability rates for graduating student teachers and excellent external inspection reports. However, most observers would agree that teacher educators in England carry heavy workloads and deal with multiple roles and responsibilities and that is the context in which new teacher educators in this study are working and learning.

Purpose

The project aims to understand the structures and processes which contribute effectively to the professional learning of new teacher educators as they make the transition from school teacher to become Higher Education (HE) based teacher educators, that is ‘lecturers’ in Initial Teacher Education. The focus is on the basic academic unit (Dill, 1999), which includes subject and programme teams but is extended here to also include non-formal networks. The workplace learning of new teacher educators is viewed as social practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Eraut, 2000) operating within formal and non-formal structures and processes, referred to as ‘learning architecture’ by Dill (1999). The aim is to inform practice locally but also to contribute to the theoretical understanding of induction for new teacher educators (Trowler & Knight, 2000).

The key questions include:

1. What are the perspectives of new teacher educators regarding their professional learning as they become HE based teacher educators?
2. How do structures and processes within the education faculty, including formal and non formal teams or communities of practice, support the professional learning of new teacher educators?

3. To what extent do their main communities of practice provide new teacher educators with induction and support for development of a pedagogy for teaching adults in HE and for development of scholarly and research activity?

Theoretical frameworks

The concept of community of practice within situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) provides a framework for understanding professional workplace learning by new teacher educators within the case study education faculty. Fuller et al. (2005) provide a useful critique in the application of situated learning to complex educational settings and emphasise the importance of power relationships and the potential of formal experiences to contribute to workplace learning.

Important previous work on new teacher educator induction informed this project in highlighting the twin challenges of becoming research active and developing a pedagogy for teaching adults (Murray & Male, 2005). Previous work had identified the danger of new teacher educators becoming ‘semi-academic’ (Macguire, 2000; Ducharme, 1993; Hatton, 1997), in this scenario the teacher educator maintains the core of their identity as that of a school teacher.

Murray and Male (2005) develop a useful and relevant framework which views new teacher educators as moving from first order practitioners (school teacher) to second order (teacher educators). They apply a perspective of occupational change developed by Southworth (1995) which focuses on the tension between situational self, ‘developed from interaction with others’, and substantial self, based on ‘a core of self defining beliefs relatively impervious to change’ (p.2). These are seen as wide apart, especially in the first year of appointment of a teacher educator, and career

3. Working with Multiple Identities: supporting new teacher education tutors in Higher Education.

Peter Boyd; Lily Baker; Kim Harris; Chris Kynch; Emma McVittie: St Martin’s College, Lancaster

3. Working with Multiple Identities: supporting new teacher education tutors in Higher Education.
transition is considered to be complete when the situational and substantial selves are back in close alignment.

A central conceptual code emerging from the qualitative analysis focused on ‘transfer of teaching’ from school to Higher Education. The workplace of the new teacher educators appears to be primarily the ‘university and academic’ system which we define here as the professional world of the academic. However, the Education Faculty works in partnership with a large number of schools which provide work placements for student teachers. The new teacher educators visit schools to support the teachers in their work with students and to observe students teaching. In this way the workplace of the new teacher educators continues to include the ‘schools and professional’ system which we define as the professional world of school teaching. The teacher educators thus expressed within the interview data a view of their workplace as including two separate but inter-related activity systems. The two systems have some elements in common but they also have clear differences including language, rules and purposes.

Our analysis suggests that the struggles of new teacher educators during transition into their new role appears to be due to structural contradictions within the subject discipline and the teacher education partnership which exacerbate the barriers to alignment of situational and substantial selves. In discussing academic identity, Kogan (2000) looks beyond the university to consider connections of academics with the external environment and suggests that an ‘exchange relationship’ is a more useful metaphor than that of a ‘community’ (p.215). Wilson (2004) uses activity theory to analyse teacher education partnership as a single activity system but our analysis points towards the potential of Engestrom’s work (2001) on networks of interacting activity systems. This perspective views the university – school Initial Teacher Education partnership as two separate but inter-related activity systems with tensions or contradictions within and between the two systems which generate efforts by individuals and groups to bring about change.

Our analysis leads us then to adopt a position in which the nature of the subject discipline of teacher education and of the teacher education partnership provide dominant contextual elements which frame and help to explain the challenges faced by new teacher educators. Activity theory enables us to express a perspective of teacher education partnership, and, to a lesser extent, of the subject discipline, as placing teacher educators and their students, in a boundary-crossing context. The contradictions and tensions within that context provide the key explanations for the experiences of new teacher educators. Activity theory considers the development and learning of individual teacher educators as relatively independent but they are viewed as ‘subordinate units of analysis’ which may only be understood within the context of whole activity systems. It provides a useful theoretical approach to analysis of the case study education faculty as a ‘collective, artifact-mediated and object-oriented activity system’ (Engestrom, 2001:136).

Methodology

The project adopts a practitioner research approach as the research team is investigating social practice within our own faculty and four of the research team are relatively new teacher educators themselves. It is informed by a practitioner research approach (Robson, 2002) and to some extent took the form of a self study of teacher education practice (Berry and Loughran, 2002). However, the level of collaboration possible beyond the core research team was limited by the workload and time constraints of colleagues.

A sample of 18 new teacher educators were interviewed, they had between one and four years experience in Higher Education. The sample included teacher educators from both Primary and Secondary age phases and covered a range of school curriculum subject specialisms. Their roles within school and prior experience in school teaching differed considerably, but they had all made a major shift from teaching in schools to working in Higher Education.

In England, Initial Teacher Education programmes operate in partnerships between Higher Education institutions and schools. Schools at the very least provide work placements for students, and school teachers take on the role of school- based teacher educator and act as mentor to the students. Teacher educators based in Higher Education institutions manage the links with schools for purposes of quality assurance and visit schools to support school-based tutors as they work with the students. Many of the new HE teacher educators in this study had gained some experience of being a school-based teacher educator acting as mentor to student teachers.

Semi-structured interviews were used with an emphasis on gaining spontaneous description from the interviewees of their journey into Higher Education. In addition, four heads of department were interviewed to gain their perspective on the induction of new teacher educators. Four follow-up interviews were also conducted in order to test the emerging findings of the analysis carried out by the research team. The qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts was informed by a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin 1998). The days spent by the research team on collaborative data analysis allowed us to explore our own identities and conceptions of being a teacher educator. We were influenced by the use of situated learning and activity theory frameworks as applied to new academics.
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by Trowler and Knight (2000).

The collaborative process enabled us to respond to the emerging analysis and to move into a more speculative mode which allowed us to express a view of teacher education partnership from an activity theory perspective (Engestrom, 2001). It is important to note that the element of this paper informed by Engestrom’s work and presented in figure 1 was stimulated by the data analysis but goes beyond it. The diagram in figure 1 is a tentative and emergent attempt to express our shared perspective as practitioner educators of the teacher education partnership as a workplace.

Findings

In order to provide a concise report for the purposes of this paper the reporting of our analysis of the interview transcripts will not include quotes. The responses reveal both surface level contextual issues surrounding the initial uncertainties of the procedures in Higher Education, and also the deeper level issues relating to the professional learning which is fundamental to this case study.

Contextual issues

Findings in this category related predominantly to the problems and feelings of disorientation encountered by the new teacher educators on moving into a large institution and familiarising themselves with the complex administrative systems. The need to know how to deal with practical problems such as claiming travel expenses, ordering resources and confirming room bookings was compounded by frustration in not knowing who to ask and in some cases a reluctance to ask for help.

A gap was identified in the organisational learning of new teacher educators in terms of acquiring an understanding of the political processes and change mechanisms within a large institution and within the faculty, the departments and the teaching teams. A feeling of being a ‘small fish’ illustrates the perceived lack of influence felt by many of the new teacher educators. This was particularly disconcerting for those who had previously held leadership roles within schools. Some new teacher educators expressed a feeling of isolation and difficulty in developing a sense of belonging.

A key strand permeating new teacher educator perspectives related to time management issues. Personal management of time was cited as a problem, particularly when combined with a lack of understanding of the overall workload throughout the academic year. Finding time for reflection, to attend courses, or to engage fully with induction needs was seen as a problem because of workload.

Pedagogy for Higher Education

A central conceptual theme arising from the qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts was termed ‘transfer of teaching’. It related to the perception by new teacher educators that they were able to bring some of their teaching practices from school and apply them in the HE setting; this important theme included three dimensions.

Firstly new teacher educators felt that they had many of the practical skills required to plan and deliver taught sessions. However many did report a tendency to use didactic lecture based approaches in the early stages. This was partly related to their perceived expectations of Higher Education but also that it seemed ‘safer’ to lecture when dealing with very recently acquired propositional knowledge.

Secondly new teacher educators placed a high priority on maintaining their credibility as a school teacher; they saw this as critical to their relationships with student teachers and with partnership colleagues in schools. It was also related to their need felt to maintain the ability to move back into working in schools if they were not successful or happy in Higher Education. These findings highlight tensions between the ‘school and professional’ and the ‘university and academic’ activity systems.

The third dimension of teaching transfer concerned the layered nature of teacher education, teaching about how to teach, and raises the complex issue of ‘modelling’ within Initial Teacher Education (Loughran and Berry, 2005). This was interpreted in many different ways by new teacher educators and is a contested area worthy of further research, again it suggests tension between the ‘school and professional’ and ‘university and academic’ activity systems. Many new teacher educators described an ‘academic bump’ as they realised that not all of their student teachers were highly motivated and independent learners. They were surprised by the need to address motivation within their emerging pedagogy for teaching adults and the ‘academic bump’ often became a stimulus for moving away from a didactic approach.

New teacher educators felt they had a significant gap in their professional knowledge focused around assessment processes in Higher Education. This was a strong and significant finding which caused anxiety and took up considerable time for new teacher educators. Their induction needs in this area appeared to be only partly met by formal and non formal activities and support within their departments was particularly valued.

Learning architecture

In considering the learning architecture of the faculty we consider the distinction between formal and non-formal structures and processes to be at best a fuzzy and
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overlapping categorisation.

The new teacher educators tend to belong to multiple teams; this is especially true for those working on Primary age phase programmes. This transition from working intensively as part of a clearly defined team in school to working in the much larger organisation of Higher Education with less easily identifiable teams was perceived as leading to fragmented professional learning. The findings indicate that many new teacher educators relied heavily on 'significant individuals' for their induction, in only a minority of instances were these individuals also the officially appointed mentor. Geography plays its part in the significant networks reported by the new teacher educators. Local colleagues, on the same site, corridor or shared office were seen as significant even if they were in different teams. Above all, the initial findings indicate new teacher educators have very varied experiences in terms of their membership of significant communities of practice.

Formal departmental workshop sessions within subject disciplines were valued because they were seen as relevant and usually offered at a point of need. New teacher educators also cited non-formal meetings such as second marking and moderation meetings as valuable learning opportunities.

The formal institutional induction was not viewed as particularly useful, and there was a perceived need by the new teacher educators to develop a 'professional' induction with emphasis on their new role as an academic in Higher Education.

New teacher educators, particularly those working in the Primary phase, felt they only slowly and partially became aware of the overall student experience and they did not feel that personal tutoring of students in HE replaced their previous pastoral role in school. Teacher educators who had adopted a post of responsibility, such as a year group leader with pastoral responsibilities, claimed that this did lead to learning about institutional structures and processes and provided the 'big picture' of the student experience.

Some new teacher educators were studying on or had completed accredited courses including a PgC in learning and teaching in HE and a range of MA programmes. New teacher educators valued these as they were perceived as offering a holistic experience of learning, development of research skills and time for reflection.

An Activity Theory perspective

Emerging from our collaborative work on the grounded analysis was a tentative but important finding that new teacher educators were not making a 'clean break' from the 'schools and professional' activity system to the 'university and academic' activity system. Rather than viewing the teacher education partnership as a single activity system (for example Wilson, 2004) the nature of the partnership and of the subject discipline of teacher education suggests a view to us of the partnership as including two activity systems and the interaction between them (Engestrom, 2001; Fanghanel, 2004) as expressed in figure 1. Within the Initial Teacher Education partnership the 'schools and professional' activity system interacts with the 'university and academic' activity system. This interaction forms a complex and challenging boundary-crossing context in which new teacher educators must survive and develop.

Within activity systems theory, the 'subject' refers to the individual or subgroup whose agency is chosen as the point of view in the analysis’ (Engestrom, 1993:67). Whilst the purpose of this investigation means that the New Teacher Educator should be positioned as the subject of the activity system, this does not, in our view, represent the context sufficiently. Therefore the activity system of the university education faculty has been set out with three identified subjects whilst the activity system of the partnership schools has four subjects.

Within activity systems theory, Engestrom defines the object as:

the 'raw material' or 'problem space' at which the activity is directed and which is moulded or transformed into outcomes with the help of physical and symbolic, external and internal tools (mediating instruments and signs). (1993:67)

The focus of this study is the professional learning and identity development of new university-based teacher educators, and this is therefore in the foreground of figure 1, but that is not the prime object of the school system or of the university. It is, however, an element within the contested and multi-voiced objects within both activity systems as together they form a partnership in teacher education. Therefore figure 1 includes multiple objects of the school activity system and the university activity system but with the professional development of teacher educators in the foreground. To some extent then figure 1 represents an activity theory perspective of the case study teacher partnership which was stimulated by the emerging data analysis, but it also includes a significant element of the prior professional experience, perceptions and values of members of the research team. The perspective was developed here as such rather than as an empirically based finding.

The perspective offered by figure 1 provides a framework for further explanation of the perceptions and experiences of new teacher educators by making the contradictions within the teacher education partnership...
Figure 1. Teacher education partnership as two interacting activity systems.

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and the subject discipline of teacher education more explicit.

- The tension over what constitutes theory and creation of new knowledge within the partnership and subject discipline may be expressed by such questions as ‘what is the contribution of the school activity system to theory and creation of new knowledge?’ This provides further explanation for the search for teaching transfer by new teacher educators and for their desire to hold onto and emphasise credibility as a schoolteacher.

- The tension around pedagogy may be expressed by such questions as ‘what are the similarities and differences between pedagogic approaches suitable for school pupils and for adult learners in Higher Education?’ This provides a framework for understanding the transfer of teaching skills and strategies reported by new teacher educators and for their developing conceptions of learning and teaching in Higher Education.

- The tension around modelling of teaching may be expressed by such questions as ‘what is the role of the school system in providing modelling of teaching and how should the university system be involved in such activity?’ This provides an explanatory background to the confusion surrounding modelling as reported by new teacher educators.

Overall we propose that the exploratory application of activity theory as set out in figure 1 provides a tentative but potentially useful framework for further research and development work within teacher education.

Implications

We propose that using and further developing an activity systems theoretical view of teacher education partnership would usefully support further research into teacher educator professional development and teacher education as a subject discipline. Practitioner change / research projects in local contexts in Education departments might be in the form of formative / developmental experiment approaches as proposed by Engestrom (1999). By making the tensions within teacher education partnerships explicit and by working through them in terms of developing structures and social practices, it should be possible to improve the experience of both new teacher educators and student teachers within them.

The findings suggest that there is a need to critically review the structures and processes within the education faculty or departments in order to ensure that all new teacher educators are able to join and contribute fully to formal and non formal academic communities of practice.

There is a need to deliberately design the work of new teacher educators with their professional induction and development in mind so they are able to participate in a meaningful way with at least one teaching team rather than having superficial membership of several.

There appears to be a need, as part of induction, to address the changed role of the new teacher educators based in Higher Education when they are working in partnership schools.

New teacher educators identified a grieving process for the pastoral element of their old role as a schoolteacher. There is a need to review the personal and academic tutor role which does not appear to replace this.

Realistic expectations of scholarly and research activity of new teacher educators need to be established by Education departments and their institutions. There is a need to critically review the contribution of formal accredited teacher education for new teacher educators because, in many Higher Education institutions, they are not required to complete such training. It would also be useful to consider how courses in teaching in HE might be better integrated into departmental or teaching team activity and how they might contribute explicitly to developing research skills and activity.

The subject discipline of teacher education needs to be critically considered, the teacher education community needs to debate and develop the significance of abstract theory and practice based theory. In addition the role of modelling within teacher education pedagogy needs to be debated and clarified.

This paper has presented an argument which gives some potential direction to those interested in improving the practice of professional learning within teacher education and possibly in other professional subject disciplines. We assert that the boundary-crossing context of teacher education requires specific attention within the induction of new teacher educators and also considerable further research and development within the teacher education community of practice. The layered nature of the subject discipline, involving teaching about teaching, means that improvements in new teacher educator induction and research on teacher education practices have particularly strong potential to impact on and enhance the experience of student teachers within Higher Education.
Biographical notes

Lily Baker, Peter Boyd, Emma McVittie and Kim Harris all taught for a number of years in Primary or Secondary schools before moving to Higher Education to become teacher educators between one and seven years ago. Chris Kynch is a research fellow within the Education Faculty.

References


Challenges and Opportunities: Developing learning and teaching in ITE across the UK.

4. The findings of the ESCalate study on teacher educators’ induction into Higher Education.

Jean Murray: Brunel University

Summary

The research study reported in this paper was originally commissioned by ESCalate as part of its agenda for developing induction support for pre-service teacher educators. The study aimed to collect and analyse examples of the practices used by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in inducting initial teacher educators into Higher Education (HE) work, and to identify and analyse induction provision from the perspectives of a sample of New Teacher Educators (NTEs). The study found that most induction provision occurs within teacher education departments, often at the micro levels of the teaching or subject team. The paper discusses the findings with particular references to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concepts of legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice. The conclusion draws on the study as a whole to suggest guidelines for good practices in teacher educator induction.

Keywords

Teacher educators / Induction to Higher Education / Teacher education / Communities of practice

Introduction

There have been a number of recent developments by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) to support teacher educator induction. Nevertheless, New Teacher Educators (NTEs) are an under-researched and poorly understood occupational group (John, 1996; Murray, 2002; Davison et al., 2005) whose induction needs in making the transition from schools to Higher Education (HE) have not yet been fully explored.

The research study reported in this article was originally commissioned by ESCalate – the Education Subject Centre within the Higher Education Academy (HEA) - as part of its agenda for developing induction support for teacher educators and other academics involved in working on education courses. The study aimed to investigate what might constitute good practice in the induction of teacher educators new to HE-based Initial Teacher Education (ITE) or pre-service work. This included the aim to produce for ESCalate an up to date account of current practices in the induction of new teacher educators. The project was designed to be investigative in nature, and to draw on a wide range of knowledge and expertise about induction practices within teacher education and the Higher Education (HE) sector. The objectives of the study were: to collect, analyse and collate examples of the practices used by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in inducting initial teacher educators into HE work; to identify and analyse induction provision from the perspectives of a sample of NTEs; and to draw on the findings to suggest guidelines for good practices in teacher educator induction.

In this paper a brief review of relevant literature is followed by the methodological details of the ESCalate study. I then give an overview of the main findings of the study. (Fuller details of these findings can be found by referring to the study as published on the ESCalate website.) I then discuss the implications of the findings, particularly the fact that most induction provision seems to occur through non-formal learning within teacher education departments, often at the micro levels of the teaching or subject teams. I draw on Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concepts of legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice and on some recent critiques of these ideas (see, for example, Fuller et al., 2005) to analyse the findings. Finally, I draw on the study as a whole to suggest guidelines for effective induction into HE.

Literature review

1. Teacher educators as academics.

Teacher educators teaching on ITE courses in English HEIs are nearly always qualified school teachers, with considerable experience of teaching and of middle or senior management in the school sector. Entering HE they bring with them a wealth of professional knowledge and expertise accrued through school teaching. In the English teacher education system this is often the main reason for their recruitment, and it is frequently a major source of professional credibility during their early years in the university sector (Maguire, 1994; Murray, 2002). In making the career transition to HE they encounter the practices, norms and expectations of academic work, as instantiated in the settings of the teacher education departments of their universities or Colleges of Higher Education (CHEs).

Most new academics enter HE with very high levels of knowledge in their subjects or disciplines – typically
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gained through study for a PhD - but limited experience of teaching. In contrast, NTEs are a unique type of academic for two reasons: firstly, they enter HE with high levels of teaching expertise, albeit expertise gained in a different sector of education; secondly; they often enter HE without doctoral level qualifications in education, or other sustained experience of research and publication processes.

2. Induction support: making the transition from school to HE.

Previous studies of new teacher educators in a number of anglophone countries (see Murray, 2005; Acker, 1996; Ducharme, 1993; Sinkinson, 1997; Hatt, 1997; Nicol, 1997) have identified that, while the transition between school teaching and HE work may look like a small shift of occupation and setting to the casual observer of education, individuals often experience the change as challenging and stressful. Many teacher educators have difficulties in adjusting to the academic expectations of HE-based teacher education work (Ducharme, 1993). Uncertainty about the exact nature of their new professional roles (Wilson, 1990), finding it difficult to adjust to the pedagogical skills needed to work with adult learners (Kremer-Hayon and Zuzovsky, 1995; DES, 1987), and concerns about the adequacy of their professional and academic knowledge bases necessary for HE work (Kremer-Hayon and Zuzovsky, 1995) have all been identified as areas of tension in previous studies.

In a study of teacher educator professionalism (Murray, 2002) all teacher educators with less than three years experience of HE work were found to have similar professional biographies and attributes; these teacher educators were defined as Novices in a typology of teacher educators. This type constructed a model of professionalism termed practitioner bond professionalism in which the experience of school teaching was central. For those in other educational sectors, professional credibility centred on their identities as ex-school teachers, and they had strong senses of responsibility and commitment to the school sector. In a later study (Murray and Male, 2005:136-137) we argued that NTEs are positioned as the expert become novice in terms of their expertise for teaching in HE (because of their past teaching experience in schools), and as the novice assumed to be expert in terms of engaging in research activity (because, as previously stated, few pre-service teacher educators in England enter HE with established research profiles). We then identified two key and symbiotic areas for professional development during induction: developing pedagogy for HE work, and building on past scholarly activity in school teaching to develop personal research / scholarship profiles as academics.

Previous research on NTE induction in England over a period of forty years has identified that formal HE induction structures for this group of academics have often been very limited (Taylor, 1969; DES 1987; Maguire, 1994; Sinkinson 1997). Most induction is assumed to take place through informal (what Eraut, 2000 terms ‘non-formal’) work-based learning on an apprenticeship model, often characterised as ‘sitting by Nelly’ (Wilson, 1990). Such informal learning is seen as inadequate and often ad hoc. One of the induction issues identified in the sources quoted above is the assumption that knowledge and understanding of teaching acquired in the school sector can be ‘transferred’ to HE with few problems. Some studies have identified that generic institutional induction structures for new academics need to be more consistent, and tailored to the specific needs of teacher education (see, for example, Wilson, 1990; Sinkinson, 1997).

This perceived inadequacy of formal induction structures – and the de-emphasising of the potential of non-formal learning - may be placed within the context of the overall devaluation of pedagogical skills in British HE until the publication of the Dearing Report in 1997 (see NCIHE, 1997). This report identified the need for more focus on pedagogy across the whole of the HE sector, including better induction procedures for new academics. Since this date, formal induction provision has become more extensive, often requiring the completion of a PGCE in HE, and with probationary requirements and structures specified through Human Resources and / or Staff Development units. There has also been an increased focus on non-formal professional learning during induction (see Trowler and Knight, 2004; Eraut, 2000; Akerlind, 2003; Boud, 2001) and on subject- or discipline-specific issues.

The recent developments by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) to support academic induction address such issues, and have included the creation of discipline-specific, web-based resources by each Learning and Teaching Support Network Subject Centre (the Support for New Academic Staff or SNAS database). For teacher education, extensive SNAS resources are not available at the time of writing. Initiatives by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) have recognised the need for further research into existing policies and practices and the development of more extensive support materials for induction. These initiatives have included the commissioning of a national symposium on new teacher educators’ needs (Murray, 2003) and of web-based resources with a strong focus on the subjects of the school curriculum and the needs of ITE tutors preparing students for Secondary school teaching. These resources are designed to support NTEs working in schools as mentors, in SCITTs (School Centred Initial Teacher Training Schemes) and through DRBs.
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(Designated Recommending Bodies for Graduate Teacher Training Schemes) as well as in HEIs. These materials have considerable potential value, but do not address many generic issues in ITE work or include focuses on some of the specific needs of HE-based NTEs.

Methodology

The ESCalate study was designed to include different perspectives on the research question through the following elements: firstly, an analysis of current HEI practices and principles for induction, which aimed to provide evidence of existing support structures across the HE sector in England; secondly, an analysis of NTEs’ perspectives of their induction experiences. This second element aimed to provide evidence of needs from practitioners’ perspectives, and some opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of current approaches.

For the first element an on-line questionnaire was sent to the Heads of Department (HoDs) of all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in England involved in ITE provision in the academic year 2003/2004 (n=75). The questionnaires requested a brief overview of the probationary requirements set for NTEs, and details of the provision designed to support induction at central university and departmental levels. After each set of questions, there was an opportunity for HoDs to add their comments. The overall response rate was 47% (n=35).

The methods for the second element of the research design included an on-line questionnaire sent to a purposive sample of 50 NTEs who had been working at a range of different types of HEIs for two years or less. The questionnaire was sent out either via the HoDs or through a subject group network list. The questionnaires requested some brief biographical details about previous time in the school sector and current work in HE, but its main focuses were threefold: the probationary requirements the NTEs had been asked to meet; the formal provision at university level, including long courses such as the PGCE in HE; and the formal and non-formal induction provision provided within the education department. In the latter two sections, individuals were asked to use a Likert scale to indicate which types of provision they had found most useful in supporting their development, and to comment on their answers.

Follow up individual and focus group interviews with 20 teacher educators from this sample were designed to enable issues arising from the questionnaires to be pursued in more depth. These interviews were also designed to enable the teacher educators to identify and discuss induction practices which they felt had or had not been effective for them. The interviews were planned to have the following characteristics (adapted from Cohen and Manion, 2002). They were semi-structured, based on a pre-set but not rigidly ordered schedule of questions, and developed from the literature review. Within this semi-structured format, the schedules were as open as possible, allowing me to pursue any unexpected responses, to follow each interviewee’s train of thought, and to probe responses. With the permission of the interviewees, the interviews were taped and the resulting data transcribed. The transcript data was analysed drawing on a systematic coding system, developed in a previous study of teacher educators (Murray, 2002).

Findings from the study

The summary below provides an overview of the main findings from the study. Full details can be found in the ESCalate report of the study on the LTSN (Learning and Teaching Support Network) database.

- Probation requirements for NTEs differ across institutions, with the majority of new universities and CHEs (Colleges of Higher Education) setting requirements only for high quality teaching and contributions to academic administration. Old universities, however, added research related targets (for publications, funding or achievement of a doctorate) for NTEs appointed on full lecturer contracts.
- Most NTEs see probationary requirements as driven by the university’s agenda, rather than by their individual needs. For some NTEs in old universities, research related targets were seen as unrealistic.
- Procedures and targets for probation were planned, implemented and monitored in most HEIs. These procedures, and related processes such as the observation of the NTEs’ teaching, were routinely included in departmental induction ‘curricula’ in most HEIs.
- Most NTEs are exempted from the PGCE HE qualification, largely because they already hold Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) for the school sector.
- The small number of NTEs in this study who had taken the PGCE HE qualification, however, defined it as a valuable learning experience. It was generally agreed that starting points needed to be differentiated in order to acknowledge the existing levels of teaching expertise of NTEs.
- Because most NTEs did not take the PGCE HE and were unlikely to opt in to other centrally provided courses, the formal induction provided for them at the level of the university was effectively limited to short, initial orientation courses.
- Most induction provision for NTEs was situated within education departments, at the micro level of teaching or subject ‘team’. It was often implicitly characterised
Responses from both HoDs and NTEs indicated that the content of induction ‘curricula’ at this micro level varied, with activities which supported probationary processes – such as target setting and observation of the NTEs’ teaching - most likely to be planned and implemented. This approach is termed induction by monitoring here. Some potentially valuable collaborative learning opportunities – such as team teaching and observing experienced colleagues teaching - were less likely to be routinely included in induction programmes.

Approaches to induction varied between HEIs, according to the HoDs’ responses, with some institutions formally planning, implementing and monitoring detailed micro level programmes, whilst others followed a less formal approach, relying on induction taking place through the inclusion of the NTE in the daily work of the relevant team(s).

From the perspectives of the NTEs, the quality of micro level provision was variable. Some NTEs reported that they participated in a varied range of formal and non-formal induction activities which led to professional learning; this group felt well supported in general. For other NTEs though, provision was limited to the formal structures which met the requirements of the university’s probationary schemes (usually observation of teaching, other relevant auditing processes and probationary review meetings with the mentor or HoD). This latter approach was felt to have limitations, and to be for the benefit of the university rather than the individual. I have termed this approach induction by monitoring. A further group of NTEs experienced an approach I have termed induction by immersion where few formal learning opportunities were planned, and NTEs were expected to learn through participation in the normal, on-going routines of the department. The learning which resulted from this approach was seen by the NTEs as haphazard, often ad hoc, sometimes deeply puzzling and, ironically given the emphasis on participation, solitary.

Responses from both HoDs and NTEs indicated that time and staffing pressures might be a factor in how induction policies are translated into practice. A number of NTEs, for example, reported having induction programmes planned, but not implemented. Generally, NTEs felt that some degree of formal provision, planned to meet their professional development needs and well implemented in practice was important during induction.

The quality of mentoring was stated to be an important factor in the overall quality of NTE learning. NTEs defined empathy and trust between them and their designated mentor as key factors. A good mentor provided invaluable feedback and support for the NTE during induction. Just as the boundaries between what could be counted as formal or non-formal learning were blurred in this study, so too were distinctions between formal and informal mentoring. Different types of mentors were discussed by the NTEs and by the HoDs. For example, NTEs referred to ‘formally appointed’ or ‘designated’ mentors who had been given that specific role within the department, but they also discussed different ‘mentors’ informally taking on different supporting roles for different purposes. In many cases such mentor support was not part of the HEI’s formal probationary structures, but was a more experienced colleague working alongside the NTE in one of more of her/his immediate work settings.

In other HEIs, HoDs reported that the roles of formal mentor and probationary appraiser were conflated and undertaken by one individual, often the HoD or a senior manager. Some NTEs found this conflation of roles unhelpful, especially where they were heavily dependant on the mentor for day to day support.

Both formal and non-formal induction provision at the micro level centred around academic administration and teaching activities. There was less emphasis on induction into research. But where this occurred, it was likely to come from different sources of support from the teaching and administration provision, being provided by key individuals (research ‘mentors’, ‘buddies’ or doctoral supervisors) or research teams.

Discussion

This study found that most induction provision for NTEs was situated within departments at the micro level of the teaching ‘team’, and through non-formal learning. For some – but by no means all - new recruits, such induction was perceived to provide a good induction into HE. Framing NTE induction as occurring through non-formal learning and predominantly and most effectively within the micro levels – or specific communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) - of teacher education departments would seem then to have considerable potential for developing effective induction provision.

This emphasis on the effectiveness of induction at the micro level is reiterated in previous research. Drawing on Wenger’s work, Trowler and Knight (2004) argue, for example, that this micro level is the most important context for induction to HE. In their view it is the university which provides the structural context for work, but the community of practice (variously defined as the department, the research group or the teaching team) which develops the day-to-day behavioural and discursive practices for the new academic (p.159). Induction to HE is in their view essentially ‘departmental
or team business’ (p.144). Gilpin’s work (2003:2) supports Trowler and Knight’s arguments in identifying this type of induction as often ‘contextually well aligned, (and able to) provide rich insights into variations in local procedures and culture … (because it) is people, rather than institutionally purpose’d’. Boud (2001) also reiterates that much learning for new academics will be informal and based around the immediate workplace settings.

The idea of learning through membership of and participation in the micro level of a community of practice offers a popular way of understanding induction then. But the concept of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) which underlies much of this literature is very broad, and has a number of limitations (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004). These include the following: limited conceptualisation of how such participatory learning might occur (Edwards and Protheroe, 2003); a dismissal of formal learning or training as transmission (Fuller et al., 2005); a lack of emphasis on the way in which individual professional biographies and habitus (Bourdieu, 1987) play out in professional learning in the HE workplace (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004); the de-emphasis of the power relations embedded in specific learning situations (Fuller et al., 2005); and analysis of how induction occurs where the novice brings existing professional knowledge to a new workplace (Fuller et al 2005). Without a further consideration of these issues in understanding of NTE induction – and the acquisition of the expertise in teaching and researching as a teacher educator which it involves – I would suggest that the informal learning involved in micro level induction risks continuing to be mis-understood or dismissed as ‘merely’ apprenticeship learning or ‘sitting by Nelly’.

The existence of the induction by monitoring approach in a number of HEIs in this study indicates some of the problems in devising professional induction programmes within the current accountability-led system of HE. The emphasis on the ways they monitor and judgement of individual performance during induction certainly raises questions as to who or what some of these structures might benefit, and about whether or not such an approach offers sufficient time and space for NTEs to learn.

In this study, induction by monitoring seemed to narrow the range of both formal and non-informal learning opportunities on offer to the NTE during induction, with collaborative learning opportunities – such as team teaching and observing experienced colleagues teaching - less likely to be routinely included in induction programmes. There are parallels here with Edwards and Protheroe’s (2003) identification of the lack of extended learning opportunities offered to student teachers by mentors on school placements. In that study student teachers had limited opportunities for learning through participation in and interpretation of teaching processes. Edwards and Protheroe argue that this was in part because understanding of how participatory learning might occur was undeveloped. I would argue that a similar statement could equally well be made for induction into teacher education communities in instances where valuable collaborative learning opportunities are not routinely provided for NTEs. Part of the reason for such omissions may be that, to draw on the words of Edwards and Protheroe (p.229) what we lack at the present time is ‘a worked-out view of participatory learning that might draw on mentors’ strengths and enrich the learning experiences’ of NTEs.

In previous work (Murray, 2005), I have argued that, equipped with their personal knowledge and understanding of teaching and scholarship in schools, new teacher educators require support in ‘shifting the lens’ of their existing knowledge to meet the demands of HE-based ITE. Good quality induction support for NTEs needs to focus on analysing previous practices and their implications within the new setting in order to begin to build new pedagogical and research-based knowledge and understanding for teacher education work. Induction support in interpreting and understanding both the HE setting and the nature of ITE work therefore becomes essential. This induction into the specific setting(s) of teacher education, to the wider world of the university, and to the HE sector in general, needs to go far beyond the conventional and limited induction models which were reportedly on offer to some of the participants in this study. It needs to be tailored to the specific contexts of each education department and its missions, as well as attending to the issues from academic practice, which arise for each new educator as part of daily work as a teacher, researcher and scholar.

The challenge for ITE induction then is not to devise set induction programmes which will equip NTEs with a ‘bag of tricks’ full of generic pedagogical and research skills for HE work, but rather to give them the time, space and opportunities to reflect on and analyse their emerging practice as teacher educators and the questions, issues and dilemmas it raises. As Eraut (2000:133) states, ‘Tidy maps of knowledge and learning are usually deceptive’. This is in part because tacit knowledge is often developed, acquired and used ‘unobserved’ in the ‘interstices of formal learning contexts’ (p.133).

In the article cited above I have also posed some questions about centring induction only around specific, local teacher education communities of practice, identifying that this may lead to ‘insularity’, and fragmented and fractured provision. Such fragmentation may mean that we lose sight of teacher educators’ commitments to broader social goals and to communal

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discourses and practices valued within the wider, national and international teacher education communities. I would suggest then that, whilst acknowledging the power and importance of coherent and well planned induction into the immediate community or communities of practice within specific HEIs, care also needs to be taken to ensure that such provision does not become parochial, communally anecdotal, and limited in understanding of the broader social and moral purposes of HE-based teacher education. Induction provision clearly has to meet the needs of individual NTEs and of the departments within which they work, but it also needs to reflect the accepted discourses and practices of teacher education as a professional discipline in the university sector.

This study found that most NTEs are exempted from PGCE HE courses because they already have QTS for the school sector. This recognition of existing expertise may seem superficially beneficial, but could also be considered unhelpful in a number of ways. Firstly, it lends credence to the assumption that teaching skills acquired in the school sector can be ‘transferred’ to teaching in HE in straightforward ways. This is an assumption which this study and previous research (Trowler and Knight, 2004; Ducharme, 1993) question. Secondly, equating the skills of teaching in school with those for teaching teachers in HE fails to recognise the skills involved in teaching adults, the uniqueness of teacher educators’ pedagogy, and the consequent need for NTEs to develop their existing teaching and research skills and knowledge. Most NTEs in this study did not have access to the PGCE in HE as one type of formal learning structure which, if properly designed, could have assisted them in developing this new pedagogical and scholarly knowledge. Finally, lack of access to a PGCE in HE, together with limited engagement in other university wide learning opportunities, means that most of these NTEs had restricted early career stage opportunities for networking with new academics from other disciplines and with their wider university communities. The findings of this study would suggest that, if the practice of exempting NTEs from PGCE in HE qualifications is routinely followed, then alternative ways of ensuring high quality induction provision for NTEs into those academic communities need to be given enhanced consideration.

Future research

This study, as implemented, had a number of methodological limitations. For example, the size of the sample groups for the questionnaires and interviews with NTEs was small, and the use of questionnaires as a research tool to gather details of induction provision from both the NTEs and the HoDs may have resulted in tendencies to give normative responses or ‘thin stories’ about induction (Leonard et al., 2005). To address these limitations, further research could include larger sample sizes and a wider variety of research tools, particularly the more extensive use of focus group interviews. A more in-depth and detailed survey of departmental provision, for example, could include case studies investigating what provision is planned and implemented for NTEs’ learning when, how and by whom across a range of institutional contexts.

Research could also track the early stage career trajectories of individual NTEs to see how, when, and where learning occurs over time and across different work settings (for example, HEI seminar rooms and school classrooms where NTEs supervise students’ fieldwork). An additional element to such research would be to consider the part which individual professional biographies and habitus play in professional learning in the HE workplace (see Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004).

Towards guidelines for good practice in the induction of NTEs

This was a small-scale study, with some methodological limitations, as indicated; hence using its findings to draw up definitive guidelines for good practice in the induction of NTEs would not be appropriate. But the following questions about induction provision emerge as pointers from the study, and could be used by HoDs, other senior managers, mentors and NTEs in drawing up, implementing and evaluating induction programmes. Feedback from colleagues involved in NTE induction on the usefulness of these questions would be very welcome.

- Has the NTE been involved in a ‘needs analysis’ as s/he enters HE, identifying previous knowledge and understanding, existing strengths and areas for future development?
- Are probationary requirements challenging but achievable? Do they take account of individual starting points? Do they reflect the individual’s aspirations for career development as well as the departmental and institutional priorities? Do they relate to teaching, research / scholarship and service to the university as the three commonly accepted elements of academic work?
- Is induction provision tailored to assist new teacher educators in meeting the requirements set for their probationary period? Does the provision aim to match individual aspirations?
- Does the programme provide a good basis for further professional development, beyond induction?
- Does the PGCE HE provide differentiated starting points for NTEs who already hold QTS qualifications? Does it acknowledge the existing pedagogical
knowledge and expertise of NTEs? Does it support the changes in the processes of teaching, research and scholarship during the transition from the school sector to HE? Does it include opportunities for structured personal reflection on personal pedagogical and scholarly practices within the particular learning and teaching contexts in which teacher educators’ work?

- If NTEs are exempted from the PGCE HE, does the induction programme identify alternative ways in which they can acquire the skills of teaching teachers in HE settings? Are there alternative ways in which they can become familiar with the broad HEI setting in which they now work? Are networking opportunities with academics in other disciplines provided?

- Is there a planned programme of induction activities within the department? Does it clearly relate to overall provision, to the probationary requirements and to the initial needs analysis? Is it clear within which specific micro level(s) of the department the various induction activities will take place? Is the implementation of the programme monitored and reviewed regularly? Is the programme flexible enough to take into account developing needs which the NTEs, in charge of the mentor or appraiser may identify as arising during the induction period?

- Does this programme support the development of all three elements of academic work (research or scholarship, teaching and service)?

- Does the programme include a broad spectrum of activities to support professional development, as well as to monitor and regulate performance against probationary targets?

- Within the programme is there articulation between different ‘levels’ of induction (for example, between the requirements of a PGCE HE course and the departmental / micro level induction programme)?

- Does the programme include opportunities for the NTEs to gain experience of how other teacher education communities of practice work, beyond their own micro level context(s), and departments?

- Is the NTE encouraged to access research and scholarship of teaching on ITE courses, and to use relevant sources to inform her/his practices?

- Does the NTE have a mentor who is not directly involved in the formal probationary processes set by the university and the department?

Biographical notes

Dr. Jean Murray works as a Lecturer in Professional Education at Brunel University where she co-ordinates pre-service courses for intending teachers, as well as teaching and supervising on Masters and doctoral programmes. Building on her background in schooling and Higher Education, her research interests focus on exploring the academic and professional identities of teacher educators, and their induction and career development within the Higher Education sector.

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Des Hewitt: University of Derby

Summary

This paper reports a school-based project involving the University of Derby and its partnership schools. Undergraduate students undertook short focused placements in schools facing challenging circumstances. This enabled the trainees to develop a greater range of teaching skills in more diverse classroom settings. Schools facing challenging circumstances have much to offer trainee teachers. Trainees have much to offer schools facing challenging circumstances. Partnership, practice, inquiry and the principles of social justice can support the ends of both schools and Universities.

Key words

Initial Teacher Education/ Placements/ School facing Challenging Circumstances

Introduction

Over the last two years, students on the BEd programme at the University of Derby have completed a series of short-focused placements, which are the subject of this paper. The BEd programme team wanted to expand the student experience of more challenging inner city and urban school settings serving socio-economically disadvantaged communities: the circumstances of which are discussed in Chapman and Harris (2004). This partly sought to expand the opportunities to develop awareness, knowledge and skills in respect of pupils for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL). Students in national surveys of trainee teachers often cite this area, as one where they would like more support.

We also wanted to respond to the growing concerns highlighted by the document, Excellence and Enjoyment in Primary Schools, (DfES, 2003) in respect of a broad, balanced and purposeful school curriculum. The programme team wanted to retain the strengths of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in this project, but we were also very clear that cross-curricular links should be made where this supported coherent, creative and purposeful learning for children. Whilst school-based training in all placements seeks to achieve this, many schools were at the time and are still developing their own practices in these areas. We felt that the planning, teaching and assessment of student teachers would improve by working on a short focused placement in schools in challenging circumstances. This would provide students with the opportunity to develop a more diverse range of teaching skills in more diverse classroom settings.

I also feel that University training providers have a duty to support schools in challenging circumstances. As Dippo states:
undergraduate BEd programme. The Core subjects’ module, on this programme, was the vehicle for students to carry out the short focused placement in schools in challenging circumstances. This was a single, 15-credit module at level 6 for final year BEd students. In common with other modules at the University, this represented a total of 150 learning hours of which 40 hours were taught by tutors and school colleagues at the University, 40 hours of school-based tasks and directed activities and approximately 70 hours of independent learning.

Module learning outcomes focused on developing subject knowledge in core subjects (English, maths, and science) in addition to demonstrating the ability to make cross-curricular links in the teaching and learning of the core subjects and Personal, Health and Social Education (PHSE). Whilst the first of the learning outcomes was demonstrated through the submission of action plans and personal audits of subject knowledge, the second was by completion of a 2,000-word reflection on the teaching and learning associated with the placement.

Students worked in groups of 4 or 5 to develop two resource-based activities, which they would then implement in the placement. The school indicated the areas which they wanted students to work on so that the activities were consistent with class planning and the focus of school development planning. The schools and University also stipulated that the activities must develop creative and innovative approaches to learning which would be stimulating and purposeful for the children. Students were placed in groups from Nursery (Foundation I) to Year 6, in each of two schools. Arguably the experiences of planning for the Foundation stage presented different challenges than those in Key Stage 1 and 2. However, we felt that the principles of cross-curricular learning in creative and purposeful activities were no less important in the different phases. Individual groups gained in different ways from their involvement but there was a common core of learning as anticipated in respect of creative and cross-curricular approaches to teaching and learning.

Placement schools

The focus of the placements was to work with schools in challenging circumstances. There is no clear-cut definition for such schools (Chapman and Harris, 2004). The schools were all, however, in inner city, urban contexts. There had been a significant history of poor or under-achievement of the pupils who frequently came from socio-economically deprived backgrounds. Added to this was a significant increase in children from refugee and asylum seeking families. The ensuing changes in the linguistic population of the schools necessarily resulted in challenges for teaching and learning. It would be wrong to paint a negative picture of the contexts in which such schools operate. In fact it is the very success that many schools facing challenging circumstances make of their situation that we wanted to share with the students through this project.

I will focus on describing the schools visited by the 2005 cohort. Grange Primary had made substantial progress since coming out of ‘special measures’. The school has adopted a very innovative approach to teaching, learning and the curriculum, which it calls ‘Grangeton’. There is a bewildering array of facilities in the school: TV/ radio studio, museum, shop and garden. Classes use these facilities in cross-curricular programmes on a rotating basis. The opportunities for students focused on the implementation of ‘personalised learning’ using the facilities available at the school.

Hardwick Primary School has a very high proportion of minority ethnic pupils for whom English is also an additional language. There are a number of pupils who are recently arrived refugees or asylum-seekers. In 2005 much of the school was demolished as part of a new building initiative. For this reason, the school asked that the students focus on the theme of construction in the cross-curricular activities. An Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) had been helping the Local Education Authority in their training for the Workforce Reforms (DfES, 2004). Teaching Assistants in this school had already taken on the wider brief under the principles of ‘Workforce Remodelling’ (DfES, 2004).

Pattern of training for this project

The programme team learned many lessons from the first year of this project. In 2004, students visited one school for two days. In 2005 students visited two schools, spending a day in each. They carried out the activities in Foundation/ Key Stage 1 (in one school) and Key Stage 2 (in the other school). There are arguments for and against a placement pattern in which they implement a sequence of lessons over several days. These will be examined in the evaluation of the project towards the end of this chapter.

In the second year (2005), much more emphasis was placed on liaising with the placement schools. This had been difficult in 2004, as the school we were working with had been placed in ‘special measures’ by Ofsted. The process by which it successfully moved from that status required significant effort and time on the part of the school staff. The time available for additional meetings for students to meet the teachers of the classes they would be visiting was therefore at a premium. The following timetable outlines the pattern of taught sessions, visits to schools and the end of year conference to evaluate the students’ work for visits to schools in 2005.
Challenges and Opportunities: Developing learning and teaching in ITE across the UK.

Project outline

Initial meeting with Stakeholders - July 2004
Initial meeting with school representatives to organise the management of the project, its aims and expectations of the schools and the University in respect of this project.

Introductory conference - October 2004
- Head Teacher, Grange Primary
- Foundation stage Manager, Hardwick Primary
- Introduction to the school context, school improvement plan and priorities for raising standards in schools:
  - New technologies/personalised learning
  - Remodelling of the work force/EAL/minority ethnic issues

Initial school visit -
October 2004 Hardwick Primary
October 2004 Grange Primary
- Trainees working in 14 small groups were linked to one class in each Primary.

Development of activities and resources
November 2004
- Development of two resource-based activities (one for each class) following negotiation with the school
  - In Grange Primary the emphasis was on the Grangeton ‘personalised’ curriculum.
  - In Hardwick Primary the emphasis was on responding to the needs of pupils from culturally diverse backgrounds, whilst considering the role of other adults in the classroom.

Feedback and refinement of activities and resources
December 2004
Proposals were appraised by school staff, LEA advisers and University tutors; and targets for improvement set where necessary. Feedback and targets were given in respect of the following questions:
- What is the focus for the proposed resources/activities?
- Do the planned activities include links to English, Maths, Science and PHSE?
- Are the activities appropriately challenging for the age and development of the learners?
- Do the activities incorporate interactivity and do they cater for a range of learning styles?
- Is there evidence of differentiation?
- Are the suggested activities purposeful and likely to be motivating for the children?
- Has the group considered assessment for learning during the lessons: for instance, questioning, observation and the use of the plenary to evaluate the success of the learning?

Implementation of activities
Week 1 February 2005 (7 groups in each school)
Week 2 February 2005 (7 groups in each school)
- Activities were then implemented by the groups, working closely with the class teacher in a team-teaching capacity. Each group spent one day in the school.
- Morning getting to know the class and supporting the class teacher.
- One lesson working (after lunch) with the teacher to implement the activity.
- Support the teacher for the rest of the day.

Conference to celebrate Teaching and Learning April 2005
- Conference day to celebrate and learning in this project, and the process of school improvement.
- Trainee groups made short presentations, reflecting on the effective strategies to promote successful teaching and learning.
- Independent evaluation of the students’ work was carried out by a Senior Teacher from a Partnership school, an advisor from the Local Education Authority and an evaluator acting on behalf of the TTA.
- Feedback was also given by student groups to each other in terms of the following:
  - Quality of presentation (use of visuals, ability to articulate etc.)
  - Cross-curricular links?
  - Degree of creativity/originality of activities and resources?
  - Justification or rationale for resource/activity?
  - Degree of reflection on own professional development as trainees?

Illustrative example
At Hardwick Primary a group of 5 students worked with a class in Key Stage 2 on the manufacture of bricks. Remember this is the school, which was being rebuilt! They brought some ‘green’ bricks into the class. These are the raw clay materials from which bricks are made. The children worked in groups to discuss a range of designs, which they would imprint on to the bricks. Once completed, the designs were taken to a local brick company and ‘fired’. The completed bricks and designs have subsequently been returned to the school so that they can be incorporated into the fabric of the new school building.

The programme team were impressed by this activity since it included structured opportunities to develop group discussion (an important strand in speaking and listening). In terms of science, pupils learned about the changes in materials (following the ‘firing’ of the bricks).
The activity promoted positive discussion of the different pupil backgrounds. The activity was most certainly purposeful, since the pupils knew that their brick would eventually be incorporated into the fabric of the new building.

The programme team could not have predicted that the students would decide on such an activity. This was indeed therefore a creative activity. The feedback from the teacher and the pupils was very positive. The feedback from the students was that they really enjoyed the opportunity to work with a range of children with whom they would not normally work in their main placements. They gained greater understanding of English as an Additional Language; how to frame language objectives in parallel with curricular objectives.

The students from all groups felt that they would have benefited from spending more time in each school, and this was no different for the students who worked on the brick making activity outlined above.

“We planned to do far too much in the limited amount of time that we had. By the time the children were getting in to the activity then it was finishing.” Nicola (BEd student)

I agree with this view. There was no sense that students were ‘parachuting’ into the school without any knowledge of the pupils learning. However, the 2004 cohort had the benefit of working in the same class over consecutive days. This tended to focus the students on the development of learning in sequenced activities. By carrying out activities on only one visit, there could be a tendency for students to focus on teaching strategies and activities, rather than curricular targets or continuity and progression in learning. This reflects the classic stages of development in teacher trainees noted by Twiselton (2003).

Evaluation

In each year the training was evaluated by students, class teachers, LEA (Local Education Authority) staff and external evaluators appointed by the University of Derby. All groups of trainees had developed physical resources for cross-curricular learning, which had been left in the school. The resources were all of a high standard, and the learning activities were mostly of a good standard, with some of an excellent standard. Class teachers highlighted these points in oral and written feedback. The data was essentially of a qualitative nature and is summarised below.

Excellent resources:

- ‘A superb well-planned and prepared lesson with good pace and great resources.’ Class teacher evaluation of Year 4 input
- ‘All resources were extremely well thought out and prepared. They covered a cross-curricular theme, linking science, literacy and numeracy. Students used the resources effectively to promote children’s learning. There was a good science and geography link with ICT to support the curriculum. All activities covered a multi-learning style approach. There was excellent use of puppets, with the story-book theme connecting all the work. The resources produced will be used ‘time and time again.’ Class teacher evaluation of Year 1 cross-curricular sequence of lessons based on the book ‘Six Dinner Sid’
- ‘Resource was of an excellent standard. Children got opportunities to develop their own ideas and share explanations. Pupils participated well with the task and good relationships were formed with the trainees. Trainees got opportunities to exercise different strategies of behaviour management. A super activity!’ Class teacher evaluation of Year 2/3 project.

Excellent teaching to develop learning in children from diverse backgrounds:

- ‘Haiku poems incorporating mathematical word problems was an absolutely brilliant idea, which worked so well that it is definitely something I will repeat (thanks for the idea!). Even the new pupil who has only been speaking English for two months was able to write a shape poem. Incorporating ICT to type up the poem allowed the children to practise their word-processing skills. This has created a marvellous display of work on the main school corridor.’ Class teacher evaluation of Year 3-4 project.

To summarise then, I would like to say that placements are about quality rather than quantity. As one evaluator noted:

‘Students can gain much more from a short high quality placement than a poor but longer placement. I’ve seen students here learn more in a few days on placement than others have by spending several weeks in a poorer quality placement.’ Head Teacher comments in evaluation of the 2004 cohort.

Schools in challenging circumstances have a lot to offer trainees. Trainee teachers have a lot to offer schools in challenging circumstances.

In both years, the students’ reactions to the project went through something of a transformation. The students did not know the nature of the setting. They were working in
Students could work as problem-solvers in collaboration with the pupils and the classroom teacher. This was not always successful. In a minority of cases students did not get on with each other or the class teacher with whom they were placed. In the majority of cases, students really enjoyed the opportunity of working together. It opened their eyes to different practices. At the start of the year, students felt like they had an impossibly large boulder to roll up a hill. By the end of the year, they felt that they had climbed and conquered a significant peak!

Importantly student teachers liked the opportunities to experience working with different approaches to teaching and learning in a range of ‘real’ classroom settings. This would seem to be more effective than the ‘systematic reading of articles’ suggested by Milner and Smitley (2003) to enhance understanding of what they call ‘culturally celebratory pedagogy and classrooms’. I do not discount the importance of the literature in supporting students’ developing understanding; this is necessary but not sufficient.

The teaching and learning activities developed by students were generally of a good to very good level. However, the students’ ability to articulate and reflect on the principles underpinning their practices lagged behind their practical skills; most teacher educators will recognise this gap. However, there are good reasons for pursuing the goal of inquiry and reflection in the work of students on placement for the reasons articulated by Dewey:

Unless a teacher is... a student (of education) he may continue to improve in the mechanics of school management but he cannot grow as a teacher. Dewey (1963 :6)

What we would do differently

It is very important that the students focus clearly on the learning of pupils. By visiting the same school over a sequence of lessons they are more likely to develop a greater understanding of progression and continuity. Trainee teachers move beyond activities and the curriculum towards a detailed consideration of children’s developmental learning needs (Twiselton, 2003). Students can be seduced by superficially attractive ‘fun’ activities, which do not necessarily address the learning needs of pupils. The ‘trick’ clearly is to encourage students to develop ‘enjoyment’ and ‘excellence’ in purposeful and challenging activities, which support continuity and progression in children’s learning. Whilst continuity and progression are important in the children’s learning, this is also an important feature of the students’ experience.

It is not enough that university tutors work carefully with schools to develop documentation and a programme, which supports students’ learning on such short focused placements. The importance of preparing schools and class teachers with appropriate training is no less important in shorter placements than on longer placements. In both placements, third parties prepared the schools and class teachers. In the 2004 cohort, Advanced Skills Teachers acted as mediators, whilst in 2005, the Head and Senior teacher, respectively, disseminated the appropriate information. In my opinion, this level of management of the placement was insufficient. In future, University tutors should attend staff meetings at the school to establish a common understanding of the details, purpose and expected outcomes of such short focused placements.

The prospects for such short focused placements at the University of Derby are good. In the revalidation of our undergraduate BEd degree the importance of collaborative school-based projects are encapsulated in a double (30 credit) module (‘School collaborative projects’). Students will follow this module in the fourth and final year of the BEd programme. The main difference between this and previous examples is that placements will extend over a sequence of days. This might be several days over a week in which students plan, teach and assess a unit of work. We have already started to prepare for the ‘school collaborative project’ of 2006-07. This will build on strengths which we have identified in local partnership schools (including some in challenging circumstances) as well as opportunities offered by non-school settings such as museums and galleries.

At the heart of such placements is the desire to support schools in developing teaching and learning for the ‘right reasons’. Universities and schools can develop ‘mutually constructed learning communities’ (Cochran-Smith, 1991). Partnership, practice, inquiry and the principles of social justice can support the ends of both schools and universities.
Biographical notes

Dr. Des Hewitt has taught from Year 5 to doctoral students over the last year! As Assistant Head of Teacher Education he has principal responsibility for managing the Initial Teacher Education of Primary teachers. His research and teaching encompass Primary English, Primary Modern Foreign Languages, English as an Additional Language, E-learning and the development of self-regulated learning.

References.


6. Creativity outside convention: how a saturation placement can develop 21st century holistic teachers

Adrian Copping and Sandra Eady: St. Martin’s College, Lancaster

Summary

Creativity outside convention discusses an Excellence and Enjoyment driven theme week school placement for primary postgraduate students at St. Martin's College that took place in March 2005. Within this paper we evaluate the contribution made to the education of the student teachers and highlight benefits and areas to improve from the viewpoints of all the main stakeholders: students, teachers, college tutors and children. We also explore its success in relation to a key aim of asking the students to plan and teach in collaboration with each other whilst allowing curriculum subjects to collaborate with each other under a freedom of removed assessment constraints. Excellence and Enjoyment is about allowing the students to be excellent and enjoy the business of teaching. We aimed to facilitate this whilst developing skills of reflection, collaboration and dialogue.

Keywords


Context for innovation

The high intensity placement provided opportunities for primary postgraduate students to strengthen links between their learning at school and college by engaging in professional dialogue and reflection. In this way it was hoped that they would be able to combine theory and practice by working in a non-assessed, team teaching context. In this way it was hoped that they would be able to combine theory and practice by working in a non-assessed, team teaching context. The 'theory' and 'rationale' was driven by the government’s Primary Strategy, Excellence and Enjoyment (DfES, 2003), with a focus on meeting individual pupil need and cross-curricular thematic planning as a vehicle for learning. Students were encouraged to enter into a professional dialogue and reflect on practice through collaborative planning and peer review.

Our agenda was to create a context in which students would experience a different way of working. We wanted to give students the opportunity to use the rationale of the Excellence and Enjoyment document (DfES, 2003) to plan topics, which purposively crossed the borders of subjects whilst still teaching key skills. We wanted to create a context for reflection without worry of formal assessment including the scrutiny of meticulous paperwork. The opportunity was there to be creative, take risks, have an idea and run with it. As one teacher commented, ‘an opportunity to opt in not opt out’. Perhaps of primary importance was the opportunity for students to find their ‘professional’ voice and negotiate the established authoritative voice of the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Standards (TTA, 2002) along with the professional dialogue in which they would engage in school. The focus was definitely on developing our students, as reflective practitioners rather than mere technicians, providing opportunities where they could construct their own knowledge through professional dialogue and collaboration and in doing so develop a more holistic approach to teaching.

Rationale for innovation (connecting school based and HEI based learning)

The Primary National Strategy, Excellence and Enjoyment (DfES, 2003) was a key driver for the saturation placement enabling us to find ‘space’ within the school context for students to engage with the professional context in order to develop both personally and professionally. In our current placement model, there seemed to be little time for lifting one’s head above the surface of the water to stop, reflect, think, act and review, so we wanted to provide time for reflection in action, and collaborative dialogue. We also wanted to establish a context where pupil need was not viewed in terms of the subject driven curriculum.

However, developing reflective practitioners through ITT is not perhaps as straightforward as we might at first believe. Although reflection might be considered a more meaningful way to learn for experienced teachers, McIntyre (1992) argued that student teachers who are at an early stage in their teaching career can only really reflect on the ‘technical’ aspects of teaching, such as maintaining classroom order or gaining children’s attention. Only at a later stage in training did he feel students could articulate their own criteria and evaluate and develop their own practice accordingly. A more recent concern has been that the model of teacher education we have at present focuses only on reflection in terms of classroom practice (Reynolds and Salter, 1998; Turner-Bisset, 1999). Reynolds and Salter (1998) argue that if reflection is just focused on teaching techniques and problem solving in the classroom, it then neglects the wider importance of knowledge, understanding and values in promoting successful teaching. Although the present Standards (TTA, 2002) have given ‘professional values’ a higher profile, it is still predominantly focused on teaching skills.
Burton and Povey (in Hustler, McIntyre, 1996) apply McIntyre’s (1992) argument to postgraduate programmes and suggest that the interrogation of theories in relation to practice cannot have high priority on a PGCE course due to the pressurised environment and the time constraints. They suggest that due to their limited experience, students do not have anything to reflect on, so how can they become reflective teachers? They query:

how much it is possible to develop a reflective practitioner through a short course of teacher education...

With this in mind we wanted to give the students opportunity to reflect as honestly and as widely as possible on their own teaching. Whilst we acknowledged that the current ITT framework might have imposed a particular kind of reflection on our students, (Reynolds and Saiters, 1998), we also hoped that by using Excellence and Enjoyment (DfES, 2003) as the focus for the placement, the students might be more creative in their reflection. We also hoped by moving out of their comfort zone of the prescribed framework of literacy and numeracy students would be placed in a position where knowledge could only be gained through discussion and negotiation.

Underlying this view was the notion that the model of ‘competency’ outlined by the Standards (TTA, 2002) allows the students opportunity to be ‘mediocre’ and still pass. Eraut, in Burton and Povey (in Hustler, McIntyre, 1996) redefines competency and states that in today’s climate teachers need to be able to stand back from their existing practice and to keep it under critical review.

This whole concept of reflection and competency as outlined above means that the nature of knowledge needs to be questioned. The pedagogic content knowledge that is required to meet the Standards (TTA, 2002) could be viewed as embedded in a transmissive model of teaching, based predominantly in terms of technical competency only (Turner-Bisset, 1999).

Knowledge needs to be more fluid and take into account the different experiences, beliefs and values that both students and pupils bring to the classroom context. Thus, here lies the tension. Clearly we must be ‘compliant’ with the Standards (TTA, 2002) and enable students to demonstrate competencies so that they can gain their Qualified Teacher Status, on the other hand what value do we place upon the wider definition of pedagogic content knowledge which takes account of existing knowledge, beliefs and experiences and is constructed by teachers and students through professional dialogue and practice in school settings?

In order to develop reflection on practice, the notion of collaboration and dialogue between students and teachers was central to planning the placement in terms of a ‘themed’ week and giving the children opportunity to learn and practise cross-curricular skills. Mercer (1995) argues that the most effective way to evaluate and revise your own understanding is through debate and dialogue. He uses the example of Piaget’s notion of ‘cognitive conflict’ which enables children to de-centre, to become sensitive to other perspectives by listening and reflecting on these in relation to their own ideas. Thus opportunities for ‘cognitive restructuring’ and ‘debate and dialogue’ (Mercier 1995) were provided on the placement by placing groups of students in unfamiliar team planning and teaching settings forcing them to share ideas in relation to developing thematic learning experiences for the children. In this sense the creation of knowledge was, ‘not something you do to another person. It is something you do with people’ (Isaacs in Leong, 1999).

Overview of the placement

The one-week placement placed approximately two hundred postgraduate students in eight contrasting primary schools, in the North West of England. College tutors and teachers from participating schools decided on themes appropriate for cross-curricular planning for the week’s placement. Students were briefed at college regarding the purpose of and organisational aspects of the placement and were given inputs on the rationale behind the Primary Strategy and cross-curricular planning. They were also briefed on the informal nature of assessment through peer observation.

Two weeks prior to the placement, students met with teachers within schools to discuss and plan in relation to the suggested themes. Teachers worked with the students to support the initial planning by constructing mind maps which were then developed into appropriate and detailed lesson plans using either college or school based planning proformas. Students worked in groups of three to four per class.

During the placement students became responsible for running the theme week, maximising the opportunities for cross-curricular links. Teachers took on a variety of roles; some withdrew from the class completely allowing the students to have total autonomy, whilst others worked along side them in the classroom as part of the teaching team. All teachers met with students at various times during the week to pick up on issues and to help them reflect on the teaching experience, often through seminars at the end of the day. Finally the students were asked to complete at least two peer reviews of another student teacher working in the class, ideally at the beginning and towards the end of the week.
Student and school evaluations

Students and school evaluations highlighted a number of similar comments regarding the placement and these are summarised below. On the whole teachers felt that students had drawn on each other’s strengths and been able to experience cross-curricular work in a very practical and intense way. Teachers felt that there had been increased collaboration between staff and students as well as between students themselves. They also felt that the majority of lessons were practical and gave children a chance to try things out for themselves and that children had experienced a variety of teaching styles:

With four student teachers and class teacher we were able to support and aid the children on a much greater scale, which we saw the benefits of in terms of the work produced. (SCH G)

Some students felt that they had a chance to discuss a government initiative and reflect upon the thinking behind Excellence and Enjoyment (DfES, 2003) and be involved in translating this into practical experience in the classroom:

Actually doing it and seeing the results the children thoroughly enjoyed it (especially showing the rest of the school) highlights its benefits. Just reading about it isn’t enough. (SCH E).

They were pleased to see how easy it was to link subjects through a theme and thought this way of teaching definitely had a place in the curriculum:

This week has been such a roaring success that rather than feel apathetic towards another guidance document, I strongly believe in this method now and feel the need to incorporate it in my future teaching! (SCH E)

Students cited a range of advantages in relation to cross-curricular planning; many felt that this way of working was more interesting, engaging and fun for the children. They liked the way they could move away from distinct blocks and schemes of work and become more creative.

Some even felt they could fit more in:

Cross-curricular planning not only creates interest but also provides opportunities to get the most use of available time so an interesting approach towards targeted learning. (SCH G)

Many students felt children enjoyed this way of working and tended to study more in depth and become more focused as they can see the point of their work and as a result seemed to remember more. They too felt they were able to develop their knowledge and have a better understanding:

Focuses thinking and encourages children to view their knowledge and understanding of the world in a more holistic way. (SCH F).

Because the placement was not assessed in the conventional way, they felt they could take risks try out different kinds of organisation and groupings:

I enjoyed the freedom to do my own planning and use my own ideas without sticking so rigidly to NLS and NNS. (SCH E)

They felt the placement gave them an opportunity to try out activities they wouldn’t do on their own and they found they could really focus on non-core subjects, developing cross-curricular themes in subjects like art, drama and D&T:

The freedom to be creative. The feeling of seeing the children enjoying the lessons and the ability to try ideas that otherwise you would not. After the toil of our last placement this had reminded me of the reasons I went into teaching! (SCH G)

Students cited working with their peers and teamwork as one of the most positive aspects of the placement. They liked the fact that they could learn from their peers, that they could share their ideas and reflect upon different approaches to teaching. Many found it a worthwhile experience as they felt they not only received feedback on their own teaching they also learnt from each other’s teaching styles. They also commented on the positive aspects of teamwork in that they shared ideas and could work closely with class teachers in a supportive context. They liked the opportunity to collaborate in terms of planning together and in terms of experiencing different teaching styles and ways of organising the classroom and pupils.

Schools were pleased with the way students seemed to collaborate effectively without the pressure of formal assessment. Teachers felt that opportunities to develop professional dialogue and reflection were provided at the end of school in order to support planning for the next day. Some schools commented that where the students actively selected their groups they worked much better together and were more willing to engage in collaborative dialogue and reflection. Where groups were made up from those students left, it was noticeable in the way they found it harder to work together.

Issues raised

There was much evidence from student and school feedback that the experience was ‘dynamic, effective and inspirational at all levels’. Schools spoke of the overwhelming success and excitement for all involved and particularly for pupils who wanted it to continue. For
some students it proved to be a definitive moment in their teaching experience in terms of challenging their views and conceptions of cross-curricular planning:

This has shown me a way of teaching that I strongly believe in I have now seen it in practice and planned for it, and would like to see it introduced much more.

Students not only took part in cross-curricular planning, teaching and learning but gained a great deal by doing so, both in terms of developing a wider range of teaching strategies and in terms of challenging their conceptions of planning successful learning experiences across subject boundaries. For many this seemed to be a completely new way of viewing learning and knowledge in the curriculum. By doing so they actively engaged in professional dialogue in reflecting upon the different way of organising learning experiences, other than by subject. This led to greater collaboration with peers not only in terms of verifying their own ideas, but also in terms of listening to the ideas of others and reflecting on them in light of their existing knowledge of the curriculum and children’s learning (Mercer, 1995).

Many were forced into a situation where previous notions were challenged; some were able to adjust to this whilst others found this to be a challenge throughout the placement. In this way students were able to construct new knowledge and understanding with the opportunity to test this out within the school environment. They were able to engage in ongoing reflecting and evaluation by assessing the response and learning of the pupils and through discussion with teaching colleagues during the placement.

In order to support this approach, students’ notions of teaching predominantly through written work were challenged; they had begun to realise that in order to include all pupils, other strategies and learning experiences needed to be developed. This led to a greater proportion of ‘lessons’ becoming practical based and not necessarily fitting into hourly time slots, again a new experience for the students. Whilst students felt they were in a situation of uncertainty they felt that collaboration and open dialogue with each other and the teachers provided the ‘scaffold’ in which to try out new ideas. At the end of the placement many reported it as being exhausting yet exhilarating.

The removal of formalised assessment also enabled students and schools to focus on a team approach. Peer review and observation allowed students to engage in more formative assessment through reflection and dialogue.

Conclusions and recommendations

Despite the overwhelming positive feedback from both schools and students, it is difficult to measure the impact of the placement in terms of developing student’s abilities to reflect in any greater depth on wider issues in relation to teaching (McIntyre, 1992). It is also difficult to ascertain whether the existing Standards Framework (TTA, 2002) still constrains reflection on teaching skills only (Reynolds and Salter, 1998). We like to think that challenging students’ existing beliefs about curriculum organisation through using a thematic approach to meeting individual pupil need, required students to engage in more reflective, critical and creative thinking about their practice. However evidence for this may not be apparent until they are teaching in their first teaching posts. However, in order to understand why reflection is important, students need to be exposed to alternative and often conflicting ideas about education policy and how it influences practice in the classroom in order to understand why it is necessary to develop their powers of critical reflection during their Initial Teacher Education.

Biographies

Sandra Eady - Before moving into Higher Education, Sandra Eady taught in a range of primary schools in the South of England for thirteen years. She took up her first post in teacher education at Canterbury Christ Church University College, lecturing on undergraduate and postgraduate primary education programmes. She is now a Principal Lecturer at St Martin’s College, where she co-ordinates research and scholarly activity for the Education Faculty. Sandra also teaches on the primary PGCE and Masters in Education programmes and is actively involved in Initial Mentor Training with partnership schools.

Adrian Copping - After his training at St. Martin’s College, Adrian Copping taught in contrasting schools in Lancashire for seven years. During this time he was actively involved in initial teacher education as lead mentor in a large primary school in Lancaster. Upon return to St. Martin’s College as a lecturer, Adrian joined the English and Literacy team where he now teaches on primary postgraduate and undergraduate programmes. Adrian now jointly leads the primary PGCE and is also actively involved in research within the Education faculty.

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Challenges and Opportunities: Developing learning and teaching in ITE across the UK.

7. Desktop Video Conferencing in Higher Education – the Potential and the Reality
Ray Potter and Deborah Roberts, St Martin’s College

Summary
This paper reviews some preliminary experiences of the use of Desktop Video Conferencing (DVC) within a multi-site Initial Teacher Training Institution. The limitations of asynchronous communication such as email and the potential of synchronous communications such as DVC are appraised. Examples of actual and potential DVC are described alongside the attendant benefits derived from both practical experience and research evidence. Consideration is also given to the realities of setting up DVC, such as firewall issues and resource implications including hardware and software.

Keywords

Introduction
St Martin’s College is currently the largest provider of Teacher Education in the country and yet is mainly located in areas of relatively low population density. It is a multi-site institution with campuses in Ambleside, Carlisle, Lancaster and London (Tower Hamlets). The college draws ‘local’ non-resident students from an extensive catchment area and frequently places students in schools over a very wide geographical range. The College also offers an established distance-learning programme. Improving the quality of communications between students and their base campus and between staff on different campuses is therefore a critical issue for the college.

While the more familiar asynchronous e-learning tools such as websites, email and the BlackBoard virtual learning environment have all been utilised, none of these alone fully met the communications needs of staff and students of the college. It was felt that a synchronous audio and video communication system, where participants meet in ‘real time’, would offer greater immediacy and interactivity. This article discusses our initial experiences in the field of Desktop Video Conferencing (DVC) - an exciting area which has the potential to revolutionise communications between tutors and students at dispersed locations.

E-Learning?
E-learning, facilitated by the rapid growth in personal computer ownership and internet access is sometimes cited as a panacea for the challenges of distance learning. E-technology, in its many forms such as email, virtual learning environments, web-sites and video-streaming certainly has much to offer in enabling learning to take place for those students who are situated some distance from tutors. However, teaching and learning are essentially social activities and our education system has been constructed around this social reality. As Palmer (1995:282), argues:  

Face to face communication, the standard of the traditional classroom, is the ‘paradigmatic social context and medium’ and it is critical for interpersonal processes.

Whilst such technologies do enhance the opportunities for communication, it can be argued that such communication is qualitatively poor. Russell (2005:3) for example, contends that in low-bandwidth communications such as email, the affective domain is compromised:

Teachers and students interacting via computer have little access to the body language, social subtext, and relational cues that abound in face-to-face communication.

He proposes ‘blended’ learning solutions that combine programmes of face-to-face and online learning and high-band width solutions that allow for synchronous video, audio and text communication. Desktop video conferencing is one such electronic solution.

Introducing DVC
DVC provides audio and visual communication in real time from a standard personal computer and allows one to one and multiple user conferences by participants in different physical locations. A decade ago, Coventry (1995:5) claimed:

It is only recently that the technology has reached a level of stability, usability and affordability which permits its use in real teaching scenarios rather than research projects.
More recently, Furr & Ragsdale’s (2002) US university study demonstrated that, although DVC technologies had existed for some time, their use was still frequently hampered by a lack of bandwidth. This resulted in audio and video delays of few seconds to several minutes and gave rise to student and staff frustration.

As we move into the 21st Century, more and more schools and homes in the UK have access to Broadband, meaning that this is a technology that may finally have come of age. In addition to a high bandwidth connection (Broadband or LAN), users require a modern computer with a USB port, DVC software, webcam and headset. Typically, participants sit in the comfort of their own office or home and experience live video and audio from other participants via their computer. Some software features a ‘whiteboard’ for information exchange and the option to show or share documents and websites between the participants.

There are currently a number of DVC software packages available, ranging from the entirely free, such as Microsoft’s Netmeeting to commercial products. Netmeeting can be problematic to set up for more than simple ‘point to point’ contact and, in common with all free services, it uses a public remote server which inevitably raises issues of speed and security for college business. St Martin’s College makes use of the Marratech software which, although having a relatively high initial purchase cost, is then free to use with no per minute or per hour charges. The ‘client software’ can be installed on numerous computers and the only limitation is the number of concurrent users which is limited by the number of ‘seats’ purchased. The benefits of the Marratech software are that it is fast and secure and delivers high quality video and audio. It also allows users to share applications and web pages as well as giving participants the opportunity to record the meeting for later analysis. Staff and students need only to download the free client software, be equipped with a simple webcam and headset and they are ready to communicate.

The potential and the reality

Within the context of Higher Education and in particular Initial Teacher Training, there is huge latent potential for the application of DVC. Communication between tutors, between students and staff and also student to student might all be enhanced. In the context of a multi-site institution, cross-campus meetings, for example, to plan courses or moderate assessment, can be time-consuming and problematic to co-ordinate. DVC is already being used within the organization for tutor meetings between distant campuses. Benefits accruing from this use of technology include the elimination of travel costs and time saving (of up to two hours); and an increased availability to meet (because only meeting time rather than travel and meeting time is required). In the wider context, a reduction in the stress of modern travel and the environmental benefits should also be acknowledged.

Staff – student DVC interactions might include individual or small group tutorials. A number of the institution’s students, whilst considered ‘local’ might commute a round trip of eighty miles or more to college. In the longer term it is envisaged that DVC might allow a more student-focused approach to tutorials; with students accessing the system from their own home, should this better meet their needs. BECTA (2003:2) also suggests that video conferencing promotes participation within the session:

Students who normally stay in the background participate more; they are motivated to take part in video-conferencing.

Students are also geographically distanced from college whilst on school placements and although academic staff, acting as ‘Link Tutors’, liaise with students on placement; this is usually limited to one or two visits and can result in feelings of student isolation. DVC, in this context, might diminish the feeling of remoteness, provide support and enhance links between the college course and school-based learning. A related finding by Sharpe (2000:62) was that DVC led to more frank discussion between students and HE staff:

Students on teaching practice feel ‘a safety in distance’ when using video conferencing to communicate with their supervisors, resulting in a more frank interaction.

Students on placement might be further supported by their peers, via student to student DVC. This might be particularly appropriate where students are grouped in the same classroom and are required to plan collaboratively outside the normal school day; or where there is a lone student in an individual school. Hearnshaw (1997:57) found that DVC:

Supports distance learning by linking up students, and also offers a means of reassurance and social contact for schools.

Other possible applications of DVC might include keynote lectures given on one campus, for example by programme leaders or external experts, transmitted via DVC to groups of students at other campuses (Gilbert, 1999, Carville and Mitchell, 2000). The convenience for external experts to provide input to one or more campuses from a distant location might facilitate greater exploitation of such resources.

Whilst DVC is successfully used by a number of staff, the potential of the emerging technology to be utilised...
more widely in some of the ways described is still limited, largely, by access to hardware. It is not yet commonplace to find staff or students with webcams and headsets; in the same way that a decade ago students were unlikely to have access to email prior to entering Higher Education. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many students now arrive at college with their own email account. Similarly, with the affordability of the hardware and availability of internet communication systems, it might be anticipated that in the near future, ownership/access to such hardware will increasingly be the norm. An interim solution might be to instigate a library loan system where staff and students would borrow hardware for the duration of a project or placement.

It is not envisaged that DVC will totally replace the more traditional video-conferencing, where participants might meet in a designated video-conference room with large screen display. Rather it is a case of fitness for purpose; meetings of larger groups might be better catered for in video-conference suites whilst smaller meetings of one or two individuals at each location might enjoy the benefits of desktop video-conferencing.

As with any online course environment, DVC does raise a number of issues, both pedagogical and technical. Salmon (2003), although not writing specifically about video conferencing, proposed a five stage developmental process for describing and managing the online experience. While previous literature (Cloke and Sharif, 2001) has made a clear distinction between learning about ICT and learning with or through ICT, Salmon (2003) asserts that the most efficient strategy is to integrate the two so that, after very brief initial training, participants learn both technological and pedagogical aspects in parallel. The early stages of Salmon’s (2003) model involve setting up, accessing the system and familiarisation while also undergoing a period of online socialisation. It is only in the later stages that course-related group discussions occur and the interaction becomes more collaborative.

In addition to the technical skills that users require there are other issues of which project leaders should be aware. Students will need relatively modern personal computers and, depending on the individual level of proficiency, possibly assistance to install any hardware and software. Also, firewalls which can be both hardware or software based, and act to protect computers and networks from unauthorised access, can be a source of frustration. Although the required configuration changes are relatively straightforward and swift, it is possible that some Regional Broadband Consortia, understandably concerned about the security of their networks, may view any modification requests with suspicion and consequently make access to schools problematic.

Conclusion

Broberg (2000) listed three classical motives for the use of IT in learning. He argued that IT was ‘economical’ – learning more at less cost; it promoted ‘learning efficiency’ – learning more in less time; and thirdly, it ‘bridges distance in time and space’ – learning at anytime from anywhere. Whilst Broberg was writing about IT in general terms, rather than DVC specifically, we would argue that DVC offers all those advantages.

DVC is a promising, if still embryonic, technology that can be used to complement both existing face-to-face and distant learning techniques. The compelling nature of synchronous communication with video and audio offers a glittering opportunity to enhance the quality and breadth of teaching and learning in Higher Education.

Biographical note

Ray Potter is a Senior Lecturer in the Division of ICT Education at St Martin’s College, Lancaster. Having taught in primary schools in the midlands he moved into higher education, where he now works with undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as providing continuing professional development for teachers. His curriculum expertise lies in the fields of primary professional studies and primary ICT.

Deborah Roberts is a Senior Lecturer in the Division of Education Studies St Martin’s College, Lancaster. She is an experienced practitioner in both primary education and initial teacher training, with expertise in the areas of primary ICT and primary professional studies.

Bibliography


Desktop Video Conferencing in Higher Education – the Potential and the Reality.


8. Developing a blended learning approach: pedagogy and practice

Pat Jefferies: De Montfort University

Summary

The concerns to be addressed within this paper relate to the way technology has largely been implemented in educational institutions within the UK. As such it aims to highlight for both practitioners and trainee teachers the various issues surrounding use of the technology for supporting learning and teaching. For example, the literature review will identify the various drivers for change that have impacted implementation. It will also briefly outline why each of these have then been perceived to have exacerbated the gap between technology and pedagogy (e.g. Wintlev-Jensen, 2000). The paper will then go on to outline findings from a piece of action research that was conducted using asynchronous computer conferencing (ACC) within a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) with final year undergraduates studying computer ethics/professional issues in computing. Such students were based on campus but in the fieldwork study to be described they were geographically dispersed (UK, Ireland, USA). The main mission will be to provide guidelines aimed at improving practice as well as giving both practitioners and trainee teachers a greater understanding of how the learner, the learning task and a particular technology, Asynchronous computer conferencing (ACC), interact within a campus-based HE environment.

Keywords

Asynchronous computer conferencing/ Discussion boards/ E-learning/ E-teaching/ Computer supported collaborative learning.

Introduction

The development of e-learning is gathering momentum throughout the various sectors of education. This is due, in part, to the technological ‘pull’ characterised by the ever-increasing expectations to exploit the growing functionality of the Internet. For example:

- Rapid expansion of networking capabilities (e.g. Mason, 1998);
- Improved access to the technology through increased provision and functionality (e.g. Brittain and Liber, 1999)

In addition to the ‘lure’ of the technology there has also been the political ‘push’ provided by various government initiatives to encourage e-commerce, technology use in education and the like (e.g. JISC, 1995, NCIHE, 1997)

Despite the various factors that have encouraged development of networked learning environments there are, however, factors emerging that highlight some of the difficulties that educationalists are now encountering. For example:

- Professional uncertainty and differing academic orientations towards learning development (e.g. Land, 2000);
- Implementation and integration difficulties – institutional readiness (e.g. Twigg, 1999);
- Limitations of understanding regarding the impact of technology on the learning experience (e.g. Lipponen, 2002).

Further evidence of the impact of these particular factors can also be found in the ‘overwhelming evidence, both nationally and internationally, that the vast majority of teachers are not using ICT to enhance student learning. (Ofsted, 2004; OECD, 2004)’ (ESRC, 2005). However, in a recently completed four-year project, at the University of Bristol, Professor Sutherland, who led the research, says that ‘teachers could be helped to make more effective use of computers in a wide range of subject areas’. (ESRC, 2005) It is, therefore, particularly important that, as practitioners, we help trainee teachers and colleagues to recognise that ‘a technological revolution is going on, it will have massive effects, and it is of utmost importance to us concerning how we will actually use the new technologies – or whether they and the forces that control them will themselves use us in their projects’ (Kelner, 1999).

It is, therefore, proposed that the factors that influence our use of technology to support the learning process can be encapsulated as in figure 1

Aspects of each of these internal factors will now be addressed in order to briefly outline the impact that they are likely to have in developing a blended (technology mediated and teacher mediated) approach to learning and teaching.
Technology

With regard to technology, availability and accessibility (SENDA) are clearly some of the ethical implications that will impact implementation. The design and characteristics of the technology itself may also affect how it is actually used by students and the type of learning that it supports (e.g. Jefferies & Stahl, 2005).

Institutional factors

A number of issues related to the institution will have an impact on how e-learning is developed and deployed. For example, the support for such development may be impacted by the political structure of the institution itself (e.g. Becher, 1989), by management expectations, institutional policies in terms of widening participation, performance and retention, technical/support infrastructure and general Institutional Readiness (Twigg, 1999).

Tutors/Learners

Tutors and learners will also influence development of a blended learning approach in terms of their theoretical perspective on education (i.e. whether this is goal oriented or emancipatory); the learning context and individual learning styles (e.g. Knowles, 1978); expectations and attitudes towards learning and assessment (e.g. Boud, 2002) as well as skills/experience in using the technology itself. The tutor will be additionally influenced by their orientations towards academic development (Land, 2000); their perception of the role of the tutor and the teaching strategies that should be used to prompt or support learning (e.g. Stiles, 2002).

External influences such as theories of learning, government/public expectations and professional bodies will also exert influence on how innovation, in developing blended learning, is supported and encouraged.

The questions for practitioners and trainee teachers considering developing a blended learning approach therefore must be to ask ‘Why am I using the technology?’ in order to be able to provide an educational rationale for its deployment. Educators also need to know what is the ‘value added’ of using the technology for both themselves as well as their students. Secondly to ask ‘What technology is to be used and what is it to be used for?’ Further questions will then arise with regard to ‘When will the technology be used?’, ‘Who will use the technology?’, ‘Where will the technology be used?’ and ‘How will the technology be used?’ This latter question should also address the need to develop strategies for implementation, integration with the face-to-face contact sessions as well as strategies for monitoring and evaluation.

The Case Study - Background

The Case Study to be described concerned final year Computer Science undergraduates who were studying Computer Ethics. Such students were all campus based but were studying in different universities in the UK, the USA and Ireland. The focus for this particular piece of action research was based on a social constructivist model of learning (Vygotsky, 1978) and was aimed at developing self-organising groups such as those depicted in the Brittain & Liber’s (1999) adaptation of Stafford Beer’s (1981) viable systems model as depicted in Fig. 2:

Final year undergraduates in computing do, however, tend to adopt a very ‘scientific’ and strategic approach to their studies. For example they much preferred ‘black’ and ‘white’ answers to problems and were very averse to undertaking discussion related to rather abstract concepts and groupwork. In studying a module such as Computer Ethics this was, however, exactly the type of activity that needed to be encouraged. Thus the
educational rationale for using the technology (ACC) in this particular instance was that it was being used to support the social constructivist approach to learning. It was also supporting andragogic (Knowles, 1978) learning styles and was fully aligned with learning objectives for the module concerned.

**Stages of development**

After having determined the educational justification for using ACC, as a particular technology, the next step in development was to address the ethical issues in terms of accessibility, privacy and informed consent. For example:

- Accessibility - ensuring all students had access;
- Privacy – ensuring all students knew that their access would be tracked through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE);
- Informed consent – ensuring that there were strategies in place to make sure that all students were fully aware of how and why the technology was being used and how this would impact assessment of their work.

Following on from this, the next stage of development was to look at module design in terms of how to ‘authentically’ integrate use of the technology (ACC) with the face-to-face activity (F2F) – the integrated model of course development (Mason, 1998). In order to enhance the authenticity of using the ACC technology within this particular module, efforts were made to set up collaboration with other tutors who were involved in teaching similar modules in other countries. This was felt to be an enhancement to the student experience as they would be facilitated in experiencing ‘first-hand’ the approaches that would be made to discussing computer related ethical dilemmas by students from different cultures and countries. Such learning objectives therefore necessitated the setting up of virtual work groups that included students from each of the countries involved. Tutors had, of course, to collaborate over how the course would run as well as having to agree an assessment strategy. Tutors also had the job of ‘selling’ the idea of computer supported collaborative learning (CSCL) to their students.

Issues addressed at this stage were, therefore, related to:

- Technical issues – evaluating availability/accessibility of the technology, investigating procedures for setting up student accounts, setting up group areas, populating the VLE with resources;
- Setting up virtual work groups across international boundaries – to facilitate this, the Belbin (1981) Self-Perception Inventory was eventually used. The rationale for using this particular instrument was to provide a means for objectively grouping students from each of the different countries involved;
- Monitoring/moderation issues – looking at the role of the tutor and determining whether or not they should moderate the discussion groups – i.e. ‘What is the role of the tutor in using ACC to support CSCL in a campus-based environment - is scaffolding/moderation a necessary or sufficient condition for success?’;
- Setting up strategies to support motivation – e.g. setting an initial task aimed at getting the students to socialise using the text based medium, setting interim (e.g. strategy development) and final deliverables (e.g. collaborative report, strategy evaluation, module evaluation);
- Making decisions as to how the use of asynchronous computer conferencing (ACC) could be evaluated. For example, questions asked at this point included ‘How could use of ACC be assessed to ensure that it supports achievement of learning outcomes?’ and ‘How could we gauge engagement of individual students and how would we be able to assess that they were communicating productively?’ In order to answer these sorts of questions the following instruments were subsequently researched and used:
  - Access tracking – to determine student engagement;
  - Transaction Analysis (Freeman, 1978) – to identify patterns of interaction in the threaded discussions;
  - Discourse Analysis - Community of Inquiry Model (Archer, Garrison, Anderson & Rourke, 2001) – to identify the types of messages that students were posting;
  - Staff/student questionnaires and semi-structured interviews - to assess the benefits of using the ACC medium;
  - Assessment – Module Outcomes – to identify patterns of achievement mapped to such things as access/contribution to the discussion boards.

**Findings**

Findings from this particular case study subsequently identified a number of assumptions that ought not to be made about students, even at final year degree level. These were the level of computer literacy and their confidence in communicating via the text medium. Whilst these were all Computing Science undergraduates it was noticeable that a number of them were uncomfortable with using the text-based medium for communicating with students that they had never met. For example one student commented:

> It was hard to get my ideas across through text instead of verbally and is something I must work on. (BSc student)
This may, in part, have been due to the permanence of the text within the discussion boards that some found a little daunting. Mason (1998) has also noted that this is a factor that may inhibit engagement with discussion forums.

Other factors that could not be taken for granted, even at final year degree level, were that students had developed the necessary organisational, group work and critical evaluation skills that might be assumed at this level. Reasons underpinning these findings are likely to be highly complex and will probably vary with different cohorts of students. It was felt, therefore, that students needed to have their critical evaluation and group work skills developed within the module itself. In this latter respect, use of the Belbin (1981) Self-Perception Inventory was deemed to have been successful. For example, not only did this instrument provide tutors with an objective way of determining the groups it was also found that students were clearly using their knowledge of group roles to good effect in developing their strategies. For example one student commented:

As Company worker, I felt the role suited my practical, common sense and less creative aptitude towards solving problems. (BSc student)

It was also subsequently found that all of the ‘international’ Belbin (1981) groups generally performed well – final grades for these groups were, overall, all higher in comparison to those achieved by ‘single campus-based’ groups that had been chosen by the students themselves.

However, a well-defined outline of expectations and rewards, both intrinsic and extrinsic, also needed to be given to students to boost confidence and stimulate motivation for using the ACC medium. For example, it quickly became clear that the conferencing environment needed to be structured either by the tutor (through moderation) or by the tasks imposed. It was then interesting to note that imposition of structure through a task focus increased contribution as evidenced by the number of message postings students made but that tutor intervention promoted a ‘star’ pattern of transaction to be evidenced. (See figure 3) Either that or discussion threads were terminated following such tutor intervention. The ‘star’ network pattern (figure 3) can, of course, be seen to be consistent with the transmission model of learning, where information flows almost exclusively from one resource – in this case the tutor. This can, of course, be seen to reflect traditional expectations of both the tutor and learner roles – i.e. the Cognitive Apprenticeship model of learning (Collins, et al, 1989). On the other hand, the ‘all-channel’ or fully-connected model (Freeman, 1978/79), suggestive of a more cooperative model of learning, was clearly evidenced when there was no tutor intervention – i.e. more students were making more contributions and the quality of these improved as they gained confidence in using the medium. (Similar findings, related to the impact of tutor intervention on student collaboration have, in fact, been reported in other research (e.g. Nurmela, Lehtinen and Palonen, 1999))

Thus, one important finding was that student engagement with the module increased significantly when there was no tutor intervention. This was clearly evidenced by both the number and quality of postings made by each of the individuals involved as well as the transaction patterns that emerged.

Finally, feedback from students indicated that they saw the value of using this technology to work with their peers in other universities. For example:

Being part of a group in a project of this kind opened my eyes in a way to the importance of communication between members in order for further development of the work. (BSc student)

Findings from this latest fieldwork study have, therefore, subsequently led to the following set of recommendations being developed

Recommendations

Recommendations, for using ACC within a campus based HE context, are:

- Choose an appropriate, focussed module that has a discursive nature that promotes development of critical analysis;
- Determine strategies for integrating use of the ACC environment into the F2F sessions as well as defining how such use is going to be structured and assessed – i.e. by the tutor or through the tasks set;
- Brief students as to the monitoring that will be undertaken and how they are expected to use the environment;
- Propose introductory exercises for students to undertake using the technology – e.g. socialisation to build trust. (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1998);
- Clearly identify extrinsic and intrinsic rewards aligned
Challenges and Opportunities: Developing learning and teaching in ITE across the UK.

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Conclusions

Despite the fact that this case study refers to some action research that was undertaken with geographically dispersed, final year computing science undergraduates it is felt that there are a number of lessons that have been learnt that can now help development of similar activity within other educational contexts. For example, the findings from this case study, as well as previous fieldwork studies undertaken by the author, have shown that using technology to support learning and teaching is not simply a question of choosing certain pedagogical theories and technical tools. Rather it is gaining the understanding that such choices will implicitly follow from our view of education and that these will necessarily impact the student learning experience. In raising some of these issues this paper, therefore, seeks to help practitioners and trainee teachers to both understand, and subsequently address, the pedagogical and ethical risks involved in developing their e-learning and e-teaching strategies.

Biographical notes

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Glossary of acronyms

ACC  Asynchronous Computer Conferencing
AST  Advanced Skills Teacher
BECTA  British Educational Communications and Technology Agency
BEd  Bachelor of Education
CEPD  Continuing Education and Professional Development
CHE  College of Higher Education
CSCL  Computer Supported Collaborative Learning
DRBs  Designated Recommending Bodies for Graduate Teacher Training Schemes
DfEE  Department for Education and Employment
DfES  Department for Education and Skills
DVC  Desktop Video Conferencing
EAL  English as an Additional Language
EPS  Education and Professional Studies
ESCalate  Education Subject Centre: Advancing Learning and Teaching in Education
ESRC  Economic and Social Research Council
HE  Higher Education
HEA  Higher Education Academy
HEI  Higher Education Institution
HoDs  Heads of Department
ITE  Initial Teacher Education
ITP  Individual Training Plan
ITT  Initial Teacher Training
JISC  Joint Information Systems Committee
LEA  local Education Authority
M  Masters
MA  Master of Arts
NC  National Curriculum
NCIHE  National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education
NLS  National Literacy Strategy
NNS  National Numeracy Strategy
NQT  Newly Qualified Teacher
NTE  New Teacher Educator
OECD  Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofsted  Office for Standards in Education
OU  Open University
PDP  Personal Development Plan
PGC  Postgraduate Certificate
PGCE  Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PHSE  Personal, Health and Social Education
QCA  Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
QTS  Qualified Teacher Status
SCITTs  School Centred Initial Teacher Training Schemes
SNAS  Support for New Academic Staff
TDA  Training and Development Agency for schools
TTA  Teacher Training Agency
UCET  University Council for the Education of Teachers
VLE  Virtual Learning Environment
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