

CHAPTER 1 | TO TRAIN OR TO EDUCATE A NEW GENERATION OF TEACHERS?

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CRITICAL ISSUES

- *Setting the scene: the current context in ITE*
- *Personal challenges for teacher educators*
- *Learning from different models*

Introduction

Teacher education is in a state of dynamic flux across the United Kingdom and internationally. Many teachers are taking on teacher education roles in schools, colleges and universities for the first time. There is a need to provide high-quality, relevant and rigorous ITE in order to develop committed professionals who are able to offer the best possible learning experiences for all pupils in this and future generations.

Across many Western countries there is a growth of government policies which are designed to promote more school-led models of teacher education. In England, the government-driven changes are probably more radical than those being experienced in other countries. These changes were announced in *The Importance of Teaching: Schools White Paper* (DfE, 2010). A new emphasis on outstanding schools leading the training and professional development of teachers was heralded, through the designation of 'teaching schools'. The initial plans were developed further (DfE, 2011), building on the premise that teachers in schools are the best people to be leading teacher education. The following statement is included in the vision and background to teaching schools on the NCTL (National College for Teaching and Learning) website.

Teaching schools will play a fundamental role in developing a self-sustaining system where:

- *trainee teachers learn from the best teachers, supported by a culture of coaching and mentoring;*
- *professional development is school-based and classroom focused – teachers, support staff and leaders improve through exposure to excellent practice within and beyond their immediate school, through observation, mentoring, coaching, practice, reflection and sharing with peers.*

(DfE, 2012a)

The first step the government has taken toward achieving this in England has been the introduction of the School Direct programme, which is described as:

part of a wider set of reforms designed to help schools take greater responsibility for leading and shaping Initial Teacher Training, including new approaches to university-school partnerships, Teaching Schools' Initial Teacher Training role, and the accreditation of new school-led providers.

(Teaching Agency, 2012)

As a result, the relationship between schools and accredited providers such as Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and School-Centred Initial Teacher Training providers (SCITTs) is rapidly changing.

Critical questions

- » Where is teacher education located and who leads it in your context?
- » What are the challenges in your national context?

Teacher educators

Teacher educators facilitate the professional development of teachers by providing learning opportunities through a variety of means and in a range of contexts. The teachers may be at any stage of their career; however, within this book we are focusing on nurturing student teachers and NQTs (Newly Qualified Teachers) in particular. Because of the changing terrain, there is increased diversification of teacher educators as an occupational group. Many ITE programmes are situated in HEIs, with institute-based teacher educators (IBTEs) who have strong academic backgrounds facilitating the learning (Chapter 2, Swennen, and Chapter 8, van Velzen and Timmermans). Experienced teachers in schools may work as school-based teacher educators (SBTEs), supporting the learning of student teachers and NQTs in the classroom by taking on roles as mentors or tutors (Chapter 6, Chapman, and Chapter 7, Jones). Others are *hybrid educators* (Zeichner, 2010) who work in both settings. In the Netherlands, teachers who are involved in ITE are known as cooperating teachers. Within this group the term SBTE is used for those with more of an overseeing role in school, rather than the teacher (or daily) mentor who works alongside the student teacher from day to day (Chapter 8, van Velzen and Timmermans). In England the term professional mentor is commonly used for this role (Chapter 7, Jones). In summary, there is a diverse group of individuals whom we would view as having this privileged role of being teacher educators. With the current rapid rate of change there are challenges for all teacher educators in terms of their roles and responsibilities and their professional identities, within whichever context they are working.

Training or education?

A debate surrounds the nature of the preparation of teachers with a number of national governments promoting the concept of ITE as training, implying that teaching is a set of skills that student teachers can learn through apprenticeship without associated academic underpinning. While learning teaching does include acquiring a range of classroom and behaviour-management skills, it is our belief that this alone does not develop outstanding teachers who enable pupils to fulfil both their academic and personal potential. Rather, there is a need to develop student teachers as reflective practitioners who can adjust their teaching approaches to meet the needs of learners because they have a critical and rigorous approach and a growing understanding of:

- » the theories of learning;
- » their own subject(s);
- » the context and culture in which they work locally and nationally.

This is more than just training in the skills of teaching; this is the all-encompassing scope of education. Teacher education is the remit of teacher educators who are cultivating an identity beyond that of a teacher of children (Chapter 2, Swennen). The role of a teacher educator could be seen as being an 'enriched' teacher, requiring additional skills, knowledge and pedagogical approaches. The challenges of developing an effective pedagogy for teaching about teaching are deliberated in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4 the concept of developing an academic identity through practice-based research and scholarship is considered in a way that is relevant to all teacher educators. These are some of the personal challenges of educating a new generation of teachers that will be considered in Part A of the book.

As many teachers are taking on the new role of teacher educator in their own settings, there is an urgent need to develop a community of practitioners where their needs can be met, enabling them to consider the challenges of this work alongside those with more experience. This may be especially demanding while continuing their prime role as teacher and remaining in the context where their teacher identity is well established and the overarching priority is the education of children rather than the education of teachers.

Critical questions

- » What personal challenges do you face in your role in teacher education?
- » How will you balance this against the expectation to consistently deliver outstanding classroom teaching and the high demands this, in itself, makes?
- » What do you believe the role of a teacher educator should encompass?
- » How can you engage with a community of teacher educators where your identity, knowledge and practice can be strengthened?

Recently, Davey has explored the professional identity of teacher educators in *Career on the Cusp?* (Davey, 2013). This volume draws on the findings of the author's research, revealing issues that are real for new and developing IBTEs in their professional role, context and identity. Although in a different context to SBTEs there are many common elements around the challenges and opportunities that arise from constantly evolving education policies.

Different models of teacher education

Leading teacher education takes us beyond our personal development in this role and into the domain of what institutional models we can develop to best meet the needs of the new generation of teachers alongside whom we are working. This is explored in Part B of the book. What is meant by outstanding provision is debated in Chapter 5, drawing out some themes that are illustrated in the rest of the book:

- » having an inquiry-based approach;
- » building a learning community;
- » developing reflective practitioners;
- » having an ethos of high aspiration;
- » evaluating the impact of the programme on the quality of teaching.

The opportunity to consider developments in England and in the Netherlands has provided much food for thought. Chapter 6 describes a partnership model used in England to develop a series of school-led modules that help to integrate theory and practice. The impact of this approach was evaluated on both the outcomes for student teachers and their ability to link theory and practice.

The development of a learning community in a partnership of secondary schools in England is illustrated in Chapter 7. From this SCITT model we also see how student teachers are developed into reflective practitioners, how an ethos of high aspiration is maintained across the partnership and how the impact of the ITE is evaluated.

Finally, in Chapter 8 a school-centred model for ITE in the Netherlands demonstrates how practice-based inquiry aimed at improving the practice of student teachers and school development is part of the curriculum of ITE.

Critical questions

- » What underpinning theory and research is necessary for an effective new generation of teachers?
- » How can you develop post-graduate thinking in your developing teachers?
- » In what ways do you nurture your partnerships?