

**Teaching Practice as a component of
Initial Teacher Education in the Learning
and Skills Sector**

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Dr Joe Harkin

Oxford Brookes University

Education Research & Development Ltd

j.harkin@brookes.ac.uk

The Research

The DBIS Workforce Development group commissioned research in response to Ofsted reports, over many years, stating that there are weaknesses in the initial education of teachers in the Learning and Skills sector.

The research was based on a literature review, including Ofsted reports; and interviews with a range of stakeholders.

What works, what doesn't in ITE?

Ofsted reports that most generic ITE is effective but

that some teachers in ITE experience too little “breadth” of practice.

The term “breadth” is not an accurate shorthand for the range of experiences desirable in ITE

“Breadth” of Practice ?

“Breadth” includes depth of subject pedagogy; non-teaching role; practice across levels, settings and learners

These are not equally important in ITE – subject pedagogy is very important

Effective workplace mentoring is key to fulfilling them all

Employers' role in ITE

Problems lie in some employers being unable (e.g. due to size) or unwilling (e.g. due to resource constraints) to provide mentor support for the practice component of ITE

Systemic problems in providing support for ITE

Why can some employers provide high levels of support for ITE, and others not?

Problems lie in some employers lack of commitment to professional development;

and/or to lack of co-ordinated systems for institutional development, performance management and professional development, including ITE.

Solutions to systemic problems in providing support for ITE

Clearer guidance about the duties of employers to support ITE

Clearer guidance about best practice in providing support for ITE through workplace mentoring

Joined up Ofsted inspection framework for general provision and ITE, to incorporate the leadership and management of professional development, linked to institutional performance

Smaller employers/more dispersed providers of ITE

Some employers, even when willing to do so, cannot provide high levels of support for ITE, e.g. because they do not have staff capacity to provide a suitable mentor

- Solution lies in networks of support across providers/employers

Who should lead the ITE Team?

Generic providers of ITE are the only continuity of provision and the only central location for training. (EoT, 2004, saw the ITE team as pivotal). An ITE team can provide:

- Expertise in ITE
- Guidance to employers
- Training for Mentors
- Oversee the assessment regime
- Act as a network hub
- Oversee the ITE QA regime

What power do ITE teams have over employers?

None.

Which is why:

- clear employer guidance is needed
- the inspection regime should link general employer performance management systems with ITE
- dedicated funds are needed

Being clear about the role of the Workplace Mentor

The ITE mentor should be a qualified, experienced teacher, preferably in the same or similar subject area to the trainee, whose main role is to support the trainee to develop subject-specific pedagogy.

In addition, for some trainees, there may be an induction role.

This is accomplished mainly by observing the trainee teach and giving formative feedback, using clear criteria agreed with the generic ITE tutors.



The Focus of the Mentor Role

By three methods we may learn wisdom:

- **by reflection**, which is noblest
- **by imitation**, which is easiest
- **by experience**, which is the bitterest

Confucius (551 BC - 479 BC)

The training of the Mentor

To perform the role of mentor effectively some training is necessary, e.g. to understand the role; become familiar with teaching observations and the use of agreed criteria; to take part in the quality assurance processes of the ITE programme.

The training need neither be extensive nor deep - most of the characteristics of an effective mentor e.g. ability to listen, to provide formative feedback, to empathise are similar to the skills that a trained and experienced teacher will already have.

Resourcing the role of the Workplace Mentor

Formal recognition of the mentor role is needed – marked by allocation of some dedicated time resource per trainee.

Review funding of CTLLS & DTLLS to earmark funds?

Persuade employers of the institutional performance benefits?

References

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