

The Importance of schools *and* HEIs in Initial Teacher Training: How Collaboration Between Canterbury Christ Church University and its Partnership of Schools Changed Trainees' Understandings of Diversity.

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The DfE's recent teacher training strategy, 'Training the Next Generation of Outstanding Teachers' argues that 'where teachers have had extensive initial training in schools, they perform better' (DfE 2011a, pp. 13). The strategy therefore argues that 'schools should take greater responsibility in the system' (ibid, pp.14), a move which follows in the footsteps of three-quarters of OECD countries (Musset, 2010, pp. 38). However, the DfE's strategy also recognises that 'universities bring great strengths to the training of teachers' (DfE 2011a, pp. 14). The role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in initial teacher training (ITT) will therefore not disappear but will need to be 'reconceptualised' (Sachs, J. 2003).

Our research provides a successful model for collaboration between HEIs and schools. We show the measurable improvements to training achieved when Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) and its partnership of schools used a phased model in which we tapped into both parties' different strengths. The HEI took responsibility for aggregating trainees' experiences, co-ordinating a research based response and providing the space and theoretical frameworks for trainees to share, contrast and reflect on their in-school experiences. Meanwhile, schools brought an understanding of context which guided an appropriate response, provided trainees with opportunities to see theory in practice and a context for professional dialogue. In order to bring together these strengths, the HEI's role

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started as that of initiator, then moved to that of facilitator and capacity builder and finally to evaluator and supporter.

Our project was focused on a need (identified in feedback and surveys) for enhanced training on 'teaching for diversity'. Our definition of diversity emerged from the project itself and was agreed to be: *'the variety in pupils' sense of self and their background including the range and differences between pupils' personal biographies'* (Menzies and Curtin, 2010, pp.1). At the end of the ITT programme, surveys and interviews suggested that trainees had developed a more sophisticated understanding of diversity and that several had changed their opinions. We explore their views on what contributed to their learning ('the locus of learning') and show that some, though far from all trainees were able to see significant complementarity between the contribution of the HEI and school.

Keywords: Partnership; diversity; school based initial teacher training; collaboration; EBITT; Graduate training program.

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Introduction

Employment Based Initial Teacher Training (EBITT) requires schools to provide training and professional development to beginner teachers who they 'employ'. The role of the school is to provide a programme of 'education and professional development' for their beginner teacher. The role of the Higher Education Institution (HEI) is to monitor, support, quality assure and to assess and award the professional qualification, Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) was set up in 1997 by the then Teacher Training Agency (TTA) as an employment based initial teacher training route. It was originally seen as a means to address teacher shortage and was aimed at mature entrants to the profession and career changers. The numbers on GTP routes have grown year on year but still accounts for less than 10% of the overall number of teachers trained. Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) is the provider of the largest Employment Based Initial Teacher Training (EBITT) programme in the country. CCCU works in partnership with over three hundred schools across Kent, Medway and London. It was graded 'Outstanding' in its most recent Ofsted Inspection (May 2010).

Evidence on the success of EBITT provision has showed a mixed picture: Ofsted's 2011 annual report showed that just 19% of employment based routes were judged outstanding compared to 36% of ITT as a whole (Ofsted 2011). However some EBITT providers consistently deliver outstanding provision (Smithers and Robinson 2011). There is also evidence that 'of the employment-

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based routes, those linked with an HEI did better than the independent employment-based providers'(Great Britain, Education Select Committee, 2011.)

Musset (2010) reviews international evidence on the performance of teachers with different training experiences. Her evidence, has been used to argue for an increase in school based ITT (DfEa 2011, Education Select Committee 2011). Musset argues that ITT is most effective where it is linked to specific school needs, demonstration and peer review and that trainees who have extensive training in schools perform better as teachers. She cites Fleener (1999) who shows that retention rates amongst trainees with extensive training in schools are three times higher than amongst those trained on traditional routes, a finding reflected in Smithers and Robinson's more recent work (Smithers and Robinson 2011). Musset also cites Reihartz and Stetson (1999) who describe perceptions amongst school leaders of the advantages of trainees with substantial school based experience and Schwille and Dembélé (2007) who argue that school based elements of training provide an opportunity for trainees to be socialised into professional norms and standards.

In the UK, all ITT routes already include substantial practical experience and the trend towards increasing schools' involvement in teacher education is in fact nothing new (DfE 1992, pp.1). Back in 1997, Brooks *et al.* went so far as to argue that the 'trend towards giving British secondary schools a fuller role in initial teacher education (ITE) had been gathering pace for much of the second half of this century'(Brooks *et al.*, 1997, pp.163). Our concern is therefore not with how schools provide practical experience but with how schools collaborate with the HEI so that teachers move along the 'continuum of teacher learning' (Schwille and Dembele, 2007). As Musset explains:

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'It appears that the responsibility for teacher education has typically been divided between these two types of actors (schools and HEIs), rather than shared between both systems. This is a missed opportunity for developing synergies between teacher education institutes and schools (Price, 2004). A study by Wilson *et al.*, (2002) shows the relevance of the quality of the practicum: they establish a link between direct classroom observation and teacher teaching of particular subject matter, and this kind of improvement should be worth developing in future policies. New policy strategies should go toward both initial teacher education institutes and schools to share responsibility for teacher education' (Musset 2010, pp.39).

Our work rises to Musset's challenge and describes a small scale research project on 'Teaching for Diversity'. The project exemplified our proposed three phase model for collaborative ITT which we argue provides a foundation for effective partnership and bridges the 'theory-practice divide'(Schon 1983, 1987 and Kolb 1987). Our model breaks down the division in responsibility between HEI and school, a division criticised by Musset and revealed by Williams and Soares' work (2002) which analyses tutors, mentors and trainees' perceptions of the division in responsibility between the HEI and school. We believe that such approaches can result in the school merely being seen as a placement provider. In contrast, our model leads to shared responsibility. We believe that our model could be replicated as a new approach to partnership making best use of both the HEI and schools' strengths. This would be in keeping with the Department for Education's (DfE's) decision to ensure that more funded training places are directed towards providers where partnerships are strong" (Great Britain, DfEa 2011, pp.16.)

Diversity

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Our project was guided by a shared belief across our partnership that ‘learning to teach in diverse settings’ is a critical element of any initial teacher training curriculum. We felt that in order for trainees to build positive relationships and engagement, nurture pupils’ identity and prepare pupils to live in a diverse world, they need to understand the biographies of the pupils they are teaching.

The importance of early professional learning for beginner teachers in relation to teaching in diverse settings is clearly articulated in a number of key documents.

‘Education for diversity is key to preparing children and young people for the 21st century world, where borders are becoming more porous and global citizenship is an increasing imperative. It is about learning for life, ensuring that in adulthood pupils will be able to cope with social mobility, armed with the social skills that will help them flourish’ (Great Britain, DfES, 2007, p.21).

Nonetheless, literature searches show that the meaning attached to ‘teaching in diverse settings’ may be a cause for confusion. Initial searches revealed that ‘diversity’ was often understood in a narrow ‘strand based’ way. Multiverse (a web based training resource for teacher education and professional development) views diversity within six strands – race and ethnicity, social class, religious diversity, bilingual and multilingual learners, refugee and asylum seekers and travellers and Roma (Multiverse 2011). This ‘strand based’ approach to diversity contrasts with what we call ‘broader diversity,’ For example, *Educating Teachers for Diversity* (OECD, 2010, p.21) states:

‘It is important to state at the outset that ‘diversity’ is a multi-faceted concept that can contain as many elements and levels of distinction as required. Work on the topic includes but is not limited to: age, ethnicity, class, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, religious status, educational

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background, geographical location, income, marital status, parental status and work experiences.’

The OECD report continues by making a distinction between ‘diversity’ and disparity’ – arguing that diversity is a neutral concept whereas disparity refers to diverse characteristics being associated with different outcomes or differential treatment. The need to address disparity of outcome and for education to actively work to remove barriers to achievement is embodied in the current Professional Standards for newly qualified teachers. Standards Q18-20 (against which the award of QTS is judged) specifically address these concerns (TDA 2009a p.34-37). The standards are due to change in September 2012 but will still refer to: ‘upils of all backgrounds, abilities and dispositions’ and the need to ‘Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils’(Great Britain, DfE, 2011).

The HEI as Initiator

The catalyst for this specific project was the outcome of the national Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) survey (TDA, 2009), an annual perception survey completed in February of the NQT’s first year. The survey forms part of the Government’s continuous review of the quality of initial teacher training. A wide range of questions are asked covering the core learning outcomes expected in any initial teacher training programme ranging from behaviour management to subject knowledge development.

The result of one question from 2009 challenged a key dimension of our training provision. The survey suggested that training to teach in diverse settings was perceived as a weakness by our trainees, with only 13% rating their training as good or very good. The HEI partners spent some time examining the

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significance of this particular response and what it told us about the training experience NQT's understandings of teaching in diverse settings.

More detail was revealed by a question set in 2009-10 trainees' interim evaluation in December 2009. Trainees were asked to explain the extent to which their training had prepared them to teach in diverse settings.

There were some positive responses:

'I haven't had any specific training for teaching in diverse settings but the day I spent in an alternative educational establishment was very enlightening and useful. I went to an independent school for children with extreme behavioural and emotional needs and saw how the staff managed learning at levels appropriate for each child. This helped me to assess how I differentiated within my own classroom for the range of abilities and needs there are. (emphasis added)

The primary school visit was an eye opener and provided an unmissable experience. Working in a severely deprived area with children in their earliest stages of learning presented a real challenge.'

The reference to 'specific training' raised questions with respect to what trainees considered to be part of their 'training'. They appeared to associate training only with discrete sessions, whether school INSET or University days, rather than their training experience as a whole. Several trainees chose to focus their responses on such sessions:

'I have received child protection training from my school, which has been extremely helpful. This training will continue to be of benefit in any future employment. I have also received training on a staff development day for thinking skills and how to engage children and to keep their brains active. This will be helpful in diverse settings.

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The RE subject knowledge day was very beneficial to me as it has enabled me to bring RE into the classroom at the pupils level and allowed me to be creative in my teaching.'

Encouraging trainees to reflect more deeply on their school experience as training therefore became an important concern which we shall return to later. Some trainees did not recognise diversity in their training:

'What are diverse settings? I have not had any training that I know of. I'm in a Grammar School - not a great deal of diversity here! In fact, very much the opposite - a sense of unity, a strongly supported school ethos by parents, pupils and staff, and a great deal of very happy students and staff (even if they don't know it).'

In early January 2010 a centre based training day for trainees (led by the HEI provider) was devoted to exploring trainees' responses to the survey question and their understandings of diversity. The day included a range of stimulus materials which addressed broader diversity as well as themes of inclusion. It used case studies to discuss the possible impact diversity could have on the learner's ability to make progress and/or face bias in their education experience. Case studies included:

- A looked after child who had experienced frequent changes of school due to movement within foster care services
- A refugee child
- A child who was a primary carer
- A child who was from a traveller family

Our role in bringing together information from different sources shows the importance of the HEI's role in aggregating information and evidence in order to identify training needs. As Husbands argues:

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‘there is no evidence that schools, any school, left alone would have been able to explore the research base, synthesise the research evidence and cull the insights on which changing practices depend’ (Husbands, 2011, pp.9).

He illustrates this argument with reference to developments in Assessment for Learning (AfL) and pupil voice in contrast to ‘faddish’ initiatives like brain-gym (ibid, pp.9). He uses these examples to argue for a framework of professional learning similar to post-graduate medical deaneries in which ‘collaborating institutions and a university partner... pool resources, partly to secure economies of scale but also to work through the identification of priorities across the deanery.’ Similarities can be seen between Husband’s proposed ‘deaneries’ and our work as well as in current moves towards teaching school alliances.

Having identified the training need we initiated a response by sharing our findings with a group of approximately thirty five school based trainers in an ‘Area meeting’. Looking at the data, partners recognised that trainees were not translating observation of good practice into understanding and that they therefore needed more support in order to elicit understanding (Loughran, 2004, pp.19). We therefore agreed that trainees (and their trainers) needed more explicit help in recognising the dimensions of diversity that existed in every classroom including carefully scaffolded activities to support sustained reflection on experience as training.

Whilst the HEI initiated the response by aggregating the data and bringing partners together, working with our partners from the ‘initiation’ stage ensured that ‘training for diversity’ was not a bolt-on extra delivered in silo at the university but instead a cross-cutting thread throughout the program. Having initiated the

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project and achieved buy in from partners, we were able to move from our role as initiators, to that of facilitators and capacity builders.

The HEI as facilitator and capacity builder

Having agreed a training need we began a professional learning conversation with our school colleagues and our new cohort of trainees. The role of the HEI was to bring together the partners and to provide resources, research insights and expertise where needed. The development of the project was organic. Fundamental to our work was a desire to examine and explore collective understandings of what constituted good training and professional development to 'teach in diverse settings' and thereafter to provide frameworks for developing the critical and reflective capacity of our school based trainers and trainees. The partners were committed to a model of collaborative enquiry (Hagger and McIntyre, 2006, p.15, Sachs 2003, p.83), it was experimental and tentative but understood that the school as the setting for training brought a unique insight into the challenges faced in better preparing the trainees to teach in diverse settings. Our project depended on a shared understanding of what diversity is and this required co-constructed definitions. The definition of diversity which we reached was: 'the variety in pupils' sense of self and their background including the range and differences between pupils' personal biographies' (Menzies and Curtin, 2010, pp.1). Our definition is illustrated in Figure .1 which was put together in conversation between the HEI and school partners.

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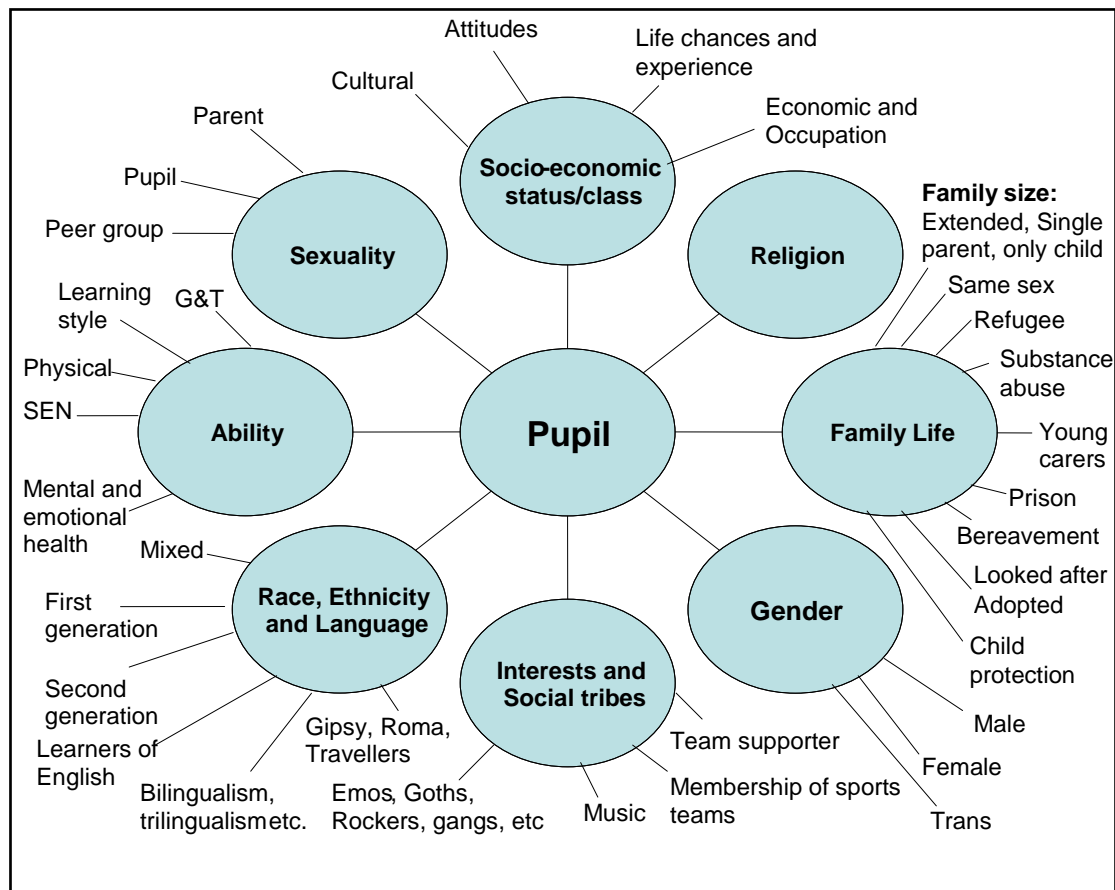


Figure 1. Factors in diversity- diagram co-constructed by HEI and school partners (Menzies, L. and Curtin, K. 2010, p.1).

Our definition aims to avoid categorising and placing pupils in particular 'groups' by recognising 'broader diversity' and acknowledging the multiple identities that may be of importance to pupils. It seeks to encourage professional inquisitiveness and an understanding of how pupils' biographies impact on engagement, relationships and attainment. Where factors in diversity act as barriers to learning, we believe that they are reasons (which can lead to solutions) rather than excuses (Menzies, L. and Curtin, K. 2010, p.1).

Partners at the Area meeting agreed that it would be useful to produce a training resource/leaflet for trainees *and* schools. It would define and explain diversity and why it mattered as well as including case studies of school interventions and

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good practice from the QCDA and Ofsted. Perhaps most importantly it would be designed to help schools plan their own professional development sessions. A focus group was set up to oversee the preparation of the materials and to ensure collaboration was on-going. The group consisted of two HEI colleagues, two school colleagues and a former trainee who had extensive prior experience working with refugee and asylum seeking pupils. The focus group's work was facilitated and co-ordinated by an HEI associate tutor.¹

Table 2. overleaf identifies the unique strengths each partner brought to the project and recognises the valuable contributions they made. Implicit in the focus group's work was the need to bridge the "theory-practice" divide (Schon, 1983, 1987 and Kolb, 1987).

Table 1. The strengths of schools and HEIs in ITT compared.

¹ Loic Menzies, Associate Tutor, Canterbury Christ Church University, Director, LKMco

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Schools and HEIs bring different strengths to the table...

Schools	HEI
Understanding of context	Theoretical frameworks including up to date research
Seeing theory in practice and evaluating impact	Aggregation of experience and identification of trends
Opportunities to apply learning	Economies of scale
A context for professional dialogue using observation of teaching to inform discourse	Teacher education pedagogy
	Preparation to teach in all schools not just the placement school

The focus group prepared draft training materials entitled 'What's your story?' (Menziez and Curtin, 2010). These were presented at the next Area meeting, critiqued by the other schools and revised accordingly. All training schools were issued with final copies of the materials in September 2010 and training in the use of the materials was delivered at Area meetings in October 2010. In keeping with the Employment Based Training approach, by facilitating the production of materials, the HEI enhanced schools' own training capacity, rather than acting as the training provider. One school adapted the materials for use in whole school training, exemplifying the way EBITT's benefits can spill-over into whole school improvement.

The HEI as Supporter and Evaluator

In order to monitor impact and maximise quality across a broad and potentially disparate partnership, an overarching view from a step back is needed. The HEI is well placed to provide this supportive and evaluative role.

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Near the end of the training year, an optional centre based workshop was held to pilot the materials and top up school based provision. Approximately 30% of trainees attended and feedback from this large group allowed the HEI to gauge the appropriateness and value of the materials. Questionnaires at the end of the session indicated that trainees considered the session extremely valuable and several suggested that training like this earlier on in the ITT program would have benefitted their teaching.

At the end of the 2009-10 training year (July), trainees were asked to evaluate their training to teach in diverse settings. The outcomes of this survey support the view that activities had led to an increase in confidence and understanding of diversity. All trainees agreed or strongly agreed that training had developed their understanding of diversity and their ability to address it in their teaching.

The new cohort of trainees was surveyed in December 2010. They were asked to evaluate their training to teach in diverse settings. 75% of trainees reported that training had enabled them to develop a 'very good' or 'good' understanding of learning to teach in diverse settings.

As a final evaluation of impact, in depth, qualitative, semi-structured interviews were held with eight trainees from across our partnership in May 2011. All interviewees were able to articulate a broad definition of diversity. They were able to reflect on differences in their school and considered this aspect of their professional learning essential, regardless of their training context. A wide range of training experiences were cited including discussions with mentors in school, independent research, placements in contrasting schools, university days and school based INSET. Their responses provided fascinating insights into where trainees perceive the 'locus of their learning' during their training experience and how the different elements come together.

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The locus of learning

The most frequently referenced source of learning was university days. Discussion of learning from these elicited the most detailed responses and showed the deepest understanding of diversity. This supports our view that an 'either, or' view of HEI/school based ITT is misguided.

'On our (HEI) subject days we had an AST come in to show us how she included some Slovakian kids into Shakespeare, she pulled up some pictures and things of castles, she said she set Macbeth in Slovakia which is really really interesting and a good way of using it.'

Another described how:

'We had on one of our subject days about how literature can be really difficult, you can spend a lot of time going on about classics and so on and then you realise the teaching group are looking at this book and realise there's no women in it, or there's no female lead, or they're all white European and you think, well why can't they respond to that... wait a minute that's so far removed from them or you might find that everyone is white European and there's no lead, there's no one who can say that could have been me, so I think in terms of what books you choose and what resources you pick in order to make people feel included and to relate to the picture is important.'

One of the benefits to training on university days was considered the fact that teachers with varying experiences are brought together, allowing them to critically reflect on the differences between schools.

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'we had an English subject day at University that was really interesting and sparked a lot of debate actually because we all came from very different schools and so coming up with things about diversity was quite interesting.'

The above trainee's view aligns with Williams and Soares' research which suggests that tutors, mentors and students most frequently see 'comparing and analysing practice from a range of schools' as the responsibility of the HEI or as one that is shared between school and HEI (Williams and Soares, 2002, pp.101):

The same trainee explained how a mentoring session on return to school provided a valuable opportunity to relate theory to practice in a school setting.

'I did speak to her (my mentor) actually, because we had a little bit of a heated debate about it because a couple of people were saying... (pauses)... one person was saying there was no diversity in their school and then a few other people got rather irate and I was sitting back and watching but I remember discussing with her and thinking about what she thought diversity actually meant. I actually think it covers more than you think, a lot of people think it just means cultural diversity especially with English and boys and girls, that's a very diverse group that you have.'

Williams and Soares' research found a 'remarkable degree of agreement' amongst primary and secondary respondents over the shared role of both HEI and school in training relating to 'critical thinking and reflection' (Williams and Soares, 2002, pp.100.) Out of school HEI training therefore need not be seen as stand-alone; the complementarity of school and HEI provision can bring benefits to both the school and trainee. As one trainee put it, it was the overall experience of 'doing the course, just becoming a teacher' which had helped him to understand diversity; as another put it, 'when you get into the school setting you

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realise that there is so much more to it.'

Schwille and Demebele argue that many teachers see informal 'on the job learning as "the most important" type of learning (Schwille and Demebele 2007, pp.30). However, we would argue that 'on the job' learning should not be seen as separate to theoretical learning and reflection. Some trainees gave specific examples of the way knowledge and experience came together during their training:

'there was a racist incident in my tutor group where one of the girls, she's black and someone said something really mean to her and I know that all those incidents have to be fully reported to the Borough.'

For this trainee, what they had learned about diversity (and their statutory obligations) was reified in their school experience. As a result, this unfortunate incident played a memorable role in their professional development.

Other trainees found it harder to see their 'experience as training:'

'I haven't had training on Gifted and Talented although I've observed it.'

Despite observation forming a core part of any training program, this trainee had not recognised observation as training. Another trainee also revealed the tendency to focus on discrete 'training'.

'There's been nothing like a concrete lecture.'

Nonetheless, trainees' understandings of diversity had significantly changed as a result of their training experience. This was even the case for one trainee who already had significant experience of diversity training in their previous job:

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‘Yeah, it’s changed again, I used to know it but now I understand it and I’m actually progressing beyond that now , I understand the need professionally and legally but now I’m sort of also saying well how can I go beyond that, is it enough to just say this group of students needs to be treated in some way, no it’s important to say this student needs to be treated this way not because of where they’ve come from, not because of you know their background but because of who they are as an individual.’

Another trainee said that her understanding of diversity was:

‘...definitely challenged to begin with. I know at the beginning of this year I definitely thought that my school wasn’t very diverse at all and I was very very distressed by the fact that I was one of the darkest teachers in my school and that there were a distinct lack of children other than white students, that really flagged up to me, then I did a little bit more reading around it, cultures and things like that and realised it’s not the school and it’s not necessarily the local authority it’s more to do with family values that come from cultures that may be to do with that stuff, and then again yeah it’s opened up the idea that diversity is everywhere and again I was aware of ethnic cultural diversity, but that word diversity can be used with everything and I think that yeah, this year’s kind of shown me that I can’t escape it really, it’s everywhere.’

In articulating a broad and well considered view of diversity this trainee shows that what she saw ‘on the ground’ in school fed into a reflective understanding that shows deep learning. We would argue that this is the key benefit of effective and well managed school-HEI collaboration.

Implications

Citation:

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The future direction of travel for initial teacher education is set to be more school based with a belief that the craft of teaching can be learnt from experience (Gove, 2010). Our research suggests that it may be over-simplistic to equate this shift towards experience based learning with the end of deep reflective learning. However, it also shows that the HEI retains a valuable role.

We believe that our project has shown that a porous relationship between the HEI and schools' spheres of responsibility brings significant benefits. However, the best relationships will not emerge and flourish on their own but require effective models of partnership working. We argue that our proposed three step approach to phased collaboration provides such a model and brings together the different parties' strengths and competencies. We believe that our approach is highly applicable to the new ITT environment and to Teaching Schools and University Training schools in particular. Our small-scale research project has provided an initial demonstration of the approach's benefits and viability but further research which trials this model amongst different training providers and focuses on different training needs would be invaluable.

You can find videos of presentations to TEAN 2011, BERA 2011 and the Cambridge University Faculty of Education by the authors on this topic at:
www.lkmco.org.uk/library

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