

**Pete Boyd and Gillian Peiser**

### **Editorial**

This issue of the Teacher Education Advancement Network journal includes a mix of reports by teacher educators of their professional inquiry into the practice of teacher education. Some of the papers can be classified as 'practitioner research' with its characteristics of robust design and methodology, positioning the study within a critical review of the literature, a formal approach to ethics, a systematic approach to data analysis, and an explicit claim of contribution to knowledge. Other papers present more pragmatic and descriptive critical evaluation of innovative practice in teacher education. These critical evaluation papers provide valuable insight into situated practice, and by borrowing some of the features of practitioner research, they offer convincing and useful provocation to teacher educators to reflect and reconsider their own practice.

Developing anti-racist teacher education and decolonising the teacher education curriculum are considered by many educators to be key priorities in the UK and beyond (Smith, Lander, and Garratt, 2025), although continue to be met with controversy in a heated policy context. Based in a bustling multicultural city in England, Karen Williams, Karan Vickers-Hulse and Aisha Thomas critically evaluate how their teacher education programme engages pre-service teachers with issues of inclusivity and intersectionality.

Primary school teachers often must teach across a wide range of curriculum subjects and some of these prove particularly challenging for pre-service teachers. In her evaluation of practice paper, Nikki Doig shows how access to resources, and even simply the raised awareness of this support, helped pre-service teachers to more confidently plan and facilitate drama education during their school placements.

Becoming and being a teacher is not usually an easy ride, and developing some measure of resilience is likely to be helpful to pre-service and early career teachers. Rather than viewing resilience as a personal attribute, Qing Gu's (2014) empirical study has helpfully developed a framework focussing on the role of community and networks in developing teachers' relational resilience. In their paper, Holly Heshmati and Li Lin follow this lead, focusing on the experiences and resilience of pre-service mathematics teachers, to reveal the important influence of context and community in this respect.

Teacher mentors are also fundamental to developing pre-service teachers' resilience. Nonetheless, they are often hard to reach in terms of supporting their professional learning in relation to the crucial support they provide. Kirsty Wilson and colleagues from the University of Birmingham share their investigation of mentoring within a teacher education partnership. They emphasise the importance of relationships between mentors and pre-service teachers and critically consider the development of a repertoire of support strategies they can offer.

There are further reasons to consider the important role of teacher educators in developing support for pre-service teachers. Many pre-service teachers, in the UK and internationally, qualify to teach through a degree course of three or more years of study including school placements. Although head teachers and teacher educators perhaps would argue that this gives these student teachers sufficient time to more fully develop a teacher identity compared to short postgraduate routes into teaching, ,

Louise Conolly's paper shows how general concerns about becoming a university student transform into a sense of professional responsibility about becoming a teacher

We can probably gain wide agreement that it is desirable for schools and teachers to develop research-informed practice, but we might differ on how to achieve that. By considering module guides from teacher education programmes and teacher educator perspectives on both undergraduate and postgraduate courses, Yuqian Wang and Douglas Newton use a contested framework from the higher education literature to investigate how educational research, as content knowledge or as skills development, is explicitly included within teacher education programmes.

Learning to read is a significant step in children's education, and the Primary teachers who take responsibility for it make a fundamentally related contribution to our education systems. In a mixed methods intervention study Jane Carter and Bob Derrick investigate how, through a 1-1 tuition programme, pre-service teachers learn to support children learning to read and the impact of the intervention on the children's progress. They found sustained learning gains for the pre-service teachers, even though the maintenance of learning gains for the children was more varied.

Reflective practice is fundamental to most initial teacher education programmes. However, despite its relatively uncontroversial role, it is not something that is necessarily easy for teacher educators to facilitate well or easy for student teachers to practise effectively. In their article, Martin Hagan and Geraldine Magennis-Clark highlight the importance of strategies to guide reflective writing focussing on meaning and purpose, modelling and guided practice to help pre-service teachers reach this key understanding.

In the managerial and high accountability policy context of initial teacher education in England much emphasis is placed on what is now generally referred to as 'mentor training'. The term training seems reductive and arguably undermines the expertise and practical wisdom of teacher mentors, positioning them as consumers of knowledge rather than also of producers. As an alternative, or perhaps addition, to such basic 'training', Tracey Wire and colleagues critically evaluate a project that positions teacher mentors more powerfully as practitioner researchers investigating their own mentoring practice. Interestingly, they still refer to such provision as 'training' – perhaps revealing the power of language and of the policy context.

In exploring the key issue of teacher retention, which is a major challenge across the UK and beyond, Penny Webb and Rebecca Piggott apply the concept of 'harmonious passion' to consider job satisfaction and well-being of two primary school teachers. Webb and Piggott outline the policy context which has reduced teacher autonomy with a plethora of top-down policies that have demotivated teachers. They reveal how although teachers report on some aspects of their work insinuating harmonious passion, motivation, and a sense of wellbeing, pressures and tensions created by accountability measures remain inescapable.

All the papers in this issue operate within the 'swampy lowlands' (Schön, 1987) of educational research to our real world understanding of teacher education.

## References

- Gu, Q. (2014) 'The role of relational resilience in teachers' career-long commitment and effectiveness', *Teachers and Teaching*, 20(5), pp. 502–529. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2014.937961>.
- Schön, D. (1987) *Educating the reflective (??) practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass.
- Smith, H., Lander, V. and Garratt, M. (2025) Anti-Racist Framework for Initial Teacher Education. Available at: <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/social-science/research/social-science-pillars/anti-racism/> (Accessed: 03:09:2025).