
'Training' is Just Not Good Enough

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ABSTRACT This article reflects on different models of professional qualification for teaching, based on a comparison between initial teacher education (ITE) in Scotland and a narrower and more pragmatic view of 'teacher training' in England. It includes an analysis of the official requirements in both countries (the Standards), which exemplify different discourses; a comparison of quality assurance systems in both countries; and some illustrations of initiatives based on the principle of problem-based learning (PBL) as used in teacher education at the University of Edinburgh.

In times of change, the learners will inherit the earth while the learned will find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists – Eric Hoffer

There is a contradiction at the heart of teacher education which we skirt round at our peril. Here we are in 2006, on the basis of experiences some of us acquired in the 1970s, educating novices who could still be teaching in 2050. We try to share our best theoretical and practical understanding with future teachers, to help them navigate complex future changes, even though we know they may face scepticism when out on placement. Initial teacher education (ITE) is torn between the poles of imitative apprenticeship and initiation into reflective practice.

In some ways, the situation is even worse than this opening suggests. Standardisation and full-spectrum surveillance, above all in England, have tended to create a pedagogical monoculture. Those who keep alive the best practices of the 1970s are often better placed than those who began teaching after the 1988 Education Reform Act. To simply transmit these limited practices is to close down alternative futures.

To some it may appear quaint that those of us who work in Scotland persist in calling our job initial teacher *education*, not *training*. Here it is always carried out by universities in partnership with schools; there is no equivalent to the school-based schemes found south of the border.

The quality of our programmes is underwritten in various ways:

- by accreditation through the General Teaching Council (Scotland) – a board is constituted which includes officials, school teachers, and lecturers in other universities;
- by external examiners (usually a university lecturer and a headteacher) verifying the quality of our degree and of our graduates;
- through occasional HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectorate)-led 'thematic reviews' across Scotland, the review team consisting of a mixed panel of inspectors and our peers.

There is no equivalent to the threatening and overbearing descent of an Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) team and no possibility that our courses might be axed if we happen to displease them.

The 'Standards'

My colleagues readily complain about the official benchmarks for initial qualification. Many have philosophical objections to lists of criteria, preferring a more holistic approach. Superficially the English and Scottish 'Standards' appear similar, including the Knowledge/Teaching/Values structure, but it does not take long to recognize discursive differences. Some examples:

Knowledge and Understanding

The English document foregrounds conformity to official regulations such as the National Curriculum. It speaks of 'values, aims and purposes', 'citizenship', and PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education), but always in terms of something which has been centrally imposed (programmes of study, national curriculum frameworks, the requirements for each key stage). The Scottish document speaks of 'the area of the curriculum or subject ... referring this to national guidelines as appropriate'. (It should be noted that Scotland's 5-14 curriculum has never been a statutory requirement, though often regarded and treated as such.) Whereas this section of the English document consists in the main of a long list of regulations for each stage, the Scottish one covers a broad field of professional knowledge, such as literacy and numeracy; PSHE; curriculum development; educational policy and practice. The discourse conveys a sense of openness as well as democracy and human rights; for example:

- the principles of structure, breadth, balance, progression and continuity in the curriculum ... and ... the processes of change and development;
- the provisions of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child;
- principles of equality of opportunity and social justice and of the need for anti-discriminatory practices.

Some of these differences in discourse appear subtle but they are fundamental. For instance, the Scottish document says student teachers must:

- know how to promote and support the individual development, well-being and social competence of the pupils ... and show commitment to raising these pupils' expectations of themselves and others,

whereas the English document treats young people's development instrumentally – solely as a factor which may affect their attainment:

- understand how pupils' learning can be affected by their physical, intellectual, linguistic, social, cultural and emotional development.

Teaching

The discourse of the English document is bureaucratic rather than pedagogical. It assumes a transmission rather than a constructivist mode. Compare the beginnings of parallel sections of both documents:

They set challenging teaching and learning *objectives* ... They use these teaching and learning objectives to plan lessons. (England)

Demonstrate that they are able to use appropriate *strategies to motivate and sustain the interest of all* pupils... that they can communicate with pupils clearly and *offer* explanations in a stimulating manner ... that they can question pupils effectively and respond to their questions and their contributions to *discussions*. (Scotland) (emphasis added)

Scotland's new teachers are expected to '*work co-operatively ... with* other professionals and adults such as parents and classroom assistants', whereas England's must '*plan for the deployment of* additional adults who support pupils' learning'. The former 'manage pupil behaviour *fairly, sensitively* and consistently'; they '*encourage* pupils, promote positive behaviour and actively *celebrate success*', whereas the latter '*set* high expectations for pupils' behaviour and *establish* a clear framework for classroom discipline and manage pupils' behaviour constructively and promote self-control and independence'. Thus, even when the same word appears in both documents, there is a difference in what is foregrounded, subtly but significantly altering the significance.

Though there are still tensions, there is a rethinking of assessment policy at all levels in Scotland, strongly influenced by Paul Black's team (AiFL [Assessment is For Learning]). This is reflected in the document; for example:

Know how to use the information obtained from assessments to encourage and reward pupils, to explain errors in learning and to advise them on ways of overcoming difficulties and making progress ... know how to encourage pupils to assess themselves and engage with them in dialogue about their progress.

The English document speaks overwhelmingly in terms of evaluating 'pupils' progress *towards planned learning objectives*', inevitably leading to a discourse of deficit: 'those who are *working below age-related expectations*'. The assessment

section of the Scottish document requires new teachers to understand ‘*principles and purposes* of baseline, summative, and formative assessment’, whereas the English one appears to regard these as unproblematic, requiring that they make ‘appropriate *use* of a range of monitoring and assessment strategies to evaluate pupils’ progress towards planned learning objectives’.

Professional Values

Both documents have a section which refers to values; in fact, this comes first in the English document. It would be unfair to suggest that the English document is simply positivistic and lacking in values, but there is a clear difference in discourse and emphasis. Both speak of ‘respecting’ pupils in their diversity, but the section of the English document is managerial and magisterial in its tone:

They have high expectations ... treat pupils consistently ...
demonstrate and promote the positive values, attitudes and
behaviour that they expect from their pupils.

The Scottish section begins with a requirement for teacher education programmes to ‘value and demonstrate a commitment to social justice and inclusion’. Students are expected to:

- demonstrate that they respect and value children and young people as unique, whole individuals;
- demonstrate respect for the rights of all children and young people without discrimination as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995;
- demonstrate that they value and promote fairness and justice and adopt anti-discriminatory practices in respect of gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, age, religion and culture;
- demonstrate commitment to promoting and supporting the individual development, well-being and social competence of the pupils in their class/register groups, and to raising these pupils’ expectations of themselves and others.

Whereas England’s novice teachers are expected to show that ‘they can contribute to, and share responsibly in, the corporate life of schools’, the Scottish expectation is broader and more open:

The programme of initial teacher education will enable students to value themselves as growing professionals by taking responsibility for their professional learning and development,

and students are expected to:

demonstrate a willingness to *contribute* and respond to *changes in education policies and practices*.

This section of the Scottish document concludes by emphasising 'commitment to the communities in which they work' with an expectation that students will:

know about environment issues and ... contribute to education for sustainable development.... the factors which contribute to health and well-being... education for citizenship [so that they can encourage pupils] to be active, critical and responsible citizens.

The Reality

There is never a one-to-one relationship between policy and practice. A range of contradictory factors make reality more complex and uncertain than the rhetoric, often pulling in different directions. Despite this, I would like to point to some features of our programmes at the University of Edinburgh which may illustrate the benefits of this policy environment. This is not to suggest in any way that English colleagues are less innovative or intent on reform, but rather to suggest that the framework of standardisation and surveillance in which they operate may be a hindrance; in conversations, there's always some reference to the next OfSTED inspection, sitting like a big black crow on their shoulders. Here innovation works with the grain of policy, not against it.

The Nursery Project

The PGDE (Professional Graduate Diploma in Education, recently upgraded from Certificate to Diploma) for primary teachers has the impossible task of preparing for all stages from nursery to P7. There are always many more applicants than places, and most of those accepted have already had some past experience, paid or voluntary, showing an ability to reflect on this at interview. Various forms of student-centred learning serve to motivate students to seek out knowledge and understanding rather than wait for it to be 'delivered'. The nursery component consists of a challenge: students work in teams of five to 'design' a new nursery. This includes planning a stimulating learning environment inside and out, and outlining policies and curricular practices. They present this to fellow students as if they were parents considering the new nursery for their children. The task requires creativity but also focused reading of the literature of early education, and above all else the ability to articulate curricular activities in terms of educational and social benefits. In my seventh year as assessor, I am still delighted by the quality of presentations and the speed with which students acquire knowledge and develop clearly justified professional values.

Generic Elements of PGDE (Secondary)

This programme balances subject-specific and generic components with a series of lectures supporting and framing learning in subject-based groups and in the 'multi-disciplinary workshops'. The latter consist of 20 students from different

subjects, and provide a context where students take it in turns, in groups, to plan an activity which engages their colleagues in exploring and discussing an issue. In week 2, for example, my students conducted two short lessons for their peers on a similar theme, one in a manner which would develop communication skills and literacy, the other not. In other sessions, the tutor designs a simulation to elicit and develop students' knowledge derived from reading and placement experiences. I present to my group a synopsis of an inspection report highlighting low expectations and achievement in a school in a disadvantaged neighbourhood. Half the students take on roles in a staff discussion, responding to the report in diverse ways. Alongside this, the others form smaller groups, improvising conversations among staff, among pupils, or between staff and pupils, which illustrate the life and culture of the school – the incidents which might have influenced the inspectors' advice. We play off the two, interspersing the staff meeting with the scenes around the school, to develop a better understanding of school change.

Two major assignments are pursued during placements, the Shadow Study and the Professional Project. The former consists of observing several pupils for two days, following them from lesson to lesson to gain an insight into school organisation and learning from their perspective. There are no restrictions on topic or mode of enquiry for the Professional Project, with roughly equal numbers pursuing subject-based or whole-school issues. Both these assignments require substantial reading and critical evaluation, as well as empirical enquiry.

Apart from students with a second subject, all students also follow an elective such as Philosophy for Children, Education for Citizenship, or Guidance.

Problem-based Learning on the BEd (Bachelor of Education) Programmes

One third of our various BEd programmes consists of an Education course common to all specialisms. These have now been reformed along principles of student-centred learning. Our reform was inspired by problem-based learning (PBL) as developed in the field of medicine, and in other disciplines at a number of European universities, but we have extended and hybridised the concept. As we practise it, the 'problem' used to stimulate students' learning can consist of a case-study scenario, a conceptual problem, or a design challenge. A 'problem' is generally more complex and multi-faceted than those used in medical studies. In responding to the problem or challenge, students draw upon a variety of resources (books and articles, video recordings, lectures but also their own their experiences).

Assessment is integrated into the learning, generally as an end-of-unit presentation. This is usually in groups of four or five students (the 'learning team') but often with an individual component, for example a 1000-word theoretical argument relating to a group presentation which is more experiential or practically oriented. By using narrative or descriptive as well as traditional academic modes of representation, we feel we are helping students to connect

theory and practice, and develop a professional understanding which is affective and ethical as well as cognitive.

The Year 2 primary students' placement is in a nursery; PE and technology students undertake a lower secondary placement (their Year 1 placement having been in primary schools). Our teaching and learning unit is driven by a conceptual problem: What do we mean by 'learning through play' or 'learning through activity'? We guide this with some supplementary questions, such as the relationship between participation and explanation, the nature of the teacher's role, and by pointing to examples of informal learning which do not depend heavily on teacher instruction (advising students to video people playing ball games, to take a trip round a museum, to observe young children at play). The presentation must include references to different theories of learning through play, activity theory, and so on.

In a unit on Education and Social Justice, the students read and discuss scenarios in which teachers act according to a kind of professional 'common sense' but which, on closer examination, are discriminatory or damaging. They pursue reading on 'race', class and gender/sexuality before presenting two sequels or alternative endings to the initial scenario. This can be in any genre or media; students have used letters from a parent, interviews on local radio, enacting of a staff meeting, extracts from a pupil's personal diary, and even a suicide note. In addition, each individual writes a theoretical commentary on the issues involved in the original scenario and their 'endings', referring to appropriate literature.

After a Learner Study during placement, in which they examine the impact of curriculum and assessment on two or three individuals, their response to teaching, and any relevant social justice issues, the course concludes with a Future Schools challenge. For this, they investigate ways in which the world is changing (technologically, culturally, politically), and design a 'school of the future' which would respond to these challenges. This includes the external challenges of our times (globalisation, environment, poverty and war) as well as new pedagogies and the changing characteristics of young people.

Educating Teachers for a Different World

Training new teachers is just not good enough. Teachers need initiating into existing school practices, including observing and working with more experienced teachers on placement, but they also need to become *critically* reflective practitioners. I include the adverb since 'reflection' has to be something other than mere navel-gazing or the minor adjustments often associated with action research; it needs to involve an element of what Brecht termed *Verfremdung*, a distancing from what you see rather than simply absorption in a performance.

Since young people are different today, teaching cannot simply be judged 'effective' in the abstract. Because the world is changing so dramatically, and even the planet from which we drink and on which we draw breath seems

increasingly precarious, we cannot evaluate schooling according to how closely it approximates to the National Curriculum. The entire discourse of standardisation is radically out of tune with the challenges young teachers face.

At this present time, education is being recast according to a neo-liberal view of what schools should and shouldn't do; a lean machine which prepares amenable young people for work, in which they acquire work-related skills earlier but learn nothing about the world they live in. Clause 61 of the Education and Inspections Bill currently before Parliament divides schools into two distinct tracks from age 14: those opting for vocational diplomas lose the entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum, to history, geography, a foreign language and performing or creative arts subjects. They are denied knowledge essential to citizenship, or ways of expressing their feelings and ideas about the world. I suspect the rest, in the academic track, will learn these things at such high pressure and speed that they acquire only a superficial collection of disembodied facts with little personal engagement. Even in Scotland, where there are no 'academies' run by second-hand car dealers or city banks, the First Minister has just proposed, as an out-of-the-blue election gambit, that the disaffected 20% of fourteen-year-olds should be segregated out into training ghettos for most of the week.

In this situation, it would be criminally irresponsible simply to 'train' new teachers to follow orders, so that they can foist uncritical attitudes onto another generation of young people in schools.

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