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## Initial Teacher Training or Education? ITT or ITE? <sup>[1]</sup>

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**ABSTRACT** In this article, it is argued that the terms education and training are different, but not mutually exclusive. Where post-graduate certificate courses are concerned, training forms only part of the preparation of new teachers.

In a chapter I wrote for a book called *Handbook of Educational Ideas and Practices*, edited by Professor Noel Entwistle and published in 1990, I tried to analyse the essential differences between 'education' and 'training'. I argued that 'education' could be seen as 'an open-ended process' with the aim of 'transforming a student's view of the world'; whereas 'training' was the correct term for those tasks where there were 'clearly pre-specifiable criteria for right and wrong' (p. 37). A trained doctor or a trained pilot could be defined as a person who had acquired or 'mastered' certain specific skills, but this did not mean she or he was necessarily an 'educated person' in the wider sense.

In other words, 'education' is all about transforming the mind so as to equip us for independent judgement and rational action; whereas 'training' should be directed towards practical skills for particular ends. This is the distinction between a social reconstructionist view of education and schooling – education for tackling problems as yet unknown – and the more limited concept of education, from primary school through to university, which sees it primarily as training for instrumental tasks as they are currently conceived.

If these definitions have any validity, it follows that education and training are different, but not mutually exclusive. To be a good classroom teacher at any level, you obviously need certain skills, say in behaviour management, but, having these skills will not, *by itself*, make you a good teacher. And learning how to be a good teacher involves an understanding of many different things – and it takes a long time. It simply cannot be achieved by a short stint of 'on-the-job training'.

It was good to see the derision which greeted the recent announcement of government plans to allow certain individuals, mainly City workers made redundant by the economic downturn, to become classroom teachers within just six months. (It is worth noting, in passing, that when Estelle Morris criticised the Government's plans for six-month training courses in a recent article in *Education Guardian* [24 March, 2009], she used the term 'teacher training' throughout which told us a great deal about her views as to what constitutes a good teacher).

I must admit I have always had serious reservations about the 'Teach First Scheme', with the idea that some young graduates with 'missionary zeal', but with very little preparation, can come in and do a wonderful job with young children in 'challenging schools'. As a new young teacher myself nearly 45 years ago, I could not have started teaching in a large secondary school on the Downham Estate in south-east London without the preparation I'd received at the Leicester University School of Education.

So why don't we take teacher education more seriously in this country? Why is pedagogy considered to be so unimportant?

In a famous article 'Why no pedagogy in England?', first published in a collection of essays called *Education in the Eighties* in 1981, Brian Simon argued that it was a source of much regret that the whole concept of 'pedagogy' – of 'a science of teaching embodying both curriculum and methodology' – was totally alien to our experience and way of thinking in this country. And the main reason for this regrettable state of affairs lay, in his view, in the dominance of the 'public' schools, which, until recently, had rejected the idea that a professional preparation for teaching was in any sense relevant to the job of a public school master. With a few exceptions, public school teachers were expected to concern themselves with 'the formation of character', not with promoting intellectual development.

I am not arguing that if we care about the 'science of teaching', we have to go back to the days when teacher training programmes included courses in the history, philosophy, psychology and sociology of education. Much of all that was dire and off-putting for many students wanting to become teachers.

We do, however, want teachers to be 'reflective practitioners', and that means that preparation for teaching has to be much more than the mere acquisition of a set of rudimentary skills. It means understanding that all our children have talents which need to be nurtured and developed. And this involves questioning concepts like 'ability', 'intelligence' and 'giftedness'. It means being aware of the debates around streaming, setting and flexible grouping. And being aware of the issues surrounding 'race', gender and sexuality. How can teachers diagnose and respond to 'disabled children' and 'children with special needs'? What does 'inclusion' mean, and how can it be promoted, both in the classroom and in the school at large? Does the 'Every Child Matters' agenda mean anything more than playing around with a set of platitudes? All these things – and many more

If we take all these issues seriously, it takes time to learn about them and work out where we stand. It cannot be achieved in short courses or by means of 'on-the-job training'.

**Note**

[1] This is the text of a talk given to the National Union of Teachers Secondary Umbrella Group at NUT Headquarters, 27 March 2009.



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