

Developing Enquiry, Reflection & Research in Teacher Education: challenges and solutions

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Starting points (1)

'Education should be not filling a bucket but lighting a fire'
(W. B. Yeats)

'Knowing... demands a constant searching. It implies invention and re-invention. It claims from each person a critical reflection on the very act of knowing' (Freire)

'Bring out number, weight and measure in a year of dearth'
(William Blake)

Starting points (2)

ESRC pilot project for research capacity building:
linearity, targets & pace / spirals, processes, time &
space

25 years of change in teacher education in England:
what have we gained and what have we lost?

Structure of the presentation

Broad changes in education

- Growth of performativity and audit cultures
- Educational institutions & competitiveness (rhetoric and realities of collaboration) – silos of re- or de-professionalisation?
- Narrow learner outcomes (for pupils / students) become focus of much educational endeavour
- Individual educator's responsibility assumed & centred
- Assumptions of linearity, rationality and control in the educational process

Twenty five years of change in teacher education

- Political intervention in teacher education (particularly ITE)
- 1984 – 2007 – raft of policy initiatives – ITE seen as the driver of change to the school sector
- Overall bureaucratisation of professional learning in teacher education
- Practice and experiential knowledge (contemporary) central – 2 examples -
- Move to school-centred ITE programmes
- Recent and relevant legislation and its after effects

Twenty five years of change in teacher education: results (1)

- a 'national framework of accountability' (Furlong et al, 2000:15) and a 'culture of compliance' (Menter et al, 2006:50) for ITE providers
- regulatory framework addresses concerns about quality & relevance of 'training' – high performance indicators – complicity of all in celebratory discourses and practices
- ITE & CPD frameworks in which workplace and essentially experiential learning in and through teaching in school(s) is centred
- where is reflection? where is enquiry? where is research? how did scholarship drop out of the language of teacher education?

Increasing Research Selectivity

	5/5*	4	3a	3b	2	1	total
1992 1s not funded	12	15	24 (3)		19	7	77
1996 1/ 2 no funding	13	17	17	20	24	13	104
2001 1-3 no funding	14	19	19	22	8	1	83

Education Departments 2001 RAE

	No core QR funding (1, 2, 3b, 3a)	Core QR funding (4, 5, 5*)
% Research active in 2001	50%	50%
% staff entered in education department	35%	70%
% education research grant income	20%	80%
focus	Schools	curriculum, assessment, policy and inclusion
audience	teachers	researchers and policy makers

Research selectivity & its effects in 2008

- Number of research active staff returned down 15% on 2001
- Volume of outputs submitted down 20%
- Only 40% of education staff entered as 'research active'
- Education ranked as 64th out of 67 subject disciplines
- In England 25% of the universities providing pre-service teacher education did not enter the RAE at all
- but in Scotland all universities did
- Teacher education as a research area was less well represented than in previous RAEs

Twenty five years of change in teacher education: results (2)

- institutional (teaching / training / research) cultures in teacher education – past resonances and current incarnations
- increase of research selectivity
- the re-definition of what counts as 'research' in teacher education
- bifurcation of research and teaching in education
- the nature of work in teacher education and the bureaucratisation of professional learning
- ill-defined boundaries of teacher education workforce
- problems in sustaining the teacher education workforce

Experiential knowledge & workplace learning

- Critiques of workplace learning and its limitations (& limitations in the ways in which we understand it)
- The dangers of 'the hegemony of habit' (Ruddock, 1985) in teaching – Mason (1994) learning & repetition
- Strengths and weaknesses of 'local professionalism' (Hargreaves and Goodson, 1995)
- Meeting national Standards for ITE students
- Meeting school targets and agendas in CPD – teacher career progression points
- What happened to the valuation of teacher / teacher educator learning in its own right?

The TERN Project

One year pilot project funded by the ESRC in the North West region of England – 7 universities, 63+ people

Social practices model of capacity building – debts owed to TLRP, AERS & WERN

Objectives: to

- foster institutional regional networking ensuring collaboration between research-intensive and teaching-intensive universities;
- contribute to building institutional research capacity in the participating universities;
- provide a research development programme to enhance existing regional provision and create teams to bid for external research funding;
- develop a) a network sustainable beyond the life of the project and b) an effective model for capacity-building which can potentially be applied more broadly across England.

Arguments to ESRC around:

the fundamental place of research in teacher education – current challenges posed by discourses of teacher training and bifurcation within and beyond universities; need for targeted initiatives to build research capacity in teacher education; unrealised potential of such initiatives to contribute to general research capacity building

TERN aims to build research capacity *in* and *on* teacher education

in teacher education through working with the education staff in the participating universities

on teacher education because the enterprise will have a substantive focus on research about the education / professional learning of teachers

Education and the social sciences

	Education	'Other' Social sciences
Size	5000	2000
Research active in 2001 RAE	42%	60%
PhDs	25%	64% (psychology)

- 2nd career professionals entering the university
- Low levels of 'entry level' research qualifications on entry
- But with rich professional experiences including in practitioner research
- Motivation, dispositions and senses of agency to engage in scholarship and research in HE settings
- Variability of institutions providing teacher education – varying valuations of discourses and practices of teacher education
- 'Expert to novice' moves and the valuation of experiential knowledge
- Provision for research induction variable across sector

- 5 workshops to include time for teams to work on bids and also research training (fine tuned by mapping exercise of participants and institutions) Workshop 5 disseminating progress on bids;
- Blended Learning pedagogy face-to-face meetings are augmented by Virtual Research Environments (VREs) for collaboration in intervening periods;
- Use of Teaching & Learning Research Programme / BERA Virtual Research Environments;
- Use of other existing resources including the TEG resource.

Figure 1

The TERN Project

Research Development

TERN

Workshops, Colloquia and VREs

Launch 5th November 08

Research Mentor meeting 24 November 08

Workshop 1 21 January 09



Group VRE 1

Colloquium 1 11 January 09



Workshop 2 25 February 09



Group VRE 2

Workshop 3 18th March 09



Group VRE 3

Colloquium 2 29 April 09



Workshop 4 20 May 09



Group VRE 4

Workshop 5 8 July 09



Group VRE 5



TERN project participants:

Research Fellows (44)

Research Mentors (10)

Institutional Research Leads (7)

Steering Group

**All teacher education staff in
the participating universities**

At the centre of the project:

the face-to-face events:

'pedagogical inputs' from expert voices + small group working time + general networking opportunities

9 research groups working with mentor support

- foci: negotiated themes of national & regional relevance for teacher education
- variable group size
- variable spread of expertise within the groups
- outcomes: short term: research bid; short to long term: professional learning
- short timeframes: tensions
- modes of communication between f-2-f events

The structures of the face-to-face events were intended to provide:

- protected time / focused time for research development – away from the workplace
- structured and unstructured opportunities for regional, inter- and intra-institutional networking
- range of levels on which networking could occur - as a whole group, micro-communities, individuals
- range of 'pedagogical' inputs / research training elements from expert voices
- structured opportunities to explore ideas – with expert voices, mentors, peers

Overall evaluations & issues (1)

High degree of project success – met or exceeded all aims and objectives –

- Fostered institutional & regional networking
- Ensured collaboration between research-intensive and teaching-intensive universities
- Made some contribution building institutional research capacity in the participating universities
- Provided a research development programme which enhanced existing regional provision
- Developed a) a network sustainable beyond the life of the project and b) an effective model for capacity-building which can potentially be applied more broadly

Overall evaluations & issues (2)

- Motivation, opportunities and expertise boosted for 91% of individuals, but what longer term effects will this have? Individual agency and (micro) communal cultures in teacher education
- Patterns of participation in TERN – and of individual outcomes variable – inevitability? other factors?
- Back at the universities – impact variable – why?
- Longer term institutional research capacity building - congruence with institutional missions (e.g. REF 2013)
- Formal plans for regional sustainability into a 2nd year, **how** will such research activities be sustainable for individuals and institutions? (short term and slow burn longer term effects) Loss of ESRC 'badging'.
- Virtual Research Environments

Research Groups as micro-communities of learning – can communities of practice be artificially created and accelerated in their growth?

What was the role of the mentor?

By what processes did the Research Groups learn?

What place did organisational structures play in developing / inhibiting learning?

Modes of communication between f-2-f events?

What were the outcomes? expected / unexpected? short term / longer term?

E-learning and opportunities for developing teacher education

'Educators have slid into the 21st century – and into the digital age – still doing a great many things the old way. It's time for education leaders to raise their heads above the daily grind and observe the new landscape that's emerging. Recognizing and analysing its characteristics will help to define the education leadership with which we should be providing our students, both now and in the coming decades. Times have changed. So, too, have the students, the tools and the requisite skills and knowledge'. (Prensky 2005: 21)

E-learning and the opportunities for teacher education

- Learning contexts of Virtual Learning spaces – new generation Virtual Research Environments, blogs, podcasts, Virtual Schools
- More opportunities for peer interactions – breaking down professional & geographical boundaries
- More opportunities for accelerated learning but in simulated, safe and communal 'virtual' environments
- More opportunities for the mediation and exchange of professional knowledge: supplementing traditional curricula & enhancing specified 'outcomes'
- Work of the Carnegie Foundation on disseminating teacher enquiry

Reflection, enquiry, research (and scholarship): starting point?

Reflexivity & reflection (Moore 2004): living across discourses of teacher education

'while both the competences and the reflective practitioner discourses may be of use to the teacher, it may be the reflexive discourse that fully 'activates' that usefulness, making it accessible and opening the way to a more critical engagement with the interface between personally-experienced difficulties and systemic failings' (2004: 138)

Developing enquiry, reflection & research in teacher education: grand solutions

- **(Re)clarification of what we mean by reflection, enquiry, scholarship and research as different manifestations of reflexivity in teacher education**
- **Articulation of these activities, their purposes and how they are manifested as processes and products**
- **Centre teacher education around a scholarly knowledge base about learning and teaching in schools and teacher education**
- **Articulate what this means for practice & policy**
- **Use this understanding to re-think the place of activities in teacher education**
- **Make sure that is generative**
- **Make sure that products are disseminated**
- **Create structures and 'scaffolds' for the development of reflexivity from induction to experienced researcher / future research leader**

Developing enquiry, reflection & research in teacher education: simpler solutions

Shared senses of missions & values around the activity

Protected time, prioritised time

Collaborative and, where possible, inter-institutional structures

Timeframes, outcomes and monitoring ... but also

Awareness of group dynamics, processes, realistic timescales and variable / multiple / unexpected 'outcomes'

Use of congruent new technologies for communication and dissemination

Judicious use of expertise across institutions

Professional generosity around mentoring / coaching

One-to-many models (not just one-to-one) of mentoring

End points: losses and gains

Living in a state of what Keats describe as 'negative capability that is when man (sic) is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason'

Learning from the insights & structures which 'number, weight and measure' (Blake) can give but

keeping a judicious balance between certainty & uncertainty, linearity & spiralling, complexity & simplicity, creativity & conformity ... permeated by a sense of the real priorities for educational endeavours (values & missions)

The TERN Project

Websites:

www.tlrp.org/tern

www.tlrp.org/teg

www.insideteaching.org

References:

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Freire, P. (2005) Education for Critical Consciousness. London: Continuum

Keats, J. (1817) Letter to George and Thomas Keats

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Yates, W. (1865 – 1939)