Final Summary Report

University of the West of England
TDA Research & Development Award (SEN) No. 3

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Title: Preparing Teachers for Management and Leadership of Multi-agency Assessment of Vulnerability: building capacity in ITT

Key words: Multi-agency; vulnerability; initial teacher training; special educational needs; workplace learning, school based mentoring, online learning, eLearning, cross-professional working, health service, social service, youth justice.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Teachers are increasingly being encouraged and/or are under statutory requirements to collaborate in multi-agency procedures for dealing with vulnerable and at-risk children and children with special educational needs. A main aim of this project was to help Initial Teacher Training (ITT) tutors and school-based mentors to support and prepare trainee teachers to for develop the necessary skills to engage in multi-agency working and to prepare them coordinating and managing multi-agency working, as necessary, within their professional teaching career. The key rationale for this project, therefore, was to translate the evidence base from research on multi-agency action and the co-ordination of assessment for children and young people with special educational needs into practice-based learning materials. The University is engaged in research and development in many professional disciplines and service sectors involving children and young people, for example, Health, Social Services and Youth Justice and we have consulted with colleagues across the university throughout the life of this project.

Main Findings

1. Trainee and mentor lack of knowledge and awareness

One of the early findings, and one of the reasons for this research and development, was a lack of knowledge and awareness on the part of trainee teachers of multi-agency working. This is evidenced in the data presented in the TDAs Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT) survey 2007-08. Similarly, the questionnaire data gathered at the early stages of this project strongly supported the need for enhancing trainees' engagement with this area of work. There was also evidence that school based mentors often lacked knowledge and understanding of multi-agency working to enable them to support trainees to develop their awareness of engaging in cross-professional practice.

2. Lack of accessible and concise information

Our desk research involved an electronic search for academic and professional literature relating to multi-agency working, using key terms.

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1 We engaged the Faculty Librarian in undertaking a thorough literature search of academic and professional literature.
In addition to this, the main researchers conducted a search of relevant websites of relevant government departments and professional organisations (see useful websites listed in the bibliography). Collectively, these exercises led us to identify a lack of accessible and concise information to meet the professional development needs of trainees and mentors. There was no shortage of information on relevant and related websites, such as, the NHS, DCFS and professional bodies/organisations, however the information tended to be repetitive across sites and often required a base level of understanding to enable the novice reader to interact with the information presented. Some of the language used, and the roles and responsibilities referred to, were not immediately accessible to a reader not familiar with the terminology and acronyms used and the professional practices being described. Indeed, we as teacher educators could barely understand it ourselves and had to consult with professionals in other sectors and Faculties to the meaning of technical terms and practices described in the literature. This led us to understand that trainees too would find it difficult to access much of the information available and would welcome guidance to support them in this.

We therefore identified the need for more accessible materials for trainee teachers and their mentors and initially started to draft paper based materials to provide them with base level knowledge and awareness. The sheer volume of information that started to emerge led us to the realisation that we were in danger of producing materials of such a comprehensive nature that it would be impenetrable to the reader, in particular busy professionals who have many demands on their time and need to prioritise their learning needs on a need-to-know basis.

3. The need for flexibility and interactivity
The significant finding from this realisation was that any materials developed to support trainees and mentors needed to be extremely flexible and interactive so that they could access specific information quickly and easily, and most importantly when they needed to engage with it. It became clear that what was required was interactive electronic resource materials and that information and communications technology would need to be exploited. With a limited budget available, and a lack of ICT expertise amongst the team, we resorted to using Powerpoint to draft materials. This proved to be a relatively successful strategy as it enabled us to present information clearly on one main slide with hyperlinks used to provide the reader with more detailed information on any specific topic. Diagram 1 below shows illustrates how the main slide is used to hyperlink for further information and importantly back again to your starting point. Hyperlinks to relevant websites are also provided for those wishing to explore particular topics further.
4. Understanding work based learning

University based PGCE training programmes require trainees to spend approximately two-thirds of their time in the workplace. There is limited time available at the University to address the breadth and depth of professional knowledge and skills that trainees need to acquire and, therefore, it is necessary to plan for engagement with particular topics to happen mainly within the workplace. A key finding of this research\(^3\) has been the need for all partners involved in supporting ITT in the workplace to have a good understanding of facilitating effective workplace learning. This is based on information gleaned from trainees (through questionnaire responses and interviews) and from discussions with mentors, headteachers and SENCOs during school-based visits. In researching the nature of workplace learning it became apparent that this may not have as high a profile as it perhaps should have when placing and supporting trainees working at a distance from the university for long periods of time. Appropriately trained mentors with a good understanding of facilitating effective workplace learning is essential for trainees to succeed. The availability of appropriate support materials for mentors and trainees is necessary to enable successful workplace learning. This project aimed to develop materials to support trainee teachers and school-based mentors to engage in workplace learning, we recognise that there may be a further need to develop understanding of workplace learning amongst mentors and university tutors, but this was beyond the scope of this small scale research project.

5. Organisations, organisational cultures and cross-professional working

To understand multi-agency working it is necessary to have some baseline understanding of the individual organisations involved. Diagram 2 below shows how we have started to develop an overview of the organisations that could be involved in multi-agency working, recognising that any combination of these agencies could be involved with individual pupils as determined by their special educational needs. This highlights the significant complexity of multi-agency working and the breadth and depth of knowledge that may be required to engage with it confidently. Indeed it is important to recognise that it is not possible for trainees to have more that a surface level of awareness and understanding of the many organisations involved in multi-agency working during their training year. A further complication is that each of these organisations will have their own unique culture, particular language and mode of operation. Much of the literature on multi-agency working highlights the difficulty of working across professional boundaries and there have been significant moves in recent years to bring greater cohesion to multi-agency working for individual children and young people. Every Child Matters (DCSF 2004) clearly sets out this new cross-professional approach and the Children’s Workforce Development Council provide

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\(^3\) See ‘Methodology and Evidence’ p.6 and appendix
statutory frameworks for those involved in working with children and young people in multi-agency settings.

Diagram 2

6. Different learning styles and stages of development
It is debateable that the interactive ICT based materials described above will cater for a range of learning styles, but the materials were designed to allow the learners to access them in different ways and to facilitate a range of approaches to learning. The information presented in the slides above, for example, enable learners to follow a systematic approach to learning by following information through in a linear manner. However, the opposite is also true as learners could choose to selected particular topics and dip in and out of the available information as desired. It, therefore, presents opportunities for personalised learning whereby the learner can access information on a needs-to-know basis, and as appropriate to their stage of development. The materials also allow opportunities for collaborative learning, for example, mentors may choose to use them to facilitate group activities and discussions, adopting a social constructivist approach to learning (Vygotsky 1978).

We were also aware that the abstract and out of context nature of much of the information being presented would not be motivating to all trainees and so we also began to develop case studies to engage trainees in accessing the same information in a very different way. The case study approach is illustrated in Diagram 3 below and feedback from trainees and mentors has been particularly positive about these materials.
Educational Psychologists (EPs) carry out a wide range of tasks with the aim of enhancing children’s learning and enabling teachers to become more aware of the social factors affecting teaching and learning. The work of an EP can either be directly with a child (assessing progress, giving counselling) or indirectly (through their work with parents, teachers and other professionals).

EPs carry out the following roles:

- assessing children and young people’s learning and emotional needs
- developing and supporting therapeutic and behaviour management programmes
- recommending formal actions to be made about the needs of a child or young persons needs including statements of special educational needs
- attending multi-disciplinary case conferences on how social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs of children and young people might best be met
- developing and reviewing behaviour, and child development policies

The Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) provide a more detailed Occupational Summary for an Educational Psychologist at: [http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/workforce-data/occupational-summaries](http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/workforce-data/occupational-summaries)

Diagram 3

Background and content
The research project was based in the School of Education, University of the West of England in Bristol and it drew upon the experiences of mentors in schools working in partnership with the University to deliver initial teacher education. The School of Education has a high profile in the sector, being rated 1 for Quality and Management in the most recent Ofsted Inspection (2006), and is very actively involved in educational developments with the South West region. It works closely with Local Authorities in the area and has extended partnerships with several Bristol schools working in challenging circumstances. It is a major provider of SEN Continuing and Post-Graduate Professional Development courses.

In recent years the School of Education has been working closely with colleagues from other areas of professional practice involving children and young people within the University, for example, Health, Social Care and Youth Justice. This research project provided an opportunity to investigate the nature of multi-agency working and cross-professional practice involving vulnerable children and young people with a view to supporting the professional development of trainee teachers, and colleagues from across the university have made a significant contributed to this.

Also, as outlined above, a significant factor was the realisation that much of this work was likely to take place outside of the university and in the workplace, and that we would need strategies to support trainees and mentors to engage effectively with it. Our desk research showed that although there was a vast amount of information that could be accessed online, much of it tended to be so sector focused that we felt trainees would find it impenetrable, and/or considerably repetition, making it frustrating to interact with. This view was confirmed through discussions with a sample of trainees following their exploration of a range of websites during a teaching session. A need for tailor made resources was identified as a very desirable outcome and this became a major focus for research and development.

Methodology and Evaluation
A mixed methods approach was adopted including:

- Desk research involving:
  - a literature search of academic materials (see bibliography)
  - an investigation of information available on relevant websites (see ‘Useful Websites’ in bibliography)
• **establishing a network of cross-professional expertise** involving academics and practitioners working in allied professions including Health, Social Care, Police, Youth Services, Connexions and colleagues from education in the University of Northampton

• **Questionnaires**
  
  Questionnaires were used with a mixed group (64 trainees) completing a one year full-time primary and secondary PGCE training programmes in order to gain an insight into their knowledge and understanding of multi-agency working. A copy of the questionnaire together with the data generated can be found in the appendices

Questions covered a broad range of issues and drew particularly on the standards for gaining Qualified Teacher Status and included, for example:

  o awareness of professional duties of teachers and the statutory framework within which they work
  
  o knowledge of legal requirements, and policies and practices of the workplace
  
  o the contribution that colleagues, parents and carers can make to the development and well being of children and young people, and to raise their levels of attainment.
  
  o The identification of and support for children and young people with SEN
  
  o collaboration and co-operative working

• **Interviews/discussions** with trainees and school-based mentors were used at various points in the research to provide checks and balances, particularly around the appropriateness of the materials being developed. School based mentors, in particular, welcomed the opportunity to access support materials online and to have these available for trainees to draw upon at any time when they needed specific information, or when they were working on their school based tasks.

The project had a timescale of 18 months and involved three main researchers, Professor John Dwyfor Davies, Dr Jane Tarr and Dr John Ryan; a research associate Kate Last; a project Advisor, Professor Saville Kushner and an external link, Professor Richard Rose at Northampton University who was involved in another SEN project that overlapped with our work. We also established close links with other professional training operating at the University of the West of England in the fields of Health, Social Care and Youth Justice. This helped us extend our links and develop further collaboration with colleagues within other disciplines across the university. Many of these were relatively new to research activities and processes, particularly relating to multi-disciplinary work within an educational context. In so doing, the exercise helped build future Capacity across a wide group of professionals.

**Areas for further investigation**

The project has identified a number of aspects that require further research and development to maximise the potential impact on professional practice. The first relates directly to the development of resources that has taken place within this project. The materials were developed making extensive use of PowerPoint

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4 When visiting schools, at mentor training days, with teachers attending CPD courses at the University and as a part of the debriefing of trainees on their school experience.
to provide an element of interactivity using hyperlinks to move from one slide to another, however, it is very clear that what is now required is to turn the PowerPoint slides into web page. This would have many benefits, such as:

- making the materials fully interactive
- making the materials more accessible, and available on demand
- removing the major constraint of having to have all of the materials together in one PowerPoint to be able to link the information together
- enabling a better presentation of the material
- the ability to make the material available at minimal cost

UWE submitted a bid for additional support from the TDA earlier this year to further develop the materials, and will be re-submitting this in response to a request for additional support received in July 09. This will also help with capacity building, for the new researcher in particular, but also for the team who currently lack expertise in eLearning and interactive materials development.

The second aspect requiring further investigation relates to the use of eLearning approaches to support work-based learning. Research focused on eLearning is contentious, with advocates presenting it as a new form of pedagogy while others question the authenticity of such claims and the lack of critical examination by those within the educational research community working outside of the field of ICT.

The third aspect requiring further research is the work-based learning context itself for trainee teachers. The shift in emphasis from University based work to school based practice in the last decade has been facilitated by developing pragmatic solutions with little emphasis on researching the nature of school based workplace learning. The particular focus of this project on multi-agency working further emphasises the need for greater understanding of work based learning as it involves engaging with a range of professional contexts and workplace learning opportunities. This project has led to a greater involvement of staff in the School of Education with the University Research Centre for Workforce Development. The research team was also invited to coordinate a Workshop on multi-agency working within a staff development seminar series.

**Benefit Realisation: dissemination, outputs and continuation**

Dissemination activity and tangible outputs, such as, teaching and learning materials were central to the project throughout. The following list of direct and indirect activities and outputs provide an insight into the breadth of outcomes from the project to date:

- A number of Case Studies involving a range of professionals working with children with SEN was produced and made available on a trial CD
- Guidance materials to support trainees and school based mentors to
  - use the Common Assessment Framework
  - understand the range of organisations involved in working with children and young people with SEN
  - gain awareness of the key legislation and government policy for professionals working with children and young people
- A Workshop outlining the aims and outcomes of the SEN research and development project at a Faculty of Health and Life Sciences (UWE)

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5 Feedback from trainees, mentors and other professionals suggests that this material would be both better presented and more accessible were it made available as web-based materials. We are yet to secure additional funding to enable this to happen
conference on Workplace Learning (14 May 2009)\(^6\)

- Presentation to School of Education staff (UWE, 21 April 2009) at a staff development day on how the project can support our trainees and school based mentors
- The project provided a specific context for a paper that was delivered at An International Education Conference in Athens on 26 May 09\(^7\). (A copy of this paper is attached as Appendix B)
- The project played a key role in the development, and/or updating, of three modules offered within our under-Graduate and Post-Graduate Professional Development programmes at UWE.\(^8\) The module specifications are available on the UWE website using the module codes listed in Footnote 8 below.
- The project has helped PGCE tutors at UWE to enhance the SEN theme within the professional studies programme

**Additional information and sources**

At the early stages of the project the literature search had two distinct strands. The first was an examination of the available academic and professional literature associated with Multi-agency working. All the literature/sources identified are listed within Appendix A.

The second was an investigation of the information that was available on relevant websites. As the project shifted towards the production of materials and supporting trainees work based learning the literature shifted towards online learning and work based learning. A selection of the material is presented below.

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\(^6\) HSC Workshop – Researching Professional and Workforce Developments in HSC: Current Perspectives and Visions for the Future

\(^7\) From teaching to Learning – how eLearning can support early professional development in a workplace setting:

\(^8\) (UTLGKR-20-2) Multi-agency Working
(UTTGNQ-20-3) Learning Partnerships in the Wider Community
(UTTG5L-10-3) Inter-professional Collaboration
Appendix A

Useful Literature and Web-based Resources Relating to Multi-professional Working


Barrow, G. *et al* (2002) *Multi-Agency Practice: resources for developing provision in schools and other organisations* Morden, Dreyfus Training and Development


Research Unit

Daly, G. (2004) Understanding the barriers to multiprofessional collaboration, Nursing Times, 100(9), p. 78


Davies C (2000), Getting health professionals to work together: There’s more to collaboration than simply working side by side, British Medical Journal 320 pp. 1021-1022.


Hymans, M. (2006) What needs to be put in place at an operational level to enable an integrated children’s service to produce desired outcomes?, *Educational and Child Psychology*, 23(4) pp. 23-34


McInnes, K. (2007) A practitioner’s guide to interagency working in children’s centres: a review of literature, Maidenhead, Barnardo’s Policy and Research Unit


Watson, H. Facilitating effective working in multi-agency co-located terms Educational and Cghild Psychology 23(4) pp. 8-22


**Summary of websites providing details of relevant occupational roles and responsibilities**

A full review of the role of Health Visitors is available at the Department of Health web site:

More detailed accounts of the role of the school nurse can be found on: Teachernet at:
http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/library/schoolnurses/
and Learn Direct at:
http://www learndirect-advice.co.uk/helpwithyourcareer/jobprofiles/profiles/profile1219/

A more detailed description of the role of a Paediatrician can be found on the healthcareernet website at:
http://www.healthcareernet.co.uk/Physician/CareerProfiles/PID00101.aspx

The role of the paediatric nurse can be found on the Medical Schools and Nursing Colleges website at: http://www.medical-colleges.net/pediatric.htm

A more detailed account of the role of Dieticians can be found on The British Dietetic Association website at: http://www.bda.uk.com/

A detailed account of the role of a Nutritionist can be found on the Nutrition Society website at:
http://www.nutritionsociety.org/index.php?q=node/224

There is a useful A-Z list of conditions on the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy website at:
http://www.csp.org.uk/director/physiotherapyeexplained/whatisphysiotherapy.cfm

More details of the role of Physiotherapists can be found on the
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy website at:
http://www.csp.org.uk/director/physiotherapyexplained.cfm

and on the NHS Careers website at:

The Royal college of Speech and Language Therapists website provides a description of the role of a Speech and Language Therapist at:
http://www.rcslt.org/aboutslics/
A description of the role of Speech and Language Support Workers can be found on the same site at:
http://www.rcslt.org/aboutslics/support_workers

A full description of the role of an Ear, Nose and Throat Consultant can be found on the ENT UK website at:
http://www.entuk.org/entsurgeon/

For an overview of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and the roles of CAMHS workers visit the ECM website at:
http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/health/camhs/

A full description of the work of an Occupational Therapist is available on the College of Occupational Therapists website at:
http://www.cot.co.uk/public/otasacareer/intro/intro.php

The Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) – provide Occupational Summaries for Portage Workers at:
http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/workforce-data/occupational-summaries

There is further information on the role of the portage worker on the Local Government Careers website at: http://www.lgcareers.com/career-descriptions/caring-for-your-community/portage-worker/

An outline of the role of an Audiologist can be found on the learn direct website at:
http://www.learndirect-advice.co.uk/helpwithyourcareer/jobprofiles/profiles/profile1491/

and the nhscareers website at:

A more detailed description of the role of a Social Worker can be found on the General Social Care Council website at
http://www.gscc.org.uk/Training+and+learning/Become+a+social+worker/

And an outline of the Job of Social Worker can be found on the Connexions website at: http://www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u/index.cfm?pid=63&catalogueContentID=2169

Or the Prospects website at:

An outline of the role of a Social Care Worker is available on the Social Work Careers website at:
http://www.socialworkcareers.co.uk/socialcare/what/index.asp

A further description the Job of Social Care Worker can be found on the Connexions website at: http://www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u/index.cfm?pid=63&catalogueContentID=2169

The Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) website provides Occupational Summaries for:
- Children and Families Social Workers

Because of the range of counselling available outlines of the role of a Counsellor can be found on a number of websites, for example,

The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) at: http://www.bacp.co.uk/education/whatiscounselling.html

The Relate website site at: http://www.relate.org.uk/workforrelate/becomeacounsellor/counsellingyoungpeople/


Connexions website at: http://www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u/index.cfm?pid=63&catalogueContentID=651

A range of professional profiles for people working with the Substance Misuse are presented on the Drink and Drugs website at: http://www.drinkanddrugs.net/jobs/careers.html

An outline of the Job of Substance Misuse Worker can be found on the Connexions website at: http://www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u/index.cfm?pid=63&catalogueContentID=2169

There are 4 levels of teaching Assistant TA1, TA2, TA3 and HLTA (see Skills4Schools website for details of these levels at: http://www.skills4schools.co.uk/page.asp?id=63

The Teacher Development Agency (TDA) provide an overview of the roles of the Learning support staff (TAs, HLTAs and Nursery Nurses) on their website at: http://www.tda.gov.uk/support.aspx

This site also has information on the roles of other staff, such as:
- Pupil support
- Administrative staff
- Specialist and technical staff
- Site staff
- School business managers

The Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) – provide Occupational Summaries for all Early Years Workers in Day

The DCFS outline the role of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) on their website at: http://www.schoolsweb.gov.uk/locate/professionaldevelopment/rolesresponsibilities/teachingroles/senko/

A detailed SENCO job description is available on the teachernet website at: http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/staffingandprofessionaldevelopment/jobdescriptions/senko/

The Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) provide a more detailed Occupational Summary for an Educational Psychologist at: http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/workforce-data/occupational-summaries

The Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) provide the full Occupational Summary for an Education Welfare Officer at: http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/workforce-data/occupational-summaries

The role of a Career Advisor can be found on the Connexions website at: http://www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u/index.cfm?catalogueContentID=647&pid=63

The Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) provide a full Occupational Summary for Connexions Personal Advisors at: http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/workforce-data/occupational-summaries

An outline of the work carried out by Pre-school workers can be accessed on The Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) website at: http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/workforce-data/occupational-summaries

An outline of the role of YOTs can be found on the The Every Child Matters (ECM) website provides an at: http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/youthjustice/yot/

and on the Youth Justice Boards website at: http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/yjs/YouthOffendingTeams/

The Every Child Matters (ECM) website provides an outline of the role of the police service, and the particular role of police officers working with YOTs at: http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/youthjustice/police/

The role of a PCSO can be found on the Home Office Website at: http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/details/Default.aspx?Id=281

The Every Child Matters (ECM) website provides an insight into how education and training can play an important part in reducing re-offending through Skills and employment: http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/youthjustice/education/

An outline of the role of a Youth Worker can be found on The National Youth Agency website at:
The Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) – provide Occupational Summaries for the professional listed below at:
http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/workforce-data/occupational-summaries

- Children's Centres
- Children's Homes
- Foster Carers
- Nannies
- Residential Childcare Workers
Other useful Websites (some will also appear above)

Brown, K. & White, K. (2006); Exploring the Evidence Base for Integrated Children’s Services; The Scottish Government; available at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/01/24120649/1

Childrens’ Workforce Development Council: http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk


Department for Children Schools and Families: http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/


Every Child Matters: http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/


National Youth Association: http://www.nya.org.uk/

Youth Justice Board: http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/

Youth Matters: www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/youthmatters/


Rofe, C. Interagency Work in the Management of Special and Inclusive Education. www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialcare/sc68.asp

Inter-agency Work and the Connexions Service (Rowntree) www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/pdf/D24.pdf

The evaluation of three ‘Communities that Care’ demonstration projects www.policyhub.gov.uk/news_item/communities_care_jrf.asp
Benefits of Multi-agency Working
http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/deliveringservices/multiagencyworking/benefitsofmultiagency/

Childrens’ Workforce Development Council: http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk


Department for Children Schools and Families: http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/


Every Child Matters: http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/

General Social Care Council website: http://www.gsc.org.uk/Home/

National Youth Association: http://www.nya.org.uk/

Youth Justice Board: http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/

Youth Matters: www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/Youth/youthmatters/
Appendix B

From teaching to Learning – how eLearning can support early professional development in a workplace setting.

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Athens Institute for Education and Research
11 International Conference on Education
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Abstract:
Trainee teachers in the United Kingdom spend a substantial amount of time in schools when compared to the time that they now spend at a University or other Higher Education establishment. For a one year Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) two thirds of a trainee’s time will be spend in schools and one third at the University. Twenty years ago a trainee on a PGCE programme would spend approximately two thirds of their time at the University and one third in a school environment. The balance of time spent in schools and at the University has therefore shifted significantly. It could be argued that the school context is much more focused on trainees’ learning and that the University elements are much more centered on teaching the trainees. In this sense it would be easy to conclude that there has been a significant shift from teaching to learning within teacher education. This paper seeks to explore the positive benefits and possible constraints surrounding the use of on-line resources designed to support workplace mentors and trainees. The impact of a significant increase in the use of virtual learning environments (VLEs) and access to on-line materials within Higher Education, including PGCE training, has helped shift the nature of teaching and learning approaches. We are particularly interested in exploring the ways that on-line materials and discussion forums are being, and could be, used to support learning.
Context for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) in England
Historically, certainly prior to the 1980’s, the relationship between schools and Higher Education Institutions (HEI’s) in England was hierarchical. As Edwards (1995) argued, HEIs, on the whole, undertook little or no consultation with schools in designing their teacher training programmes, including the school based practical teaching element. The formal assessment of trainees was carried out by HEI’s and individual action plans and summary reports drawn up by them. Consequently, teachers had little or no voice in determining training programmes and played a supporting role in the assessment and recording of individual performance.

Circular 3/84 ended the freedom of HEIs to do things their way and from the 1990s onwards the then Conservative Government promoted a move to more school-centred initial teacher training. Initially, this involved a more equal partnership between schools and HEIs, aiming to improve Initial Teacher Education by ensuring the schools took the lead in the ‘work based’ element. The early 1990s also saw the initiation of School Centred Initial teacher Training Schemes (SCITTS) where schools could work independently of HEIs.

As a direct consequence of opening up of the market in this way, some in HE were concerned that over time the nature of training would become ‘skills based’ and lack the necessary grounding in pedagogical theory. Edwards (1995:164) refers to the debate at the time, in which some saw school-based training as a ‘descent into unreflective apprenticeship’ whilst others viewed the contribution of the HEIs as too remote and theoretical. Edward’s own view was most prophetic, he argued not that schools should leave the ‘theory’ to higher education, but that…

...they should not do it all. Theory, understood as generalisation from the critical scrutiny of practice, is an activity in which good schools regularly engage. The contribution of higher education is to add a wider frame of reference and a particular commitment to independent enquiry. (p164)

In the mid 1990’s there was then an on-going process of change in the relationship between HEIs and schools. Furlong et al (1996) referred to the emergence of three types of partnership: ‘HEI-led’, ‘Collaborative’ and ‘Separatist’ and as Penny and Houlihan (2003, 243) observed ‘each reflected very different approaches to ‘joint’ activities in the context of ‘partnership-based’ initial teacher training’.

Given that the key responses to the policy changes introduced in the early 1990s were that the schools had taken on a much more active role in Initial Teacher Education (Furlong et al 2000) the DfEE, in December 1999, invited schools to bid to become Training Schools and as such to seek new innovative ways of improving the quality of Initial Teacher Training.
The first two phases of the Government’s training school programme were launched in 2000 and 2001 respectively and eighty two schools were given training school status and were provided with extra funding by the DfES to develop and disseminate good practice in ITT and to train teachers to mentor trainees. As explained by Beardsworth and Lee (2004):

It was expected that the training schools would develop innovative approaches to teacher training, working with ITT partners in Higher Education and other areas. (p.367)

In its evaluation of the training schools programme, OFSTED’s (2003) main focus was the success of the training schools in increasing the number of trainees in the school and the improvements in the quality of mentoring of those trainees. Other benefits identified included enhanced opportunities for on-going professional development of training school staff and the adoption of a more reflective and analytical approach to teaching. In other words, to a large extent the initial benefits had been internal to the training school.

Interestingly other sections of the report highlighted a divergence in the development of the training school model. A small number of schools were enjoying the opportunity to act as their own provider through a School Centred Initial Teacher Training Scheme (SCITTS) or the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP). Most schools however were unwilling to take on the full responsibility of an independent provider and were happy to acknowledge the HEIs ability to provide a wider frame of reference. As the Partnership model had evolved so the schools had come to value both the contribution of the HEIs and the expertise they bring. Edwards (1995) view had indeed proved prophetic.

A decade of policy change has prompted an ‘evolution’ in Initial Teacher Education with new types of partnerships emerging. There were anxieties on both sides of the partnerships that were emerging as schools began to perceive more clearly the demands of providing effective teacher education and HEIs worried about the possible marginalization of their role in training. However, within the OFSTED (2003) evaluation there was a sense that each of the partners in the evolutionary process was now able to appreciate the contribution that the other could make, thereby reducing the constraints of anxiety and paving the way for new and innovative partnerships between schools and HEIs.
Supporting work place learning with online materials

With trainee teachers required to spend two thirds of time in a ‘work-place’ setting it is very important for HEI and School partners to have knowledge of effective practice in work-place learning and to be familiar with different ways of developing and supporting this practice. As identified above, HEIs have been brought into a partnership model of work-based training through government legislation which can be traced back over the last two decades. Arguably, this process is on-going with the common perception remaining that much of the pedagogical theory is cover by the HEI partner and that the teacher ‘craft-skills’ are developed through school based mentoring and teaching practice. The contribution of both partners in this collaborative process and how they overlap, integrate and support each other is an on-going challenge for all involved. This is a particularly so as programmes change over time in response to new demands and government agendas.

A particular concern raised within this paper relates to those areas of work where expertise and/or ownership is not clearly evident within either partner. One such area, identified through low scores achieved on the Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) survey, is knowledge and understanding of multi-agency working which was rated by 32% of trainees nationally as ‘very good or good’. It would appear that this is an area of work that may be falling between the two key partners with neither one taking a lead in developing the training programme to fully incorporate it.

Our own research with trainees nearing the end of their one year Postgraduate programme of training revealed a serious lack of awareness of key practice – and significant ignorance about multi-professional practice when working with pupils experiencing special educational needs and/or vulnerability.

When asked what they understood by the term and concept of ‘multi-professional working’, some of the responses received included:

- Working with the wider school - outside your subject specialism
- The ability to work within a number of subject areas, working academically and pastorally
- I think in the case of a teacher it would mean they take the role of teacher/social worker
- Working within the wider school environment, not just the subject teaching but all elements of the job.
- As a guess, different professionals working together.
- Working above and beyond the classroom?
- Someone who has a number of skills in different areas
Others stated that they had absolutely no idea of this meant and had not heard the term used whilst on work-based placements.

Our research with trainees also highlights concerns relating to wider issues around a workplace training model and draws attention to the ‘lottery’ that reflects the reality of workplace learning for trainee teachers. Within this, much depends on the school a trainee happens to be placed in and the mentor’s enthusiasm, experience and knowledge for certain parts of the curriculum. Responding to a questionnaire that asked trainees to reflect their experience of school placement(s), and to identify the extent to which their subject mentor, Senior Professional Tutor (SPT), or other staff (e.g. Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) supported them in the area of multi-agency working, nearly 15% stated that they had received inadequate or no support.

Whilst some students had been fortunate in receiving high quality support from each placement school:

- “Both schools were very supportive, particularly with regard to the standards highlighted above” (Trainee A)

Others were not so fortunate, drawing attention to the fact that whilst they may well have received adequate support of this nature whilst working in one school, they had experienced little support in another:

- “A-placement: SPT arranged speakers e.g. a present support advisor to visit the group. This was very useful and interesting.” (Trainee B)

- “B-placement: SPT has only recently considered the Standards – the SPT asked us to identify gaps and offered to help us ‘plug’ any we did not have covered. As trainees, we managed to ‘plug’ gaps between us.” (Trainee C)

This raises concern about the inherent inability of guaranteeing high quality provision across all training sits and raises alarms about the potential ‘lottery’ of training placements and the challenge facing providers in ensuring quality support across all placements.

With the time spent at University now greatly reduced it is increasingly difficult to find time to cover an ever expanding curriculum within the university programme. Similarly in schools, it may be difficult to provide trainees with sufficient opportunities to engage fully with all desirable aspects of the training, particularly those, such as multi-agency working, which are beyond teaching in the classroom.

Attempting to address this challenge by retaining a view of teacher training that is firmly rooted in the notion of conventional teaching would seem inadequate. A more productive approach to the task might be to view the new model for what it really is – ‘workplace learning’, with trainees taking
greater responsibility for their own development whilst their mentors accept a wider role as providers of support and resources to facilitate that learning.

‘Workplace learning’ is itself an umbrella term that can assume a number of different forms and not all are appropriate for the task of preparing new entrants to the teaching profession acquire knowledge and skills in complex areas such as that of working as a part of a multi-professional team.

The National Workplace Learning Network site identifies the following forms of workplace learning opportunities and draws attention to the fact that learning opportunities come in many guises in the workplace - for example:

**On-the-job** - sometimes called ‘sitting with Nellie’, where you watch someone more experienced than you to see how they do something. Within any school, there is little opportunity to observe this within the context of ‘multi-professional’ work since very few take place within a school setting – and even were they to, practical engagement would be difficult due to factors such as ‘confidentiality’.

**Experiential learning and Training transfer** – the former refers to learn from experience and interaction and the latter refers to finding opportunities to use new skills learned in a ‘real’ work situation. As is the case for ‘on-the-job’ training, difficulty in accessing experiences that relate to multi-professional working whilst on school placement means that there is very little likelihood that trainees can develop the necessary knowledge and skills during this phase of their professional development.

**Informal learning activities** – relates to a lot of different styles and may not even feel like ‘learning’. This could be things that are learnt which are relevant to work through informal activities such as hobbies or games, through role play scenarios or ‘brain-storming’ sessions. While some trainees may well gain access to experiences that will enable them to gain an insight into multi-professional working through such activities, the very nature of this (being primarily informal and coincidental) means that it does not lend itself to a form of learning that can be guaranteed or made accessible across large cohorts.

**Formal training and development opportunities** – these are usually structured, often assessed and may well be led by an organisational training need. The time-pressures experienced by trainees whether at the workplace or at university, have already been acknowledged. Attempting to offer further taught elements to this is unlikely to be realistic.

**Coaching and peer support** – where someone either in a senior role or at the same level (peer) supports and encourages the learner to develop so they achieve their potential. This has potential for supporting trainee development within the workplace - but again confronts the barriers that are experienced by other forms of work-place learning opportunities unless it is possible to provide those who are undertaking the coaching role with the information necessary to help trainees in specialist areas of the curriculum.
It is also challenging to provide programme staff, HEI and school based mentors, with appropriate Continuing Professional Development opportunities to up-skill them to deliver effective training in all areas. New and different ways of addressing this problem has led many within the education community to consider eLearning as an appropriate methodology. In the case of HEIs there has certainly been a drive towards more flexible modes of learning, with eLearning being a desirable option with students recruited to programmes from very diverse geographical locations. Turney et al (2009, 71) drawing upon the work Jones and O’Shea, 2004, Laurillard, 2002, and Sharpe et al 2006, concludes that ‘Technology is increasingly being exploited for learning and teaching in universities around the world’. Although for trainee teachers University attendance is normally a requirement with eLearning used to support this work, much of the trainees time is spend away from the university in schools and it is in this context that eLearning offers a real opportunity to support their training at a distance.

When Multi-agency working was identified as an area of work that was not currently being addressed with any great success we began to produce support materials to enable trainees to engage with this topic. To provide flexibility in the training programme it was decided that these materials should be web based so that they could be made available to school based mentors to support their work with trainees to supplement anything that was done at the university. As Turney ibid, drawing upon Inglis et al (2002), points out technology is used largely because it is considered to offer greater flexibility in relation to time, place, pace, entry and exit. However, flexibility is only one consideration in choosing to use online materials within a training programme, there are many other things to take into account such as, the efficacy of technology in engaging learners/trainees, perhaps linked to trainees preferred learning styles, their access and use of ICT and the competing demands on their time.

Using online material to support work place learning would appear to be a pragmatic and relatively unproblematic way of delivering certain course content. It certainly provides the potential for access and learning opportunities for students off-campus as outlined by Biggs (2003), and it may also enable the programme delivery to engage in a more ‘blended’ approach to learning (Sharpe et la, 2006). It is, however, likely to create fewer difficulties than might be the case with other eLearning approaches and activities involving online teaching, and direct communication to provide guidance and support, see, for example, the eight different modes of eLearning delivery outlined by Harris (1999). However, Seol (2008), in discussing the transactional distance between the e-teacher and eLearners, highlights concerns about highly structured programmes that have low levels of dialogue between the instructor and learners, and these concerns might equally be applied to the provision online materials that are left for the learner to interpret.

In the case of trainee teachers who are based in a work place for a period of time online support material may not be a very effective tool without proper consideration of how both mentors and trainees interact with them. Where
there is appropriate mentor-trainee engagement with online supporting stimulus material it is likely that positive learner development will take place. Constructivist learning theories and in particular Vygotsky (1978) theory of a zone of proximal development appear to be clearly reflected in this mentoring relationship.

An opportunity for exploring the use of electronic resources was identified in the process of carrying out some research into support for trainee teachers in the field of multi-agency working. The Teacher Development Agency (TDA) made funding available to support this development and a research and development proposal was approved as one of sixteen related projects nationally.

Aims and rationale

Within the aims and rationale of the proposed work, we identified the fact that teachers had become subject statutory requirements to engage with and collaborate in multi-agency procedures for dealing with vulnerable and at-risk children and children with special educational needs. This project aimed to help school-based mentors to support and prepare student teachers with the capacity to take on such roles and to develop the necessary skills to coordinate and manage these agencies. The key rationale for this project, therefore, was to translate the evidence base from research on multi-agency action and the co-ordination of assessment for children and young people with special educational needs into practice-based learning materials that could be delivered in electronic form – and preferably, on-line.

This project therefore, aimed to build a competency base in ITT to respond to the challenge and opportunity of managing and coordinating multi-agency working at the service of children with special educational need.

The methodology that seemed most appropriate was that of a mixed methods approach that incorporated the following elements:

- Desk survey of pertinent literature [meta-analysis of data] relating to multi-professional working
- Semi-structured interviews with key professionals involved in working in multi-disciplinary teams in schools
- Focus groups comprising key professionals working in managing multi-professional teams

The desired outcomes included:

- an accessible summary of the literature on working within and managing multi-professional contexts.
- summary of central and professional policies for children's services that impact on teacher responsibilities
- guidance on the diverse values, practices and accountabilities across diverse agencies
- information and guidance on how to engage and liaise with other agencies in the identification and verification of vulnerable children
and how to orchestrate and, where appropriate, manage collaborative action across professional groups for 'combined assessment' practices

Critically however, the aim was to make such support material accessible and deliverable in a format that could would be easily available to mentors at the workplace. It also needed to be in a form that would engage trainees and that could be readily up-dated in response to the changing policy and practice contexts. The benefits of producing the material on-line meant that trainees and their mentors could access the materials at any time and work with them at a pace that best suited their needs. We were also conscious of the fact that the materials needed to be presented in a format that enabled both trainees and mentors work with them irrespective of their preferred learning styles and to make the materials as interactive as possible.

Our research indicated that to be useful, the material needed to be located within key sub-themes. These are illustrated below. Figure 1, for example, was designed to provide an overview of key themes and issues relating to multi-agency working.

This introductory page was then hyperlinked to other relevant resources that were either generated by the university team, in collaboration with other members of the extended workforce, or linked directly to specific websites and/or web pages that contained additional material and information. In this way both mentors and tutees could pursue their enquiries at a level appropriate to their needs. This meant that where a mentor needed to simply raise awareness amongst tutees, this could be done quickly and easily. Where however, the tutee may wish to investigate particular issues and topics in more depth for example, to support a written assignment, this too was possible through the electronic links. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the type of material that were hyperlinked.

It seemed important that the resource be designed in a form that provided trainee teachers in England with an understanding and a working knowledge of the key instrument used across agencies when working with vulnerable young people is that of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). This again was produced in a format that facilitated accessing links across a complex range of themes and issues. Figure 4 illustrates these links. A number of case studies were also produced as a resource for tutors, that could facilitate collaborative, as well as individual learning opportunities as illustrated in figure 5.

In addition to the concern for ‘transactional distance’ Seok (2008) outlined above, there is also a concern that simply making resources available online will not be enough to enable learning to take place. It is also recognised that providing resources alone may not represent a ‘new form of pedagogy’ as suggested by Smith and Meyen, (2003, p1). However, it is a method that is worth considering in terms of the support it could provide for individuals working at a distance and/or in a work place setting.

Providing access to online materials may, at the very least, provide a
framework, or a ‘scaffold’, for individual learner development to take place as Turney et al (2009) suggests:

Despite this, the ability of students to use technology to repeatedly return to resources was a clear benefit. The constant availability of resources allowed students to take responsibility for their own study at a pace appropriate for the learner. (p81)

In considering the use of online materials it is possible to see some direct links to the comprehensive literature on learning styles (Entwistle, 1997; Gardner, 2000; Honey and Mumford, 1992 and 2001; and Silver et al, 2004) as online materials can provide opportunities for individuals to learn beyond the ‘taught’ classroom, on their own and/or in collaboration with peers and mentors. Learning styles is not however an uncontested area itself, for example, Coffield et al (2004) highlights a number of issues about the authenticity and significance of learning styles within the learning process, a caution to bear in mind when promoting the use of online materials to support preferred learning styles in the workplace.

Other concerns have also been raised about the significance of ICT in supporting and enhancing learning, in particular the context(s) in which supporting evidence has been gathered (see for example, Convery 2009, Somekh 2007, Reynolds et al 2003 and Selwyn 2002). Convery (2009, p27) raises concerns about the ‘cultural context in which educational technology research is commissioned.’ He describes how in countries such as, the UK, the USA and Australia government technology agencies stress the importance of the use of technology in education from the perspective of skills development for the future workforce.

If this is the case, finding from research and development work carried out by government agencies, such as Becta in the UK, would need to be carefully scrutinised for their impact on learning and teaching, in addition to any skills development that has taken place. Convery (2009, p27) states that government agencies stress ‘the importance of developing technological skills for securing national economic competitive advantage’, with presumably less emphasis within their research on more complex questions about the significance of technology in cognitive development and the learning process.

Somekh (2004) highlights a lack of impact resulting from enormous amounts of money spent by the UK Government on information technology initiatives within the field of education throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s and into the 21st Century. The lack of engagement with technology of many working within the education profession over such a long period is interesting, and it may, however, have more to do with the robustness of the technology available at that time than any particular pedagogical concerns. There is no doubt that as technology has advanced in recent years with, for example, Interactive Whiteboards and Internet use now evident in many learning situations, the significance of technology is not be ignored.

The area of technology research may develop as a consequence of more
active engagement with technology in learning and teaching at the present time, but Convery (2009) suggests that there remains a lack of critical debate within this area. Drawing upon Somekh’s experiences within the field of educational technology research over two decades, he highlights how, for example, at conferences ICT researchers can find themselves annexed off as a sub-group, left to present their research findings within ‘something of a closed shop’ (Selwyn 2006, p 418, cited in Convery 2009, p30).

Whilst recognising that the use of on-line resources has their limitations and that it remains a contentious area, we believe nevertheless, that it remains a vehicle that is well worth exploring to enable us to support the early professional development of trainees who are required to spend a substantial amount of their time in a workplace setting. Early indications from our work suggests that at the very least, it provides a framework for independent study and at best, it enables meaningful discourse between mentors and trainees in areas where neither have a substantial amount of expertise or confidence.

Bibliography


Furlong, J (2000) HE and the New Professionalism for Teachers: realising the potential of partnership. CVCP/SCOP


Selwyn, N (2002) Learning to love the micro: The discursive construction
Multi-agency working

The following extract, taken from an Every Child Matters fact sheet, provides a useful outline of what multi-agency working is:

**Multi-agency working** is about different services joining forces in order to prevent problems from occurring in the first place. It is an effective way of supporting children and families with additional needs and helping to secure real improvements in their life outcomes.

**Background to Multi-agency working**

Since the publication of the Green Paper Every Child Matters (Sept 2003), health, youth justice, social care, youth work, voluntary and community sector and other children’s services have been joining forces to work more collaboratively around a preventative and early intervention agenda.

**Multi-agency working has been shown to be** an effective way of addressing the wide range of cross-cutting risk factors that contribute to poorer outcomes for children and young people. Local areas are undertaking an extensive reconfiguration of services, to offer earlier, more coherent support, which meets the needs of children and families in convenient locations and in a more streamlined way.

Figure 4

Why have Common Assessment?

What is the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)?

Who will need or need to know about the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)?

How to do the Common Assessment

When might a common assessment be initiated?

Training in the Operation of CAF

Additional support available for professionals working with CAF

Benefits and the Factors that affect partnership working

What happens next?
Henry is 8 years old the middle child of three children born to African Caribbean parents. He was diagnosed with Aspergers Syndrome, at age of 8 years which was appreciated by his family and education providers. He is a quiet unsociable child and plays the piano. He lives with his mother father, brother and sister. His grandparents live far away.

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![Henry](image)