



2014 Briefing Papers

Seminar Series on Teacher Education for the Changing Demographics of Schooling: policy, practice and research

Calls for reform in teacher education are increasingly made in response to dissatisfaction with student performance and poor outcomes, particularly relating to the long tail of underachievement of specific groups such as students from ethnic minorities, those living in poverty, or those who may have additional needs associated with disability or language. This ESRC seminar series brings together key stakeholders to consider the implications of the research evidence underpinning teacher education for diversity, and to articulate a framework for further research in the field. The seminars are designed to address a set of integrated themes to allow for the development of evidence-informed ideas on how to prepare teachers for the changing demographic of schooling.

This briefing paper summarises the presentations and discussions of the seminar held on 24 October 2014. The paper aims to stimulate further discussion with colleagues in teacher education.

Seminar 2: Teacher practices for educating all students

This seminar focused on the ways teachers can make a difference in educating all students through their professional engagement at classroom and school levels, for example in collaborations with school colleagues, families and communities. The papers in this seminar considered:

- Relationships between schools and parents
- A curriculum to support inclusive education in teacher education
- The Framework for Participation

Presentations

Liz Todd, Newcastle University presented a series of challenges, identified through research, into the relationship between parents and schools that view schools, rather than parents, as hard to reach. She suggested that inaccurate assumptions are being made about parents and their relationship with schools. She also presented some examples of creative relationships between parents and schools focusing on how we can make sure that teachers are prepared to work collaboratively with children and families from multiple and diverse communities.

Mhairi Beaton, University of Aberdeen described a learning module that has recently been developed as part of the M.Ed in Inclusive Practice at University of Aberdeen. The module encouraged participants to examine the challenge of creating a more inclusive curriculum and exemplified the underpinning principles and challenges of the process. This paper proposed that there is a need to encourage practitioners to adopt a more critical approach to the curriculum itself in order to facilitate a more inclusive curriculum that is meaningful to all.

Kristine Black-Hawkins, University of Cambridge examined the notion of participation as a way of helping teachers to shift their thinking away from focusing on individual differences between learners towards an approach that starts with classrooms and schools as communities in which everyone – children and professionals – can participate. She presented the Framework for Participation - a research tool that can support teachers to explore how and why their classroom practices do, and do not, support the inclusion and achievement of all learners.

Implications for teacher education

The following questions were raised in the discussions after the presentations:

- How can ITE providers enable opportunities for multi-agency, or multi-professional collaboration, e.g. by training professionals from different disciplines together (such as student teachers, Occupational Therapists and Speech & Language Therapists)?
- How can building relationships of trust among teachers be linked to working with parents in overcoming the culture of blame?
- How could teachers be supported to engage in master level courses as part of their day job, e.g. through research-led professional updates?
- How can we create spaces in teacher education for the systematic support of teachers to reflect and behave in creative ways?
- Could the Framework for Participation be used for observations of practice or as a tool for assessing teaching?
- How can we recognise truly inclusive practice while respecting the diversity of what teachers do?

Implications for future research

Further studies are needed about the relationships between parents and schools, particularly in relation to the secondary school sector, as research tends to focus on the primary phase.

Differences between courses where students 'read the papers and do the work' and those which helped students cope with the real challenges of teaching could be further explored.