



## 2015 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 presentations and discussions of the seminar held on 20 March 2015. The paper aims to stimulate further discussion with colleagues in teacher education.

#### Seminar 4: Teachers' development in contexts

This seminar focused on the contexts of teacher development for educating all students and explored how they can be accounted for in research of effective inclusive practices. The seminar considered issues around:

- preparation of teachers for engagement in counter-hegemonic practices
- diversity of student teacher population and teacher education routes
- preparation of teachers for helping pupils who are facing difficulties in learning without stigmatising them

#### *Presentations*

**Professor Celia Oyler from Teachers College, Columbia University**, presented a framework and a rationale for teacher education to prepare teachers to engage in counter-hegemonic pedagogies. She argued that such preparation requires sustained attention and analysis of: (1) the social-political-historical contexts of schooling; (2) teachers' own social locations & critical consciousness related to power and privilege; (3) the curricular and instructional moves that open up classroom space for both accessible pedagogies and democratic participation; and (4) the centrality of teacher inquiry in the entire process.

**Professor Ian Menter from the University of Oxford** considered forms of diversity that have important effects on teacher identity and competence, including the diversity of student teacher population, diverse routes of entry into teaching, and diversity of teacher education policies in each part of the UK, especially since the devolution 'settlement' at the turn of the century. Drawing on a range of studies and the reports of the recent BERA-RSA Inquiry into Research & Teacher Education, he argued that teacher identity and development cannot be separated from each other and that these are very important themes that connect closely with fundamental social questions of values, citizenship and the purposes of education.

**Dr Jennifer Spratt from the University of Aberdeen** presented an approach to teacher education and professional development which provides a framework for teachers to interrogate the decisions that they make about their own practice. Drawing from an on-going project that values the reciprocal cycle of teacher education, practice and research, she showed how the concept of inclusive pedagogy has been used to inform practice of both new and experienced teachers in a range of contexts, and how the theoretical concept of inclusive pedagogy has been further developed in studying the practice of teachers.

#### *Implications for teacher education*

The discussions following the presentations raised the following questions:

- How can we prepare teachers to address inequities embedded in the education contexts by engaging in counter-hegemonic practices both within and beyond their classrooms?
- How can we prepare teachers as public intellectuals for collective organising in resistance to the threats posed by the narrow performativity-driven policies?
- How do we prepare teachers to maintain the celebration of diversity while insuring inclusion of everybody?
- What are the implications of the diverse teacher education routes for the development of teacher competence and identity through different career phases?
- What are the implications of the commodification of TE as opposed to the idea of education as public good and therefore responsibility of a welfare state?
- How do we prepare teachers to work with others across professional boundaries in ways that do not stigmatise students who face difficulties in learning? What are the challenges for teacher educators?
- How do we encourage students to see the opportunities rather than only barriers of the institutional environments in which they find themselves teaching?
- How do we strike the right balance between giving teachers tools for practice and building their understanding of the underlying principles? How do we build a community of teachers who shares different practices through which they enact the common principles?
- How can we provide more opportunities for teachers' engagement in research and collaboration with researchers?

#### *Implications for future research*

Further research and diverse methodologies are needed to study aspects of teacher education that are effective towards a preparation for addressing the impact of inequality, in particular of poverty, in education.

We need a new methodological lens for exploring the issues of trust in teachers in increasingly multi-cultural societies, and for distilling the essence of inclusive practice even though it will be different in different contexts.

Further research is needed to explore how teacher education graduates enact inclusive practice in the different contexts of their workplaces. Future studies could examine: a) changes in student teachers identities in different policy contexts, b) or as a result of taking an inclusive pedagogy course, c) the ways in which students from different cultures enact inclusion, which will have different meanings in different contexts, and d) explore relational aspects of inclusive practice (e.g. working with families or other professionals).