



INSPECTION REPORT

Initial Teacher Training (Further Education)

BRADFORD COLLEGE

Validated by University of Bradford

A 2004/05 Inspection

Managing Inspector: D Knighton HMI

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BACKGROUND

1. This inspection was carried out in accordance with the Framework for the inspection of initial training of further education teachers and the guidance in the Handbook for the Inspection of initial training of further education teachers, both published in September 2004.
2. Bradford College provides two-year part-time in-service teacher training programmes for teachers leading to a postgraduate diploma or a certificate of higher education in post-compulsory education and training (PCET). The college has recently introduced a part-time one year certificate in PCET, which is a stage 2 qualification. All are endorsed qualifications and satisfy the Secretary of State's requirements for FE teachers. There are approximately 80 trainees on the two-year programmes, about half of whom teach in FE colleges.
3. The programmes have been developed, and are taught and assessed, entirely by Bradford College staff. They are currently validated by the University of Bradford. From autumn 2005 validation will be undertaken by a different university, though the programmes will not change as a consequence.

THE INSPECTION

4. The inspection was carried out in two phases by Her Majesty's inspectors (HMI), supported by a full-time inspector from the Adult Learning Inspectorate. Inspectors focussed on the quality of training and on management and quality assurance procedures during the first phase, which took place in November 2004. During the second phase, inspectors concentrated upon evaluating the achievements of FE trainees nearing the end of the programmes, through observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress through the course. Phase 2 of the inspection was completed in June 2005. Since the new stage 2 qualification did not begin until after the first phase of the inspection had taken place, it was not included in the inspection.

A EFFECTIVENESS OF PROVISION

5. The overall quality of provision is adequate (**grade 3**). Trainees are effectively introduced to generic and theoretical aspects of teaching in an FE context. Work-based mentors give them good induction into the specialist aspects of teaching their subject or vocational area. However the general and specialist aspects of teacher training are not co-ordinated. There is insufficient emphasis on practical teaching in the courses. Trainees receive good personal support, and the emphasis on developing trainees' skills in literacy and numeracy has been increased. Individual action planning is generally under-developed. Course managers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes, and have begun to introduce suitable improvements.

KEY STRENGTHS

6. Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- trainees are well-motivated, keen to improve their practice and open to constructive criticism; they have good levels of subject knowledge and occupational expertise
- specialist work-based mentoring is effective
- course tutors and work-based mentors provide good personal support for trainees
- effective links between course tutors and those responsible for management of human resources in Bradford College
- the thorough process for selecting trainees for the programmes
- systematic course review and action to implement improvements.

AREAS FOR ATTENTION

7. The partnership should address:

- trainees' under-developed evaluative skills and the variation in the quality of trainees' lesson planning
- the imbalance between practical and theoretical aspects of the programme, particularly early in the courses
- the lack of co-ordination between course tutors and work-based mentors
- the insufficient focus on areas for development in feedback to trainees on their observed teaching
- under-developed individual action planning and target setting for trainees
- moderation of the assessment of trainees' teaching.

Further information on strengths and areas for attention is contained in the substantial sections of the report that follow.

B ACHIEVEMENTS OF TRAINEES

8. Trainees are well motivated and are committed to helping their students to succeed. Most have appropriately high expectations of what their students should achieve, but a few are insufficiently clear about how to raise standards in aspects of their students' work. Trainees generally provide good role models for their students, treating them with courtesy and concern, and demonstrating a strong work ethic. The atmosphere in their classes promotes equality and diversity. They have good professional relationships with colleagues, and some have made significant extra-curricular and developmental contributions to the departments in which they work.

9. Trainees are keen to improve their practice, and are open to constructive criticism and advice. However, their ability to evaluate their own teaching in order to improve, varies considerably. A few trainees evaluate their teaching in a reflective, well-focussed way. However most trainees' evaluative skills are under-developed. Formal written evaluations of teaching sessions are completed only occasionally. They often take the form of narrative rather than analysis, and pay little attention to the impact of teaching on students' learning. Trainees are encouraged to reflect on particular aspects of education in their written assignments, but this does not always relate directly to their own teaching.

10. Trainees demonstrate at least a sound, and often a good or very good, knowledge of their subject or vocational area; in many cases this has been strengthened by the advice and guidance of mentors or other work-based colleagues. Trainees are generally able to answer specialist questions in a clear and well informed way. Those with previous or current experience in business bring a high level of occupational expertise to their teaching, and demonstrate a good understanding of professional standards and client needs. There are occasional examples of weak literacy skills adversely affecting trainees' teaching. Trainees vary significantly in their knowledge of ICT and in their ability to use it in the classroom or workshop. Some integrate ICT well into their teaching sessions, using it with confidence to reinforce learning and develop new skills. Others are aware of their need to develop expertise, for example in the use of interactive whiteboards.

11. Trainees' assignments mostly reflect a good knowledge and understanding of general education issues, of work in a further education context, and of the theoretical underpinning of teaching and learning.

12. All trainees prepare written plans for their teaching sessions, but these vary considerably in detail and in quality. The best set out clear learning objectives and individualised targets for students. Others, whilst detailing appropriate teaching and learning activities, do not make learning objectives clear. A few are relatively brief, giving insufficient attention to how assessment will be used to determine progress and support learning.

13. Teaching and learning strategies used by trainees are satisfactory overall, with examples of both very effective approaches as well as some that are weak. Some trainees demonstrate strengths in particular areas of teaching, for example

practical skills, but are weak in others, such as theory. The teaching methods used mostly address the material being covered or the skills being developed. Most trainees ensure that students are involved in a variety of learning activities in a session, but in a few cases they allow routine and relatively undemanding tasks to go on for too long. Trainees prepare suitable resources, of good quality, and deploy them appropriately in the sessions. They explain thoroughly and answer students' questions clearly. The best trainees actively encourage their students to develop ideas. They vary activities very effectively to meet individual needs, and ensure that all remain focussed and learn throughout the session. However for some other trainees, the activities in their sessions are insufficiently demanding and there is a lack of pace to the work. More generally, trainees lack the flexibility, or are reluctant, to try out more imaginative approaches, which allow their students the freedom to investigate and to challenge ideas and methods for themselves.

14. Most trainees organise and manage their classes well. They attend to relevant health and safety issues well, though there are occasional exceptions. For example students do not always wear the appropriate protective clothing. Trainees generally relate well to their students, and this contributes to a calm, positive working atmosphere. However, in a few classes, trainees accept low-level inappropriate behaviour, such as moving in and out of the classroom, without challenge.

15. Trainees meet the assessment requirements of the courses they teach in a thorough and comprehensive way. They carefully monitor their students' progress through units of work and keep comprehensive records of completed tasks and test results. In class, they informally assess learning through suitable questioning. There are good examples of trainees setting students individual targets for improvement, and following these up as part of regular reviews of learning. However most trainees have not yet developed such a systematic and focussed approach to formative assessment.

16. Trainees are conscious of the personal learning needs of their students. They ensure that students have the confidence to undertake all activities. They are aware of additional support available to learners and are able to refer them to relevant agencies or college departments. Some trainees have extensive experience of supporting individuals with particular learning difficulties or disabilities. Assignments completed during the course have helped to raise trainees' awareness of wider issues relating to inclusive provision.

C QUALITY OF TRAINING

17. The content of both the diploma and the certificate meet the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO, now Standards Verification UK) standards, including the core requirements in literacy and numeracy. Course modules cover an appropriate range of generic topics and themes, and are supported by helpful, comprehensive documentation. The sequence of modules is generally suitable, though the timing of a few practical topics within modules is not

as helpful as it could be. For example, trainees do not have a session on lesson planning until they are six weeks into the course.

18. The course content has a strong theoretical base, which underpins effectively the teaching and assessment on both programmes. There is less emphasis on improving the trainees' practical teaching skills. During the first year, trainees have limited opportunities to practice teaching skills in front of the course group and to try out new approaches. There is no requirement within the course structure for trainees to observe other experienced teachers in the classroom, to widen their experience of teaching and classroom management strategies.

19. The assignments to be completed for each module enable trainees to draw on their own teaching experience and on their specialist subject or occupational expertise. However, these assignments are often approached in a theoretical way and do not always capitalise on the trainees' own practice.

20. Arrangements are now in place on the first year of the two courses to ensure that all trainees meet basic requirements in literacy and numeracy. Formal training sessions are programmed early in the course, with additional workshop provision for those trainees needing further support. The fact that all trainees have to pass standard tests in literacy and numeracy ensures good take-up of this support. The quality of support is generally good, and a new web-based numeracy programme is a particularly promising initiative.

21. The quality of training in formal course sessions ranges from satisfactory to very good. Sessions are characterised by careful planning and thorough preparation of good quality resources. Learning objectives are clearly specified and teaching methods are generally appropriate. Some of the sessions provide examples of particularly imaginative and effective approaches to teaching and learning. They often make use of well-targeted group and individual work and provide models of good teaching practice for trainees. Most of the training encourages further individual reading, research and the use of ICT. Trainees are actively engaged in the training sessions; they work very well collaboratively and are supportive of one another.

22. Trainees working in FE colleges benefit from the good support and guidance of experienced, specialist mentors who induct them into the department or faculty, help to up-date their specialist skills, provide technical support and advise them on the drafting of their assignments. Trainees are generally very appreciative of their help and guidance. For a few trainees working outside the FE sector, mentoring arrangements have been less consistent or timely.

23. The two elements in the development of trainees' teaching capability, course sessions and work-based mentoring, are not linked together in a systematic way. Tutors do not communicate directly with mentors about the progress of trainees, and notes of session observations carried out by tutors are not shared with mentors in order that areas of development can be followed up in the workplace.

Opportunities are therefore missed to reinforce aspects of professional development and to provide a fully coherent training package.

24. The three formal observations of trainees' teaching each year, one undertaken by the mentor or other work-based colleague and the other two by course tutors, are carried out as planned. They are helpfully spread throughout the year, but they do not always cover a representative sample of a trainee's work. For example, one trainee had been observed only in sessions where he was teaching practical skills, and he had not been seen teaching theory. Feedback to trainees on their teaching is invariably supportive in emphasising clearly the strengths observed. However, areas for attention do not always feature so clearly; they are sometimes hidden within the text of the session note or are framed as very gentle suggestions. These observations, which lack clear targets for improvement, do not help the trainees to progress in the development of their teaching skills. In contrast, some more recent observations have set out clearly both strengths and areas for improvement, helpfully indicating the impact of teaching strategies on learning.

25. The role of the personal course tutor, with a responsibility for monitoring overall progress of individual trainees throughout the two years of the courses, is currently being developed. These tutors meet trainees on a formal basis each term and provide good personal support both within and outside normal teaching hours.

26. Trainees do not have formal individual learning plans to set out clear priorities for development. Individual action planning is weak. Until recently, areas of concern which have been identified in teaching observations have not been followed up in a systematic way. However recent modifications to the standard session observation form include a helpful action planning sheet for follow-up to the issues raised. A new continuous professional development handbook provides the basis for future individual planning, though tutor input is presently very limited, and early examples suggest that trainees need more detailed guidance on effective target setting to exploit the handbook fully.

27. A self-audit of personal needs and strengths has been recently introduced. This has helped to raise tutors' awareness of the trainees' backgrounds, but it has not been used as part of a systematic needs analysis, and it is not shared with work-based mentors. Prior experience is not used to tailor aspects of the programme to individual needs. For example, all trainees carry out a critical review of a piece of research in their subject or occupational area, regardless of their previous research experience.

28. Written assignments are assessed to appropriate standards. Assessment is generally rigorous, and trainees are provided with some very helpful feedback on how to improve their written work. On occasions, feedback relates more to academic conventions than to trainees' practice. A mid-year assessors' meeting, to review assessment arrangements, helps to identify trainees at risk of failing to complete assignments, and is used to plan remedial action where necessary.

29. Procedures for assessing trainees' teaching practice have improved during the last year. A re-designed observation sheet now replaces a range of documentation used previously. Assessment criteria have been made consistent for the two years of the course, enabling progress to be tracked more effectively. Unsatisfactory performance can now be signalled clearly against each of the assessment criteria. Assessments early in the course are insufficiently critical, though later assessments are more robust and give a balanced view of strengths and areas needing attention. There is a formal requirement for the assessor to state whether or not each session is satisfactory. Trainees have to reach a satisfactory standard in their teaching, as well as in their written assignments, to achieve the qualification.

D MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF PROVISION

30. Processes to select trainees for courses are thorough. All applicants are interviewed, and the interview process now includes a short literacy test to ensure that those accepted will be able to cope with the demands of the courses. Where applicants are not accepted, they are given specific advice and guidance on how to improve their skills, with the aim of applying successfully the next year.

31. Effective links between the post-compulsory education training team and Bradford College's human resources manager mean that recruitment, selection and induction of college staff are well integrated with training. This ensures that the demands on trainees' time are recognised and suitable workplace support is in place.

32. The college meets statutory requirements in relation to the implementation and monitoring of policies on equal opportunities and the promotion of good race relations. The courses recruit from ethnic minority groups well, even without any specific promotion. Enrolments of trainees from ethnic minority groups increased from 2003-4 to 2004-5, and exceeded the target for the education department.

33. New leadership and significant changes to staffing, tutoring arrangements, and selection procedures in a relatively short period of time have meant that the courses have been, and still are, developing and changing. The changes have been managed carefully and effectively, with priority given to the best interests of trainees. The post-compulsory training courses have benefited from being part of a larger education department within the college. For example in mentor training, course leaders have been able to draw on, and adapt successfully, existing good practice in other teaching training programmes.

34. Since the system of work-based mentoring for trainees has been entirely voluntary so far, course leaders have had little control over it. New arrangements in Bradford College, to build mentoring responsibilities into staff contact time from September 2005, will help to formalise existing good practice. However, those trainees employed outside the college will not necessarily have the same support. Training sessions on mentoring, including observations of trainees, though short, are of good quality. Repeat sessions have good attendance. A recently produced mentor handbook is also helpful for those undertaking the role for the first time.

35. Resources to support the training are generally satisfactory, and often good. Trainees not employed in the college initially had some difficulties over access to the library, but these have been resolved. Trainees feel that they can raise any concerns they have over resources, timing of assignments or other issues, and that their views will be acted upon.

36. The moderation of assessment of trainees' written work is good. There is regular second marking of assignments, and an external examiner carries out further, thorough scrutiny. Moderation of teaching observations is underdeveloped, but is improving. Some shared observations have recently been undertaken by

course tutors, but there is no moderation between tutors and work-based mentors. There is currently no external moderation of the assessment of teaching practice though this is planned for next year, as an additional role for the external examiner.

37. Review of the effectiveness of course provision is systematic, drawing on student satisfaction surveys and external examiners' reports. The use of performance data is under-developed, partly because of problems with the colleges' management information system. Action plans, following review and interim inspection findings, are thorough and are regularly monitored. They have resulted in important and timely changes, which are already leading to improvements in the provision.