



INSPECTION REPORT

Initial Teacher Training (Further Education)

University of East London

A 2004/05 Inspection

Managing Inspector: T Nasta 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. Since 2003, UEL has offered a full-time pre-service post-graduate certificate in education (PGCE) course, which, in 2004-05, recruited 38 trainees. Teaching placements are in about 20 colleges, in London and Essex. For most of the academic year, the course involves trainees spending part of their week on placement and the remainder at the university. In the early stages of the course, trainees spend two days per week on placement. At later stages this is increased to three. Both the PGCE and CertEd.. (FE) are endorsed qualifications that satisfy the Secretary of State's requirements for FE teachers.

3. The University of East London (UEL) also works in partnership with Barking College to provide a one-year in-service Certificate in Education for Further Education (Cert.Ed. FE) teachers. Almost all trainees take this qualification having successfully completed a City & Guilds teaching certificate at level 4 (7407 stage 2) at Barking College. In 2004-05, 15 trainees were enrolled on this course. The course was originally validated by UEL in 2001. It has been substantially modified for the cohort of trainees that will start in September 2005.

4. The in-service Cert.Ed. course is located in the Faculty of Academic, Business and Community Studies at Barking College. All the modules are taught and assessed by college staff subject to the university's quality assurance procedures. Although the in-service programme is designed as a part-time course of two years duration, all of the 2004-05 trainees had progressed directly onto the second year of the course having completed a City & Guilds teaching certificate. The main teaching input on the pre-service PGCE course is by university staff from the School of Education and Community Studies. However, the assessment of pre-service trainees' teaching practice is shared between assessors from the colleges and the university.

THE INSPECTION

5. The inspection was carried out in two phases by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), supported by specialist additional inspectors. Pre-service PGCE provision at the university and in-service CertEd. provision at Barking Colleges was evaluated as part of the inspection. Inspectors focussed on the quality of training and management and quality assurance procedures during the first phase, which took place in February 2005. During the second phase, inspectors concentrated upon evaluating the achievements of FE trainees through observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. Phase 2 of the inspection was completed in July 2005.

A EFFECTIVENESS OF PROVISION

6. The overall quality of provision is inadequate (**grade 4**). Both in-service Cert. Ed and pre-service PGCE trainees are able to manage group work and utilise learning resources effectively. They are strongly committed to their students. However, they give insufficient attention to differentiating their teaching and assessment to meet the needs of the range of students that they teach. Many in-service Cert.Ed. trainees produce assignment work that lacks analysis and is not strongly enough related to improving their teaching. In contrast, the standard of in-course assignments produced by PGCE students is generally good. On the pre-service PGCE course, the university elements of the programme are well planned. Trainees enjoy skilful training that is responsive to their individual needs and provides a good model for their own practice. On the in-service course, the quality of training is unsatisfactory. Trainees at Barking College have had insufficient support and guidance from tutors to enable them to make progress against the national standards. On both courses, there is insufficient accuracy and rigour in the assessment of trainees' teaching capabilities. Significant improvements to the management of the in-service Cert.Ed. courses have been made in response to feedback from inspectors and external examiners and a completely revised programme of training has been developed for 2005-06.

KEY STRENGTHS

7. Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- skills displayed by trainees in managing group work and learning resources
- well planned university-based training on the pre-service PGCE course with very effective training sessions which model good practice in teaching
- good responsiveness to the individual needs of pre-service PGCE trainees
- effective procedures used to review and evaluate the pre-service PGCE course
- suitable action taken to improve the management of the in-service Cert.Ed. course following major review in 2004-05.

AREAS FOR ATTENTION

8. The partnership should address:

- lack of rigour and accuracy in the assessment of trainees' teaching on both the pre PGCE and in-service Cert.Ed. courses

- limited attention given by many trainees to meeting the range of students' needs in their lesson planning and teaching
- insufficiently analytical and reflective course work of in-service Cert.Ed. trainees
- the quality and consistency of the training on the in-service Cert.Ed. programme
- variability of mentoring and subject-specific support for in-service Cert.Ed. trainees
- the lack of rigour of the course review and evaluation procedures of the in-service Cert.Ed. provision
- insufficient emphasis given to developing the literacy, numeracy and study skills of in-service Cert.Ed. trainees.

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

B ACHIEVEMENTS OF TRAINEES

9. Trainees on the pre-service course demonstrate a high level of commitment to raising the achievement of a wide range of students and are fully committed to furthering their own professional development and extending their teaching skills. They are generally reflective and provide thoughtful, perceptive evaluations of their own teaching. Most are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and are able to suggest improvements to their own teaching methods. However, in their self-evaluation, most trainees give insufficient attention to the impact of their teaching on students' learning. Weaker trainees do not consider how students will respond to classroom activities and set inappropriate tasks or pitch work at the wrong level.

10. Most pre-service trainees have been able to broaden their subject knowledge sufficiently, often outside their specialist areas, to meet the context of FE teaching. A few have experienced too narrow a range of teaching, for example teaching at just one level or only to full-time students and this has constrained their development. Most trainees engage in detailed planning and specify precise learning objectives which are shared with students. The best trainees are very clear about what students will be able to achieve and understand how students learn effectively; most plan well for differentiation and assessment.

11. All pre-service trainees use a wide range of teaching strategies. Stronger trainees make good use of information and communications technology (ICT), for example interactive whiteboards, to enliven teaching. In a few cases, weaker trainees make ineffective use of ICT, for example by providing detailed instructions for assignment work using on-line sources, that are difficult to access, so that students waste time instead of developing their ICT skills.

12. Pre-service trainees adhere to the procedures used by the colleges and are generally competent at monitoring, marking and assessing. Many gain good experience of summative assessment and work closely with their mentors on paired marking, joint planning for assessment and moderation. They have built up a good knowledge of syllabus requirements with some attending examination board training. They use in-class assessment and provide verbal feedback to students on their progress.

13. Trainees on the pre-service courses organise and manage their classes confidently and safely and establish a good relationship with their students. They are able to identify strategies for improving student punctuality and attendance, although they are not always effective in implementing them. Trainees are committed to ensuring that their students have full access to learning and they provide a good level of support for individuals. However, weaker trainees do not appreciate the importance of setting targets that are appropriate to the different needs of the students they teach.

14. Trainees on the in-service Cert.Ed. course also demonstrate a strong commitment to teaching and encouraging their students to progress. Many cope well with teaching students in challenging situations, for example maintaining the attention and interest of 16-18 student groups working in busy open-plan ICT centres. Some are very skilful in establishing appropriate standards of student behaviour by negotiating ground rules for their lessons and then insisting that students follow these and treat each other with respect.

15. Although in-service trainees are required to complete assignments and reviews of their own teaching that require critical self-evaluation, many do not succeed in effectively relating theory to practice. Some of their assignment work is insufficiently analytical and there is too much reliance on quoting extensively from secondary sources without commenting on them or showing how they can be applied to improving teaching practice.

16. In planning their teaching, in-service trainees often make use of the forms that are used by their own college. Most trainees are skilful in outlining the content and sequence of topics to be covered and stronger trainees consider the use of extension activities to reinforce understanding. However, planning for assessment is often too superficial. Lesson objectives do not give sufficient emphasis to what students should learn; they do not take enough account of the need to differentiate assessment to meet the needs of the ability range in their classes. Not enough attention is paid by trainees to existing information on students, for example records of their initial assessment.

17. Although many in-service trainees demonstrate a satisfactory level of competence in many aspects of teaching, there is little evidence to demonstrate how they have improved their proficiency as a result of attending the course. Their limited skills of self-evaluation and analysis constrain them from demonstrating how they have progressed during the Cert.Ed. year or from the levels of performance that they achieved on the prior City & Guilds programme.

C QUALITY OF TRAINING

18. There is a significant contrast between the generally well-planned training and guidance that pre-service trainees experience and the inconsistent and often weak training that is offered to in-service trainees. Following feedback from inspectors, at the end of the Phase 1 visit in February 2005, the college and university have taken steps to remedy some of the deficiencies in training, including developing a completely revised in-service course for 2005-06. However, the legacy of inadequate staffing and deficiencies in monitoring and assessment has meant that the in-service training experienced by trainees in 2004-05 is inadequate.

19. The central elements of the pre-service course are very carefully planned to allow trainees to meet national requirements. Each component is fully mapped against national standards and the minimum core of language, literacy and numeracy, with an appropriate emphasis on ICT. There is overall balance and coherence to the programme. Helpful guidelines make clear what is expected of trainees and college mentors during teaching practice. Trainees enjoy good informal support from subject mentors during placements, although procedures for formally recording trainee progress are often not followed. For example, not all trainees receive regular tutorials whilst on placement, with the consequence that their progress is not reviewed on a systematic basis.

20. The in-service course is also mapped against national standards. However, the teaching scheme for 2004-05 does not address adequately how trainees will gain experience against the main areas of the national standards and how they will be supported in the development of appropriate skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. The arrangements for subject mentoring are too often dependant upon trainees locating their own mentor and few trainees benefit from consistent and comprehensive feedback on their teaching from experienced staff in their own subject area, who are conversant with the nature of the ITT courses.

21. The quality of pre-service training sessions is good. Lesson plans developed by the teacher-education team are exemplary and model good practice. Specific learning objectives are identified and shared every session. The activities are carefully timed to reflect objectives. Each session pays careful attention to differentiation. On the in-service course, the quality of training is inconsistent. In the first term of the course, there was a high turnover of trainers and trainees experienced much disruption. Throughout the year, trainees have been taught by staff with insufficient experience in teacher education. Inspectors found that trainers and trainees lacked understanding about the expectations on them, for example how the assessment criteria would be applied to assignments or how to complete the reflective journal.

22. Provision for meeting the individual needs of trainees is a clear strength of the pre-service course. Individual study sessions, surgeries, peer support and 'Web CT' provide valuable opportunities for trainees to share experiences and seek help. Guidance and advice from professional tutors is highly valued by trainees. A wide range of support services are on offer at the university to develop study skills. For example, sessions on improving academic writing and assertiveness training are provided routinely. On placements, pre-service trainees enjoy good informal support

from college mentors, who have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and show a high level of personal commitment to their trainees. However, formal procedures for recording trainee progress on placement and setting clear targets for improving teaching practice are generally weak, with the consequence that trainees often receive insufficient structured help to enable them to improve their specialist teaching.

23. The provision of support to meet the individual needs of in-service trainees is unsatisfactory. About a quarter of trainees lack a level two qualification in English or communication. Support for those who experience difficulty in meeting the demands for academic writing is erratic. There is insufficient contact between the teacher-education team, mentors and staff responsible for providing individual help for trainees in literacy and numeracy.

24. On the pre-service route, there are comprehensive procedures for the assessment of in-course assignments. Assessment documentation is helpful in encouraging trainees to reflect upon their own performance. The assignments encourage trainees to retrieve data and to analyse their experiences on placement. Stronger trainees are able to relate their findings effectively to wider research on pre-compulsory education.

25. On the in-service course, written feedback on assignments and in relation to observed sessions does not provide enough guidance on how trainees should improve their performance. In some cases, basic grammatical errors are not picked up by assessors. Comments on observed teaching sessions tend to focus upon teaching rather than the impact of teaching on promoting students' learning. Areas for improving practice are stated in too general terms to be helpful. Tutors from the university are aware of these problems and have provided considerable support to college assessors in order to improve assessment practice.

26. On both courses, there is a lack of rigour and accuracy in the assessment of trainees' teaching competencies. On the pre-service course, the assessment of trainees' teaching is normally shared by UEL and college tutors. There is a lack of consistency in judgements amongst assessors, which often prevents a coherent overall assessment of trainees' progress against the national standards for teaching and supporting learning. Trainees exhibiting very different standards of teaching and assignment work were found by inspectors to be awarded very similar grades. In some cases, trainees observed teaching by inspectors and evaluated as unsatisfactory had been assessed as good or satisfactory by assessors. Given this background, the pass/fail borderline of the courses is not secure.

27. In an attempt to improve the consistency of the assessment of teaching, the teacher-education team has developed a four-point grading scale to distinguish between teaching practice that is unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or very good. Guidance has been issued to all assessors on the expectations that trainees should meet against the six areas of the national standards for teaching and supporting learning. However, the minimum expectation that trainees should meet to gain a satisfactory grade is set too low in some areas. For example, satisfactory performance in 'assessing learners' needs' includes the statement that 'the trainee

occasionally addresses the individual needs of students based on prior knowledge and information’.

D MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF PROVISION

28. Selection and interviewing processes for pre-service trainees are thorough and decisions are recorded carefully against set criteria. The course is successful in recruiting trainees from minority ethnic and under-represented groups, which make up over 50% of trainees. A thorough auditing of trainees’ literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is undertaken during the course induction. However, there is no corresponding audit of trainees’ subject knowledge.

29. Most in-service trainees progress onto the Cert.Ed. (FE) from the City & Guilds teaching certificate. Procedures for the audit of trainees’ skills at the start of the HEI programme are inadequate. In response to feedback at the end of Phase 1 of the inspection, the integration between initial teacher training and other aspects of the management of staff within the college, such as the recruitment, selection and induction of new teachers, has been strengthened.

30. On the pre-service course, good use is made of evaluations by trainees, tutors and mentors based upon the use of questionnaires. Procedures for action planning are thorough and precise and include detailed responses to the comments of external examiners. Progress has been made on several fronts, for example providing a programme of mentor training. Insufficient use is made of admissions data in analysing how to improve the selection processes. Procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of mentors in providing support to trainees on placement are also underdeveloped.

31. Arrangements for evaluating the standards achieved on the in-service course are insufficiently robust. Quality assurance procedures to enable UEL to monitor standards on the in-service course fell into abeyance at the beginning of the academic year due to long-term staff sickness at both UEL and Barking College. The course review and evaluation report for 2003-04 lacked rigour and depth and gave limited attention to how concerns raised by the external examiners were to be addressed. In response to issues identified by the external examiners and by inspectors, the university has substantially increased its routine monitoring of the course and a completely revamped programme has been validated to commence in 2005-06.

32. Significant attempts have also been made to improve the quality of training for the 2004-05 in-service trainees. Progress has been made in clarifying management responsibilities and in giving better support to trainers on the course. There is a detailed action plan, although many of the actions listed in it, address improvements to systems and processes rather than focusing upon the quality of training and on improving trainees’ teaching. New staff have been appointed to supplement the expertise available to the teacher-education team for 2005-06. However, the experience and expertise available to the cohort of trainees seen by inspectors was inadequate.