



INSPECTION REPORT

Initial Teacher Training (Further Education)

Sheffield Hallam University

A 2004/05 Inspection

Managing Inspector: D Hornbrook 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. Sheffield Hallam University works in partnership with three colleges to provide initial teacher training (ITT) courses for further education (FE) teachers and other trainers from the post-compulsory sector, leading to the university's PGCE (postgraduate certificate in education) and certificate of education qualifications. Both are endorsed qualifications and satisfy the Secretary of State's requirements for FE teachers. Two training routes are available: a full-time, pre-service course, on which there are 25 trainees, and a part-time, in-service route, on which there are 207 trainees. All certificate courses offered at the university and the colleges are modular and governed by the university's credit accumulation (CAT) scheme.

3. Long-standing relationships with local colleges have enabled the university to meet the placement demands for pre-service places each year in about 20 colleges. Pre-service trainees are a mixture of new graduates and those who graduated some years ago and now wish to train for a new career. They are attached to one college for two days a week throughout the course.

4. As well as running its own in-service provision, the university contracts three colleges to provide PGCE and certificate of education training. It also collaborates with a fourth college for the aspects of the college's certificate training it provides. To enter year two of an in-service certificate course, trainees must have satisfactorily completed the four first year modules suitable for national awarding body qualifications such as the City & Guilds Teaching Certificate (7407 Stage 2). Part-time trainees are assessed by college or university tutors depending on the contract with the university.

5. In 2004-05 the university introduced a community based certificate course, which seeks to engage non traditional ethnic minority learners in higher education.

THE INSPECTION

6. 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 and specialist additional inspectors. Pre-service provision at the university and in-service provision at three of the four colleges was evaluated. Inspectors focused on the quality of training and 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 through observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. Phase two of the inspection was completed in June 2005.

A EFFECTIVENESS OF PROVISION

7. The overall quality of provision is good (**grade 2**). Trainees on the postgraduate and certificate courses are well-qualified in their subjects. They are enthusiastic and reflective about their teaching and they make good progress. Trainees have high expectations of their students and set challenging targets for them. They adopt a professional approach to their work and treat students with appropriate respect and consideration. Trainees employ systematic and well-planned assessment, with much individual feedback, although some trainees do not provide activities which sufficiently meet the different interests and abilities of all their students. The course is very-well designed and its local management in the participating institutions is good. The quality of the training sessions and of the assessment of trainees is high. There are comprehensive procedures for developing and assuring the quality of training. Key issues raised early in the inspection concerning the attention paid to trainees' specialist subject development and the quality of mentor support in colleges have already been addressed for 2005/06.

KEY STRENGTHS

8. Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- high quality of trainees, who are well qualified in their subjects, and who make good progress
- a very well-designed modular course structure with appropriate, carefully planned content
- the high standard of training sessions and their links with professional contexts
- the emphasis on reflective practice
- very good assessment, including trainees' self-assessment
- the cross-partnership moderation of written assignments
- good local leadership and management at the university and in the colleges
- very comprehensive and effective procedures for developing and assuring the quality of training.

AREAS FOR ATTENTION

9. The partnership should address:

- the attention paid to trainees' specialist subject development
- the variations in the extent and quality of mentor support in colleges
- the underdeveloped systems for analysis of data on equality of opportunity.

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

B ACHIEVEMENTS OF TRAINEES

10. Trainees set their students challenging targets and have high expectations of them. They adopt a professional approach to their work and are sensitive to the needs of their students, treating them with appropriate respect and consideration. Trainees are familiar with necessary legislation. They are punctual and manage their time efficiently. Colleges value trainees' contributions to departmental teams and to the many aspects of college life. Trainees take full advantage of the opportunities offered by a range of staff development activities.

11. Most trainees are reflective about their teaching. In-service trainees produce detailed evaluations of their progress that take into account feedback from observed lessons and assignments and most use them to develop and improve their teaching.

12. Trainees are well qualified in their subject and can teach it competently. At the same time, they acquire the associated pedagogical knowledge needed for effective teaching in FE. They know their students well and are aware of each individual's progress to date. They use this knowledge effectively to plan and teach lessons and set assignments. They are responsive to students' feedback. Students taught by trainees make good progress and are generally well motivated. Pre-service trainees have a very strong commitment to their subjects. For example, one trainee gave additional classes in her non-teaching and holiday periods in order to ensure students fulfilled their potential.

13. The planning undertaken by in-service trainees is generally good. Lesson objectives are frequently and systematically referred to during lessons. Trainees use a range of teaching methods effectively and, where appropriate, incorporate information and communication technology (ICT) in their lessons. For example, one trainee was able to accommodate a number of different learning styles in a literacy lesson by using schemes on the college intranet. Trainees also use a wide range of resources and expect students to use books and journals as well as relying on the internet. The teaching materials produced by pre-service trainees are of a particularly high standard. In many cases, trainees effectively use their experiences in the workplace to inform their teaching.

14. In the best lessons, teaching attempts to meet the different needs of students and to take into account their learning styles. Plans give appropriate attention to the detail of students' past achievements and include differentiated outcomes for students of different abilities. Only in a minority do trainees fail adequately to meet the needs of individuals.

15. Trainees' classroom management skills are generally good. The strongest trainees employ a variety of teaching and learning strategies to engage and hold students' attention. A small minority of those lessons observed lacked pace and structure. A few pre-service trainees, comfortable with small groups of students, have problems with large classes.

16. In most lessons, trainees successfully use informal assessment methods to motivate students to improve, as well as to inform their planning. Questioning is mainly used well to assess learning and understanding and is an integral part of many lessons.

17. In the best teaching, assessment is systematic and well-planned, with individual feedback which enables students to make progress. Here, assessment is supported by detailed records, targets and action plans, as well as thorough and constructively critical feedback to students on their written work. Some trainees negotiate individual targets and learning strategies with students in lessons and assignments. For example, a student with memory impairment through injury was given repeated instructions and allowed to work closely with a peer to help him remember. In a few cases, assessment is not used to aid planning and trainees offer little or no written feedback on students' written work.

18. Trainees are knowledgeable about the support available to students inside and beyond the college. They are also aware of the progression opportunities open to students and support them effectively to gain access to relevant information and guidance.

C QUALITY OF TRAINING

19. The structure and content of both postgraduate and certificate in education routes are good and have been carefully planned to meet the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) standards. The content and layout of the modules encourages both in-service and pre-service trainees progressively to develop their teaching skills. For example, later modules place stress on evaluation and synthesis, with trainees undertaking small scale projects involving the collection of data, drawing conclusions and presenting recommendations. The final module addresses a range of national policies and initiatives.

20. Assignments allow trainees to explore effectively aspects of FE in the context of their own subjects. Pre-service trainees have the benefit of placements in their subject areas, but, for in-service trainees, too little attention is paid to the systematic development of subject-specific teaching approaches. Trainees may be in supportive departments where subject related developments can be discussed but

those specialising in minority subjects may have no specialist colleagues. The university is aware of these issues and a new module in place for 2005/06 requires trainees to maintain, with mentor support, a subject knowledge portfolio. At the same time, the university is developing its cross-institution electronic networking to support subject specialisms.

21. In taught sessions, trainers draw effectively on trainees' workplace experience. For pre-service trainees, the parallel experience of placement and taught sessions allows for the development of practice and ideas. The university encourages colleges in the partnership to provide a range of teaching experience for in-service trainees, but trainees' teaching timetables often restrict their opportunities to extend their experience in this way.

22. The standard of training across the partnership is never less than adequate and most training sessions observed were good or better. A range of teaching techniques is taught and evaluated, and trainees are encouraged to consider critically their own practice and that of others at every stage of the course. Trainers act as good role-models for trainees.

23. Trainers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities as they are laid out in the relevant definitive documents. The contractual, collaborative agreements between the university and partner colleges clearly outline the respective responsibilities of university staff and college tutors and managers. For pre-service trainees, the placement handbook makes clear the roles and responsibilities of those looking after trainees in the colleges.

24. Pre-service trainees have identified supervisors in their placement colleges who are often, although not always, specialists in the trainees' subjects. The quality of the support received by pre-service trainees on their placements is often very high, although it is not always systematic and often relies on the goodwill and enthusiasm of experienced college teachers. The experience for in-service trainees is very much more variable. In-service trainees at the university may or may not have mentors; where the courses are taught in the colleges, trainees generally have mentors, although they are not necessarily familiar with the certificate courses.

25. All trainees accepted onto the course undertake a comprehensive needs analysis including an ICT self-assessment, an initial self diagnosis exercise and a 'skills for life' exercise. Following this, trainees draw up an action plan. Trainees continue to evaluate, reflect upon and record their professional and personal progress which culminates in a final statement of professional practice.

26. Trainees across the partnership enrolled at the university have access to the university's extensive system of learning and ICT support. In some colleges, trainees who are identified as needing it accept additional support.

27. Pre-service trainees discuss possible placements with the programme leader at the beginning of their first semester. Once a trainee has been placed in a college, the university tutor visits to ensure that those responsible for the trainee understand what is required of them; this is the extent of formal mentor training. Course tutors have much less control over the support given to in-service trainees attending

certificate courses at the university; a small minority of trainees receive no support or interest from the colleges where they are employed.

28. On-going assessment is suitably formative and takes account of trainees' own views of their progress. Assignments are well-designed to measure module learning outcomes and are, like the modules, designed to relate to trainees' professional contexts. Feedback on assignments is very thorough. The assessment of written assignments is very well moderated across the partnership and involves all the colleges and the university; each semester, a partner institution is nominated as external moderator and produces a report. A suitable range of work goes to an external examiner.

29. Assessment is informed by comprehensive and effective programmes of lesson observations in the colleges. Observations are regularly undertaken and feedback is thorough, relevant, accurate and constructive. Guidance provides clear criteria for the assessment of trainees' competence. For pre-service trainees, college mentors participate fully in lesson observations, some of which they standardise with university tutors. In-service trainees experience observations from a range of college staff, including internal standards verifiers, quality managers, mentors and other teachers. Trainees effectively use feedback from lesson observations to develop and improve their practice. One trainee had had problems with time and behaviour management but through a combination of detailed feedback from observers and honest self-evaluation these issues were overcome by the end of the course.

D MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF PROVISION

30. Overall, interviewing and selection procedures across the partnership are satisfactory. A standard application pack is produced by the university for all the university and college candidates and the quality of initial guidance for new employees on the nature of FETT qualifications is good. Each partner organises its own interviews and details of successful candidates are sent to the university for entry onto the system. Pre-service trainees are interviewed at the university according to suitable, published criteria; in-service trainees are accepted by the university and partner colleges if they satisfy the requirements of 200 teaching hours over two years. Arrangements at the university for the accreditation of prior learning are well-developed. At interview, applicants are given good advice about the best route to take and note is taken of any individual support needs.

31. Although a community - based certificate course has been recently introduced, there is no strategy for the recruitment of trainees from minority ethnic groups. The partnership does not analyse recruitment to see the extent to which they reflect the proportion of minority ethnic staff and students in partner colleges and there is no analysis of the success rates of minority ethnic trainees. The progress of colleges in attracting teachers from minority ethnic groups from their surrounding communities varies widely, although some colleges make concerted efforts. All partners are required to implement the university's equal opportunities policy, but the partnership has no process for monitoring the effectiveness of the implementation.

32. The leadership of the partnership is sound. Improvements have been made to the administration of the courses and the partnership now has a well-designed and effective management structure. The programme leader chairs the programme management committee which is made up of course and college tutors and which meets twice during each of the two semesters. The programme committee considers all aspects of programme design and delivery. The programme leader is supported by the senior officer for quality for the division who is responsible for external examiners, course reviews and other quality matters.

33. At college and university level, the management of the different cohorts of trainees is good. In colleges, the organisation and management of training are good, although the place of training in the management system and its links with processes of staff development more generally, vary from college to college. Each college has a course tutor who links with the programme leader and members of her team and who represents the college at partnership meetings. College and university training teams are committed and enthusiastic and work hard to help their trainees make progress.

34. There is a strong commitment to the principle of equality among partners both at the university and among partner colleges. All necessary information is thoroughly well documented although there is no partnership handbook which draws together the principles and procedures of the partnership in a readily accessible form. Similarly, although a well-produced pre-service placement handbook gives guidance for colleges, there is no similar handbook to support the mentoring of in-service trainees.

35. Members of the partnership have a simple contractual relationship with each other for in-service certificate trainees. An annually reviewed collaborative agreement specifies in detail the terms of the partnership and the responsibilities of each partner. The partnership has many benefits. For example, colleges can draw on the well produced course modules and trainees at the colleges have access to the university's learning resources, including those held on its intranet.

36. The division has a commitment to continuous improvement and is supported by comprehensive procedures for developing and assuring the quality of training. There are well established procedures for validation and course review. The revalidation process is rigorous and helps to establish coherence and consistency across the programme. The course team responds appropriately to the external examiners' feedback, which is also considered by the programme management committee, and to other external reports. However, the university does not feed back to college managers the results of quality assurance reviews.

37. Trainees feed back their views formally and confidentially at the end of each module and at the end of the course; there are also less formal group evaluations. Issues arising are summarised and reviewed by the partnership's programme committee. There is evidence of action being taken as a result of this process. Trainees receive feedback on changes which is often published on the intranet.

38. Each partner college conducts its own regular monitoring, review and self assessment. The quality of this process is good or better in all colleges. At the same time, the university has a number of quality assurance procedures which aim to ensure high standards at partner colleges. These include regular visits from the university learning centre to monitor the quality of library resources, peer review by the partnership committee and the review of college self-assessment reports. Outcomes of all monitoring are reviewed by the partnership management committee.