

University of Warwick



Centre for Lifelong Learning
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A further education teacher training
inspection report
2006/07

Managing Inspector
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The inspection

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. It was carried out in two phases by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), supported by specialist additional inspectors. In-service provision at three 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 January 2007. During the second phase, inspectors concentrated upon evaluating the achievements of trainees through observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. Phase 2 of the inspection was completed in June 2007.

Background

3. The University of Warwick works in partnership with 6 colleges in the West Midlands to provide ITT courses for FE teachers and other trainers from the post-compulsory sector. These lead to the University's open certificate in post-compulsory education and training (stage 1) and certificates in post-compulsory education and training (stages 2 and 3). All of them are endorsed qualifications, broken down into the 3 stages of the FENTO standards that satisfy the Secretary of State's requirements for further education (FE) teachers. All the courses operate on an in-service basis and are taught and assessed by college staff, subject to the university's quality assurance procedures. In 2006-07 about 450 trainees were enrolled on the three stages of the programme.

4. Trainees can complete all 3 stages within two academic years. Trainees holding National Awarding Body qualifications are able to transfer onto the stage 2 and stage 3 certificates, providing that they complete an additional assignment. The university's provision is distinctive in that it is set at level 4 of the National Qualifications Framework and does not lead to a post-graduate certificate in education, even for those trainees that have a first degree.

Effectiveness of provision

5. The overall quality of provision is good (grade 2). Trainees are enthusiastic and well-motivated. Their teaching is well planned and enlivened by their prior occupational experience. They grow in confidence and competence over the courses and opportunities for further professional

development beyond initial teacher training (ITT) are extensive. However, a few trainees' experience of teaching is too narrow. There is no expectation that all trainees will be given the opportunity of working across different levels and types of courses as a routine part of their training. Teacher trainers from the colleges benefit from the extensive programme of curriculum and professional development that the university partnership offers. Trainees benefit from very skilled teaching and assessment by the teacher trainers and the generally well-managed courses. The university and one of the partner colleges provide excellent on-line resources that are enabling trainers to develop more flexible modes of teaching and assessment. However, the use of ILT in training was less extensive in the other colleges. The subject support offered to trainees through mentoring is consistently strong and systematic in one college, but is more variable in quality in the others. Although trainees are encouraged and supported in the development of their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, monitoring of this aspect of their progress is insufficiently tight. The partnership is self-critical and has robust quality assurance procedures that have enabled it to develop and improve its provision.

Key strengths

Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- enthusiastic trainees who make good use of their own vocational experience to enrich their students' learning
- well-structured ITT programmes with imaginative assignments that are reviewed and amended by the partnership each year
- good teacher-training sessions based upon the successful demonstration of a wide range of teaching methods
- progression routes that encourage wide access both onto the ITT programme and onto further professional development
- exemplar on-line resources that are enabling the partnership to pilot more flexible patterns of teaching, learning and assessment
- strong collaboration across the partnership and a successful record of curriculum planning and development
- self-critical course review, evaluation and self-assessment procedures that are leading to continuing improvements across the partnership

Areas for attention

The partnership should address:

- the insufficient opportunities for trainees to observe, assess and teach students across the range of age groups, levels and modes of attendance
- the variation across centres in the use of ILT by teacher trainers in learning and assessment and in trainees' access to on-line learning resources
- the inconsistent levels of support for trainees in developing their subject-specific teaching skills through mentoring.

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

Achievements of trainees

6. Trainees grow in confidence and competence over the courses and demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm and commitment to their role. They are well qualified in their own subject areas. Many have considerable industrial experience which they use to good effect to illustrate concepts within their teaching. Most were able to provide examples of how they ensure they keep their subject knowledge up-to-date. However, not all trainees gain a breadth of teaching experience, for example in teaching different age groups, different levels or experiencing both 1:1 and whole-group teaching.

7. Trainees are very positive about the course and feel they have made good progress. They are generally able to write self-critically and to evaluate and improve their teaching. Stronger trainees are able to justify their choice of teaching methods with reference to educational theories and their knowledge of teaching techniques. However, trainees' assignment work is often over-reliant on set text-books and makes insufficient use of educational journals and the wider educational literature.

8. Trainees are very receptive and improve their teaching in response to feedback. Lesson plans are usually well documented. Most trainees define lesson objectives clearly although, in some cases, there is insufficient focus on study and process skills. Most trainees are skilled in the use of learning outcomes and make reference to them during lessons to measure the progress made by students.

9. Trainees use an extensive variety of teaching and learning activities. They are prepared to experiment with techniques that are new to them. In

one class, for example, the teacher used a “quick quiz” to provide a vehicle for day-release students to contribute their own work experience; another trainee familiarised the students with the names of famous sociologists by allocating student quiz teams the names of leading authorities.

10. Group activities are a feature of most trainees’ lessons and, in the best-managed lessons, clear direction is given to the students about who they should work with. Activities are generally monitored well. Many trainees use appropriate questioning skills to check the students’ understanding although these do not always adequately extend students’ learning or reasoning abilities. Despite the use of lesson plans that require information to be provided about how differentiation will be achieved, weaker trainees make insufficient provision for the full ability-range: higher-attaining students are often not challenged sufficiently.

11. In most lessons, a good range of resources is used to facilitate learning. Trainees pay careful attention to integrating key skills into their planning. However, trainees generally make limited use of ILT to support their teaching and several acknowledge that this is an aspect that needs further development.

12. Trainees have appropriate awareness of the needs and expectations of awarding bodies and prepare students well for assessment. They generally provide appropriate formative assessment activities, have a good awareness of how their students are progressing and keep records to monitor progress. Marked work is generally appropriately annotated, and feedback usually includes guidance on how the students might improve their work, although in some cases comments are too brief.

13. The monitoring of activities within most classes is appropriate and enables trainees to provide individual support to those students who need help. However, there is sometimes insufficient checking within lessons that key concepts have been adequately understood by each individual.

14. Most trainees are aware of the needs of their students and alert to their needs for support. One trainee was able to explain how she had met the needs of a student whose first language is not English and of another student with Asperger’s syndrome. However, a few trainees have a very restricted range of teaching and this constrains their development of guidance skills.

Quality of training

15. The courses are well designed with comprehensive tutor and student documentation. Assignments are imaginative and relevant to the post-compulsory context. They are reviewed and amended by tutors from all the partner colleges annually. There is a strong emphasis upon the progressive

development of teaching skills based upon self-critical review and linking theory with practice. At Stage 1, the emphasis is on ensuring that trainees have the skills necessary to plan, prepare and evaluate lesson. At stage 2, there is more emphasis upon theory and reflective practice. For example, trainees keep a professional development file, in which they are expected to record and evaluate "trigger" incidents that have occurred during their professional practice. A greater emphasis on research and independent study is encouraged at stage three.

16. Attention given to supporting the development of trainees' subject-specific teaching skills is satisfactory and the emphasis on this aspect of the curriculum is increasing. A subject-mentoring scheme has been piloted successfully in one of the colleges in 2006-07. This is to be extended to all colleges in the partnership in 2007-08. Whilst trainees in the pilot scheme have enjoyed good support from experienced, trained and carefully selected mentors, across the partnership as a whole the level of mentoring support is less consistent. Some mentors lack a detailed knowledge of the ITT courses and/or the subject-specific knowledge with which to help their mentees.

17. Sessions taught by teacher trainers are good. Trainers have a detailed understanding of their trainees needs and demonstrate the use of a wide range of teaching methods. At one of the colleges, learning is enriched by the extensive use of ICT. Trainees have access to stimulating on-line resources through the web and via the college's Virtual Learning Environment. Trainees use 'web blogs' to reflect on their developing practice and receive feedback from tutors. Trainees are generally enthusiastic about this as the comment below illustrates.

"Blogging has enabled me to reflect on areas I need to work on. I have found this more of a useful experience rather than a negative one. I've seen it as a useful way of noting down areas that need attention, reflecting on them and trying different ways of addressing the issues raised. I have also found the feedback on the blog really useful as it has given me ideas on how to improve my weak areas".

18. Although the integration of ICT represented good practice in the example above, the use of ICT by teacher trainers across the partnership is less developed. ICT was not routinely integrated into teaching, learning and assessment.

19. The development of trainees' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are too reliant on informal approaches. Too much emphasis is placed on trainees self-assessing their own levels of competence and seeking support to achieve the required standards. Although this approach suited many trainees, the partnership has recognised the need for more structured monitoring and follow-up support. A more systematic approach to supporting trainees has been developed that will become routine across all the courses from September 2007.

20. Trainees benefit from dedicated and helpful support from the teacher training teams. Their progress is monitored carefully through tutorials. Each trainee has an individual learning plan (ILP) that can be maintained electronically. In addition to personal details, details of current teaching and, in some cases, a record of the interview, the ILP provides a record of the trainees' reasons for undertaking the programme and what they hopes to achieve, a record of tutorial meetings, assessed coursework and teaching observations and an action plan. Links between initial teacher training and wider aspects of staff induction and professional development are generally good. ITT is well-integrated with staff development and human resources management.

21. Assessment tasks are varied, appropriate and suitably phased throughout the programme. Assignments help link theory to practice. Assessment decisions are fair and accurate. Tutors provide detailed feedback and trainees get the opportunity to resubmit their work. Observations of trainees teaching practice give detailed and effective feedback to the trainee, with an emphasis upon improving practice. Moderation of observations is achieved through meetings and discussion and some joint observations by the course team.

Management and quality assurance of provision

22. The information given to trainees about the courses is accurate and well presented. It provides detailed information on the programme, partner colleges, entry requirements, the application process, equal opportunities and funding and costs. Helpful and extremely comprehensive guidance on the latest information on fees, grants etc. is available on the university website. Links between the ITT teams and college human resources departments are good.

23. The delivery of the courses is well managed by the university. Comprehensive handbooks are provided for tutors and students that define the requirements of the programme for enrolment, admissions, teaching practice, and moderation.

24. Leadership of the partnership is strong. A strong ethos of collaboration characterises its operation. Meetings are well-attended and lively. There is a strong sense of shared direction with many opportunities for staff secondment at the university and other forms of professional development for the teacher trainers from the partner colleges.

25. Resources across the partnership are generally good. Trainees are taught by well-qualified teams of teacher trainers. The university has a dedicated web-site for tutors and trainees with an excellent range of curriculum materials, on-line journals, recent press articles and hyperlinks to

useful web sites. However, tutors and trainees on more isolated college sites have poor access to the materials.

26. The partnership is making a significant contribution to national developments, for example it is the lead partner in the West Midlands Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT). During 2006-07 it piloted the new national threshold qualification, '*preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector*' with trainees employed in the Fire Service and other work-based contexts. The university is keen to continue to extend access to ITT programmes in this way.

27. Self-critical course review, evaluation and self-assessment procedures are leading to continuing improvements across the partnership. Issues raised by trainees and external examiners are dealt with systematically. Prior to the inspection the partnership self-assessed the standards of its own provision. The judgements in their self-assessment report broadly correspond with those of inspectors. Issues raised by inspectors following phase 1 of the inspection were acted upon systematically. For example, detailed reviews of subject-mentoring and the effectiveness of other forms of workplace support for trainees were conducted and will lead to changes to the programme in 2007-08.

28. The monitoring of assessment is generally thorough. Two of the three colleges in the inspection sample had effective systems for quality assuring the observation of teaching and course work. However, procedures for moderation at the other college were over-reliant on informal processes. In recognition of the need to strengthen the quality assurance of the non-taught elements of the courses, the university has introduced a system of sampling based upon observing and interviewing a selection of individual trainees to assess the quality of training, tutoring and mentoring that they have received.

29. The partnership and individual colleges routinely analyse data, on the backgrounds of trainees. In common with FE more generally, female teachers are over-represented and those from ethnic minority groups are generally under-represented. The partnership recognises that more positive action needs to be taken to increase the proportions of ethnic minority and other under-represented groups across the partnership.

Appendix list of colleges

The following colleges were members of the HEI Partnership at the time of the inspection;

City College Coventry

Evesham and Malvern Hills College

Henley College, Coventry

North East Worcestershire College

North Warwickshire and Hinckley College

Stratford-upon-Avon College