

# Institute of Education, University of London

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A further education teacher training  
inspection report  
2007/08

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 (FE) teachers*, both published in September 2004.

2. It was conducted in two phases by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), supported by specialist Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated full-time pre-service and part-time in-service provision. They focused on the quality of training and management and quality assurance during the first phase, which took place in November 2007. During the second phase, inspectors concentrated on 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 2008.

## Background

3. The Institute of Education (the Institute) offers two new Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programmes. One is a one-year full-time pre-service generic course with 62 trainees. The other is for teachers of adult literacy or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), or for those wishing to become language or literacy professionals in the further education sector. This new ESOL/adult literacy programme is run in partnership with Hackney Community College, City and Islington College and Tower Hamlets College. The first year is pre-service. Trainees have placements in a relevant context and attend one of the three partner colleges on one day per week. The second year is part-time in-service and delivered at the Institute. There are 34 trainees in the first year and 35 in the second year. Both new programmes are at masters' level, in line with the Institute's secondary and primary PGCE courses.

4. The second year of the existing two-year in-service generic course, developed in 2002, has 78 trainees and is being replaced in autumn 2008 with a part-time version of the new generic course, already in operation for pre-service trainees. At the time of the inspection, three other courses remain but are in their last year of operation. These are an adult and community education programme, run in collaboration with City Lit, a pathway for performing arts and a contemporary music course linked to one specialist organisation.

## Effectiveness of provision

5. The overall quality of provision is very good (grade 1). The Institute prepares trainees very well for teaching in post-compulsory education and training. New programmes, launched in 2007/08, successfully build on the Institute's considerable experience, expertise and resources in education and teacher training.

The Institute attracts trainees from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures. On all programmes, trainees make good progress as practitioners, informed by well-developed reflective skills and exemplary feedback and support from tutors. Trainees on the ESOL/adult literacy course, in particular, develop excellent knowledge and skills in the teaching of their subject. Partnerships with colleges are strong and consequently the large majority of trainees on generic programmes benefit from appropriate placements and good subject-specific mentoring. The Institute's mostly robust quality assurance arrangements, though, occasionally fail to identify where this is not the case.

## Key strengths

Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- trainees' strong commitment to raising the achievement of their students
- excellent development of trainees' academic and reflective skills
- good progress made by both pre-service and in-service trainees
- trainees' good planning and teaching skills
- well-designed new programmes
- exemplary academic and pastoral support for trainees
- detailed, clear and constructive feedback given to trainees
- rigorous selection procedures, with high expectations of trainees
- high quality resources to support training
- strong partnership arrangements.

## Areas for attention

The partnership should address:

- insufficiently rigorous quality assurance of placements and mentoring on generic programmes.

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

## Achievements of trainees

6. Trainees are conscientious, professional and highly self-motivated. Most are employed or placed in FE colleges in London, and they show a good understanding of the context in which they work. They value the diverse range of backgrounds of their students. Through their planning, teaching and evaluations, they demonstrate a genuine commitment to raising the aspirations and achievements of their students.

7. Trainees are highly self-critical and receptive to feedback from others. They develop and refine their reflective skills throughout their course, translating insightful evaluations into pragmatic actions. They draw very effectively on sessions at the Institute and on their reading, to inform and evaluate their teaching.

8. In-service trainees, who are employed as teachers, understand the impact of government policy on their organisations. They are very familiar with the wide range of duties and responsibilities associated with being a teacher in further education. Those on the pre-service programme are well informed about policy issues through assignments and discussions at the Institute. On placement, though, a minority of pre-service trainees focus almost exclusively on their teaching and fail to get sufficiently involved in other important aspects of college life, such as tutorials, additional learning support and subject-team meetings.

9. Trainees make good progress, regardless of their background, prior experience or educational qualifications. Pre-service trainees reach a level of teaching competence, in line with national qualification requirements, that is at least satisfactory and often better. Typically, trainees on in-service programmes are good teachers.

10. Trainees demonstrate good planning and teaching skills. They discuss syllabus requirements with confidence, produce or adapt schemes of work, prepare lesson plans with clear aims and objectives and select appropriate teaching and assessment methods. They promote equality of opportunity well. Experienced or not, trainees extend their repertoire of teaching skills while on their course. They are at ease with whole-class discussions, small group or paired activities and the use of information and learning technology. Trainees have grasped the importance of focusing on what students need to learn. They effectively embed literacy and, to a lesser extent, numeracy, in their teaching.

11. In relation to the subject(s) they teach, trainees are well qualified, both in terms of academic qualifications and, where relevant, vocational experience. Throughout their course, trainees on the ESOL/adult literacy programme continue to debate and develop their subject pedagogy. The extent to which those on generic programmes develop further expertise in the teaching of their specialist area is more variable, but is generally good.

12. Trainees' assessment practice is good. In lessons, trainees check their students' understanding and progress well, using a variety of different approaches. Those teaching languages are particularly good at correcting pronunciation in a

positive way. Trainees know their students well and, in most cases, use initial assessment tests or other information, such as biographies, to understand their students' prior attainment, needs and potential barriers to learning. The extent to which this feeds systematically into their classroom practice, though, is variable. Trainees routinely produce different tasks or worksheets for specific individuals or groups within their lessons. Trainees are adept at preparing students for examinations, setting and marking homework and providing students with constructive feedback. They keep good records and are able to report on students' progress.

13. Trainees support their students well, mirroring the kind of personal support they receive from Institute tutors. Trainees have a clear understanding of access and inclusion and most are knowledgeable about additional learning support.

## Quality of training

14. A number of factors contribute to the high quality of the training. These include well-designed programmes, high calibre trainees, appropriate placements, good mentoring, excellent resources, outstanding support from tutors and effective taught sessions at the Institute. In addition, trainees benefit from good initial assessment and very detailed and helpful feedback on their written work and practical teaching.

15. Courses meet Standards Verification UK national qualification requirements. The two new programmes – the full-time generic PGCE and the ESOL/adult literacy course – are very well designed. They are highly effective in providing coherence between taught elements and experience in the workplace. The ESOL/adult literacy course represents an innovative approach to training new and practising teachers in these specialist curriculum areas. With the first year of the programme delivered in the three partner colleges, the course is very successful in securing trainees' progress in teaching and assessing all levels of the adult national literacy and ESOL core curricula.

16. Trainees on all programmes are highly motivated. They enjoy learning, are stimulated by the Institute's environment and ethos, prepare well for sessions and read widely. The training encourages them to reflect critically on their learning, progress and teaching. At work, or on placement, they teach across an appropriate range of courses and they are well supported, with a few exceptions, by mentors and colleagues. At the Institute, trainees benefit from excellent resources, including clearly written handbooks, the impressive library, additional seminars and lectures and the expertise of Institute staff.

17. Institute tutors provide trainees with exemplary individual academic and pastoral support. Trainees appreciate the extensive informal support they receive, as well as the high quality individual tutorials that focus equally well on academic, practical and placement issues.

18. Taught sessions at the Institute are effective in encouraging trainees to link theory to the workplace. This aspect of training is particularly well planned and very skilfully delivered on the ESOL/adult literacy programme, where trainees often study and debate the best way to teach a topic in one session and then teach it 'for real' to their own students shortly afterwards. On all programmes, teacher trainers are good at harnessing trainees' enthusiasm to manage stimulating discussions on both academic and practical teaching matters. In these debates, a high level of attention is paid to issues relating to inclusion, equality and diversity. The best features of training on the generic programmes include: seminars giving trainees opportunities to explore ideas from lectures in depth, relating them to their own placement; the opportunity in subject groups to reflect on teaching techniques focused on their own subjects, and lectures given by recognised experts on key aspects of education, ranging from pedagogy to policy.

19. Good systems are in place to identify trainees' literacy, numeracy and information technology skills and to provide appropriate support, where necessary. In some cases, trainees update their skills at their workplace. Those who attend additional sessions on academic writing at the Institute find it very helpful. Support for trainees with disabilities is very good. Trainees with dyslexia or hearing impairments benefit from additional resources and a high level of individual support.

20. The quality of mentoring is good. Almost all trainees have mentors who provide subject-specific advice and guidance and most trainees also benefit from working with supportive colleagues. A few trainees, though, work in isolation or in a department that has little, or no, good practice in their particular subject or vocational area. To address inconsistencies in subject-specific development, generic programmes include 'cluster groups', assignments that allow trainees to focus on their specialism and subject-based discussions through the virtual learning environment. However, as acknowledged in the Institute's self-assessment report, this aspect of the training remains an area for further development.

21. Information gathered at the initial assessment stage leads to an effective action planning process. Great care is taken both in group sessions and in individual tutorials, to check on trainees' progress in all aspects of their training, and tutors know their tutees very well. Course leaders maintain a good overview of trainees' progress.

22. Trainees' work is assessed rigorously and trainees benefit from substantial, clear and constructive written feedback, both on their assignments and following lesson observations. The detailed feedback makes it clear exactly what trainees need to do to improve and usually also provides good ideas for extending trainees' knowledge and understanding by suggesting further reading. This high quality feedback, coupled with trainees' well-developed reflective skills, is a key factor in ensuring that trainees' make good progress.

## Management and quality assurance of provision

23. Procedures for selecting and recruiting trainees are rigorous and fair. On all programmes, selection is based on transparent and equitable procedures, within the context of the Institute's high expectations of the quality of trainees. On the full-time pre-service course, there are around four times as many applicants as there are places. Trainees' needs are identified both at interview and through a comprehensive induction period. All courses recruit trainees from a variety of backgrounds and cultures and around 40% of trainees are from minority ethnic groups. Many of the trainees on the ESOL/adult literacy programme were attracted to the course through a project to recruit more black and minority ethnic trainees.

24. Leadership has been strong at a time of transition. Against a background of internal re-structuring at the Institute and the external pressure of reforms in post-compulsory teacher training, two new programmes have been successfully launched and high standards have been maintained on legacy courses. All programmes are well managed. Those involved are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Resources are well deployed and Institute staff and trainees benefit from good administrative and technical support.

25. Systems to evaluate and improve provision are mostly highly effective. Significant resources, procedures and activities are dedicated to quality assurance and enhancement. Moderation, for example, is thorough and ensures that assessment of both written work and practical teaching is accurate, consistent and fair. Trainees regularly voice their views through representation on committees and completion of questionnaires. Feedback on earlier courses has informed the development of the new programmes. The monitoring of policies on equality of opportunity and promotion of good race relations is very effective.

26. The quality assurance arrangements on generic programmes, though, are not always sufficiently rigorous to ensure that every trainee has the best possible placement and mentor. Despite the close links between tutors, mentors and trainees, a few trainees still find themselves without a subject-specialist mentor, or with a mentor who has not been trained or, on the pre-service programme, does not provide them with access to the full range of responsibilities involved in being a teacher.

27. Partnerships are strong. Formal partnership agreements set out expectations of both the Institute and partner colleges and these are being further refined to make roles and responsibilities more explicit. Trainees, tutors and mentors on the ESOL/adult literacy programme benefit from close working relations between the three partner colleges and the Institute. Tutors from City Lit have been central to the success of the adult and community education programme. On the new pre-service course, Institute tutors maintain close links with college coordinators and mentors and each Institute tutor has responsibility for a group of colleges. Institute staff are working closely with a small group of London colleges on launching the new part-time in-service programme in autumn 2008.