



Sheffield Hallam University

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

What are the benefits to schools of involvement with initial teacher training?

An investigation of what Ofsted reports, and a sample of Beacon, Training and Specialist schools say about schools' involvement with ITT in the Yorkshire and Humberside region

Project conducted by members of Sheffield Hallam University School of Education for the Teacher Training Agency

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Background to the Project

Higher Education providers of ITT in the Yorkshire and Humberside region have established excellent partnership arrangements with many secondary and primary schools in the area and together these schools and HEIs provide a high level of school experience for students training to be teachers. However there is often some difficulty in finding enough places for students in schools. It was noted by the providers that this difficulty was sometimes exacerbated by schools declining to have students in the run up to, and during, Ofsted inspections.

There are likely to be a number of reasons for this reaction. It must be acknowledged that when an inspection is imminent schools are likely to feel the need to focus their limited energies on what they see as their core responsibilities and those on which they believe they will be judged. They may feel that Ofsted inspectors will not see ITT provision as a core activity.

The Steering Committee of the regional partnership felt that it would be useful to identify what schools who were heavily involved in ITT, namely Training Schools and certain Beacon and Specialist schools, saw as the general benefits to schools of providing ITT and in addition to find out how Ofsted inspectors viewed the provision of ITT in relation to the general quality of the school. In doing so it was hoped that the findings might provide a basis for persuading schools not presently in partnership to join and for those who were in partnership not to decline a placement on the grounds of having an inspection.

Research objectives

The project was set two objectives. The first was to access all Ofsted reports in the Y&H region between Sept 2001 and March 2003 and to note any comments made about ITT in those reports, to collate and analyse them and to draw out themes relevant to ITT providers and their partnerships; in particular to record what, if any, advantages Ofsted identifies as accruing to schools from their involvement in ITT. The second was to gather data from a small number of Beacon Schools, Training Schools and Specialist Schools about the benefits of involvement with ITT from their perspective.

Method

The project team accessed from the Ofsted website all reports in the relevant time frame from mainstream primary and secondary schools (not special) in the 15 LEAs of the Yorkshire and Humberside region. We ran a 'find' on line using keywords. When a relevant comment was found it was copied and pasted into a word file. This was used as the basis for drawing out themes and examining frequencies.

In order to get a sample of Beacon, Training and Specialist schools within the region we accessed the DfES website where all Beacon and Training schools are listed regionally with contact numbers. From these we chose 16 schools to contact. These included both primary and secondary, and Beacon, Training and Specialist schools.

All of the Beacon schools were listed on the DfES website as having special responsibility for the initial training of teachers and the Training schools gain their status by being recognized as having special expertise in initial teacher training. This group of schools has considerable experience in the provision of ITT in partnership in collaboration with other organizations and would therefore be well aware of any benefits to their school of being involved with ITT.

Ofsted inspections and ITT

In order to place the comments found in reports in context we need to understand what guidance is given to inspectors on reporting about the school's involvement in initial teacher training. The guidance in place for the relevant period of September 2000 to March 2003 was that contained in the *Handbook for Inspecting Secondary Schools* (Ofsted 1999) and the *Handbook for Inspecting Primary and Nursery Schools* (Ofsted 1999). The guidance in these documents was effective from January 2000. This was superseded by new guidance which took effect from September 2003 and which therefore had no effect on the reports sampled.

In both the Secondary and Primary handbooks the only direct reference to the ITT activity of schools is in guidance on how to judge the criterion,

'Is there effective induction of staff new to the school and is the school, or has it the potential to be, an effective provider of initial teacher training?'

(p94 HISS and p101 HIPNS)

In that section the guidance states that,

'A school could be an effective provider of initial teacher training when:

- *It has professional development systems in place that are a good influence on standards of teaching;'*
- *It is judged to be effective overall and to have improved since its previous inspection;*
- *It has a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed*
- *There is strong subject leadership and good standards of teaching. (Secondary Handbook only)*

This shows the assumed link with the quality of support given for the development and further training of newly qualified teachers and a recognition that the provision of good quality ITT in school is symptomatic of and associated with high standards and general good quality of leadership and management. However the scant reference lends some credence to the view that Ofsted has not to date seen the provision of ITT as a core activity of a school. However the recent introduction of Training Schools, and the requirement of some Beacon and Specialist schools that they involve themselves in ITT has ensured that ITT is part of their core business and Ofsted inspection is expected to acknowledge this and include it in their inspections of schools so designated, but not for 'ordinary' schools.

In the light of this guidance the project staff looked at how inspectors viewed ITT, what links seemed to be made with other criteria and where in the reports comments were made.

Results of the trawl of Ofsted reports

Frequency of reporting

Table 1 records the results of the trawl of Ofsted reports. This shows that 597 reports of both primary and secondary schools were accessed of which 23% (139) made reference of some kind to ITT provision by the school.

When primary and secondary schools are looked at separately we see that reference to ITT is made in a greater proportion of Secondary inspection reports (36%) than primary

inspection reports (21%).

The proportion of reports in which reference was made varies considerably between LEAs with the smallest proportion being Doncaster with only 5% and the largest proportion being East Riding with 37%.

We do not know whether the schools whose reports make no mention of ITT were in fact a provider but this was not commented on by inspectors, or whether they were not in fact providers.

Table 1 Frequency of references to ITT provision found in Ofsted reports for Yorkshire and Humberside between Sept 2001 and March 2003

LEA	All Eligible Schools	Referring to ITT	Primary	Referring to ITT	%	Secondary	Referring to ITT	%	% Referring to ITT (Prim & Sec)
Barnsley	35	14	28	10		7	4		40
Sheffield	48	14	40	7		8	7		29
Rotherham	41	10	35	8		6	2		24
Doncaster	37	2	31	2		6	0		5
York	15	5	15	5		0			33
Hull	27	5	23	4		4	1		19
E. Riding	30	11	25	10		5	1		37
N. Yorks	107	27	91	17		16	10		25
Bradford	32	6	23	6		9	0		19
Calderdale	27	2	23	2		4	0		7
Wakefield	34	9	30	6		4	3		26
Kirklees	48	9	40	7		8	2		19
N. Lincs	18	4	14	2		4	2		22
NE. Lincs	13	3	11	3		2	0		23
Leeds	85	18	72	15		13	3		21
Totals	597	139	501	104	21%	96	35	36%	23%

Categorisation of the comments made

We looked at all of the comments made and put similar comments together. The natural groupings this made were then looked at to see if we could identify them as categories. This meant that some initial groups were brought together under one category because the things they had in common were more interesting than their differences. This is an exercise requiring some judgement and a different set of categories might make equal sense but we believe the set of final categories faithfully reflects the range of comments found.

Table 2 shows the eight categories and the proportion of all comments under each category.

Table 2:

Categories of comments made in Ofsted reports on primary and secondary schools in Yorkshire and Humberside between September 2001 and March 2003

Category	Frequency
Good relations with partner institutions	33
Generally positive and evidence of high quality	33
Evidence of /connection with support for new teachers	27
Provides new ideas for staff	10
Provides an extra pair of hands	10
Enhances the range and quality of pupil learning	7
Develops staff skills in monitoring teaching quality/ facilitates reflection	7
Explicit judgement as a good provider	3
Being a training school gave extra money to the school	3
Not having students seen as connected to other problems	5
Not categorised	1

The references were overwhelmingly positive. By this we mean that ITT provision was associated in these Ofsted reports with other indications of high standards of management and professional practice. No negative comment was found about a school being involved in ITT. However it was also the case that while there were many examples of inspectors singling out ITT provision for special mention many comments were bland or noted in passing.

In order to explain what each category means we give below examples of the kinds of comments within that category.

Good relations with partner institutions

The official guidance does not make an explicit connection between ITT and links with other institutions but clearly some inspectors felt that this was an important point to note. As we shall see this was a theme in the conversations with the staff in Beacon, Training and Specialist schools.

The first comment comes at the end of this first quotation which is given in full to give the context to exemplify the 'in passing' nature of many comments.

The school has good links with partner institutions and outside agencies. There are effective transfer arrangements with the local comprehensive school, whose staff visit the school and involve pupils in educational initiatives. For example, a mathematics marathon and technology days have been organised in the comprehensive school in the past and its staff have meetings with parents prior to the transfer of pupils at the end of Year 6. There are good links with a local 'beacon' primary school and arrangements are made for newly-qualified teachers to visit this school to see examples of good practice. These links are having a positive effect on pupils' attainment and progress. There are also good links with the Sheffield Hallam University Teacher Training Institution. The school provides for initial teacher training for the university's students.

The school has good links with teacher training consortia and has the capacity to train teachers effectively.

Initial Teacher Training links with Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam and Leeds Universities are productive. A very good professional partnership exists with thirty-five students trained at the college last academic year.

Generally positive and evidence of high quality

As noted earlier the guidance in the Handbooks for Inspecting Schools explicitly links provision of ITT with other indications of the quality of management. This first quotation appears in the Summary at the beginning of the report which requires inspectors to list the main strengths and weaknesses of the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Strengths:

- *. The good leadership of the headteacher.*
- *. Priorities are well linked to the aims of the school in improvement planning.*
- *. Good financial management.*
- *. A good degree of delegated responsibility within the senior management team.*
- *. Good financial management.*
- *. Good provision for the induction of new staff and initial training of teachers.*

Student teachers who attend the college as part of their training are given every opportunity to extend their experience and observe good practice.

Evidence of/connection with support for new teachers

The high incidence of comments in this category reflects the explicit guidance in the Handbooks.

There are good systems in place to support newly appointed staff and the school has the potential to support initial teacher training effectively.

Very good arrangements are in place for the induction of newly qualified teachers, and teachers new to the school. There is very good mentoring, departmental and senior management support. The school is a very good provider for initial teacher training.

Provides new ideas for staff

There has been some helpful development of teaching through the department's involvement with Initial Teacher Training and team-teaching.

The school maintains regular and beneficial links with local schools and teacher training colleges enabling students to experience teaching practice. This has benefits for both parties enabling the discussion of new ideas and techniques whilst learning from good examples of teaching and styles of presentation used within the school.

It also welcomes students and trainee nursery nurses from local colleges who bring fresh ideas into school.

Enhances the range and quality of pupil learning

Teachers in training and students from a number of local institutions are welcomed into school each year. These visitors provide pupils with additional learning and social opportunities and expose them to a range of teaching skills.

The school provides work placements for nursery nurse students and teacher training. This brings more adults into classes so that pupils have more opportunities to interact, extend their communication skills and have support with their work. It is also helping to enhance the school's reputation as visitors experience the calm, pleasant and productive atmosphere.

There are good links with other schools and colleges and these promote pupils' learning. Two teacher-training students usually carry out some of their training in the school each year. A particular benefit last year was that a student taught Year 5 pupils how to use presentation software that they then applied to their work in another subject.

Develops staff skills in monitoring teaching quality/ facilitates reflection

The school's recent decision to seek acceptance as a Training School was prompted in part by the opportunities which would be afforded to the permanent teaching staff to reflect upon their own practice and to grow professionally through the discipline of training and supporting others. Although a relatively recent development, the Training School initiative has had a promising start.

Since the previous inspection, the school has gained Training School status for the initial training of teachers...The school's work as a training school is developing teachers' ability to look critically at their own teaching.

The training and support of initial teacher training students have increased the expertise of senior staff responsible for monitoring. As a result, the school is aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and is working towards improvements.

Not having students seen as connected to other problems

Because of the school's uncertainty about future leadership it is not at present a suitable place for initial teacher training.

The school has benefited from links with local business and industry, but this is not always capitalised upon. For example, a mini enterprise scheme was organised and run in partnership with the local 'Wildwood' charity. The aim was to raise money to improve the outside environment. But this innovative project has not been continued into this year, nor did all pupils in the participating group benefit from the experience of running their own company. Regular sporting events take place with other local primary schools. There is a well-established programme with the local secondary school that ensures the adequate transfer of information about pupils at the end of Year 6. The school accepts pupils on work experience. Currently there are no arrangements for the school to accept trainee teachers or students from further education colleges.

Talking to Beacon, Training and Specialist schools

Who we spoke to and what we asked them

We contacted sixteen schools and were able to interview members of staff from ten of the schools. These were:

1. A Secondary Specialist and Beacon School in Sheffield
2. A Secondary Beacon School in Newcastle
3. A Secondary Training and Specialist School in Rotherham
4. A Secondary Beacon School in Sheffield
5. A Beacon Primary School in Keighley
6. A Primary Training School in Sheffield
7. A Beacon Primary School in Barnsley
8. A Beacon Primary School in Rotherham

9. A Beacon Primary School in Bradford

10. A Beacon Primary in Rotherham

We interviewed the Headteacher, a Deputy or the senior member of staff with special responsibility for teacher training in the school. We asked what kind of provision they were involved with, what benefits they found from being involved and what drawbacks. The interviews lasted for between ten and twenty minutes.

The benefits as perceived by the schools

It helps the professional development of staff in the school:

This was a strong theme in the conversations with almost every contact making reference to it in some way. A range of opportunities for development were identified. One was development of leadership skills. The mentoring of students requires the deployment of coaching skills such as lesson observation and feedback and that this means that young or inexperienced staff can practise skills seen as important for future leadership roles.

Another was the way that taking responsibility for the education of a new teacher necessarily meant a re-evaluation of their own practice. This re-evaluation occurs for a number of reasons. Firstly in watching and judging a student's practice we have to articulate more clearly what we mean by good and bad practice and what will lead to better and what to worse practice. Making explicit the tacit understanding we have built up over years as experienced professionals enables us to celebrate anew what we more clearly recognize as exemplary and to think about changing what we see as less good.

Another way in which development occurs is through the sharing of materials, and the new ideas, and fresh approaches brought by the students. This enhances the craft knowledge of teachers.

The opportunity to talk with other teachers/professionals in other schools and institutions was identified as important. It is highly developmental to engage with peers about a focused educational issue. Being involved in ITT meant that some teachers in these schools served on cross school/cross institutional groups which

debated criteria of good practice, what the education of teachers entailed and what beginning teachers most needed. Such dialogue gave a lively and focused opportunity to articulate principles, values and ideas for putting things into practice and was richly developmental.

Finally the links that were made with Higher Education Institutions often led to different kinds of academic opportunities or networking that was of benefit to the schools. For example, some had become engaged in interesting research projects, others had gained access to research findings and others had found the links had eased contacts for other purposes such as enrolling for higher degrees.

The school and the children can gain?

The children benefit from the professional development of their teachers and they also gain by having a new face, new ideas, and fresh approaches. When the student is good (and all schools said that it was quite rare to get a very poor student) this can give an extra pair of hands in the classroom. They also benefit in that teachers involved in ITT have to exemplify the highest professional standards.

A common theme was the link with recruitment. Some secondary schools who feel themselves in a highly competitive market for newly qualified teachers in shortage subjects saw the opportunity to demonstrate to students that they were a school worth considering for their first post. As well as involvement with ITT acting as a shop window to the students the school also gained good knowledge of the quality of potential applicants.

Students also bring extra money, although some schools felt that this was not enough to cover the extra work. The resources going to Training Schools however seemed to be very worthwhile and had enabled a great deal of activity to take place to the benefit of all.

The fact of having to induct students into the school and inform them of policies and procedures made some schools get their 'paperwork up to scratch'. As a result the policies and procedures of the school that any new member of the staff would need to know was collected and organized. This was an example of how involvement with ITT enhanced the quality of support for new members of staff.

We have already noted the developmental benefits of working in cross-school groups. It is worth reiterating the general benefit to school of involvement as it takes the focus of staff beyond the school walls. In addition two schools mentioned that involvement with ITT offered a role, or roles, within school that had re-motivated long serving staff who had wanted a new interest.

The link with Higher Education Institutions needs to be re-iterated in this context. The links were seen to benefit the pupils of secondary schools as it made it more possible to establish some continuity with, and introduction to, higher education.

Drawbacks

Schools were asked what they saw as possible drawbacks to being involved. The most common response was the difficulties associated with less successful students. They commented on the time needed to be invested in such students and the need to protect the school staff and the children from problems. They also said that, as already noted, that only a very small proportion of students need such help.

Other comments were that the Graduate Teacher Programme took more paperwork than was necessary and that the money for taking students was not generous.

Concluding comments

Ofsted inspectors see the provision of ITT as a positive aspect of a school's activity and, where it is done well, as indicative of good practice as well as high quality management and leadership. Only a minority of inspection teams saw fit to comment on this aspect. It is likely that were the Inspection Handbooks to consider ITT provision as a core activity of most schools, and not just Training Schools or those Beacon and Specialists with special responsibility, this would encourage schools to become, and to stay, involved.

Those schools that have considerable experience of being involved with ITT identified many benefits and very few drawbacks.

References

Ofsted (1999) *Handbook for Inspecting Primary and Nursery Schools* London: The Stationery Office

Ofsted (1999) *Handbook for Inspecting Secondary Schools* London: The Stationery Office