Symposium Title: 'ITE, special educational needs and schools-led training: where is inclusive education going?'

Peter Hick¹, Joseph Mintz², Hazel Lawson³, Brahm Norwich³
¹Education & Social Research Institute, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK, ²UCL Institute of Education, London, UK, ³Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter, Exeter, UK

Convenor: Peter Hick, Principal Lecturer in Inclusive Education, Education & Social Research Institute, Manchester Metropolitan University
Discussant: Brahm Norwich, Professor of Educational Psychology & SEN, Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter

The focus for research on teaching pupils who may be identified as having special educational needs or disabilities, has in recent years shifted from assumed specialist pedagogies relating to particular categories, towards broader understandings of inclusive pedagogy and practice (Black-Hawkins and Florian, 2012). In the UK, specialist ITE for SEND ceased at the end of the 1980s; since then a range of patterns of provision have emerged. Some ITE programmes offer an option for specialism in SEND, which is largely separate or additional to the rest of the ITE curriculum. Other providers have moved further towards embedding input on SEND across programmes, and draw more explicitly on notions of inclusive pedagogy (Florian and Linklater, 2010; Lawson, Norwich and Nash, 2013). In addition, recent initiatives by the TDA and NCTL to promote special school placements for student teachers have raised interest in the impact of special school experience.

However, despite the fact that universities and schools have long established partnerships in this area, the rapid expansion of schools-led ITE is already disrupting models of university-led provision, and poses a number of challenges. There has been little research exploring the impact of the growth of schools-led ITE on provision for SEND, and a number of key questions emerge:

1) How do schools-led and university-led ITE address issues of SEND? What are the differences and similarities? How are schools and universities collaborating to develop partnerships in this area?

2) How does the experience of a special school placement influence the development of student teachers?

3) What is the balance between separate ‘specialist’ input in university-led and in schools-led programmes, compared with initiatives to embed input on SEND across the ITE curriculum?

4) How far does ITE reflect notions of specialist or of inclusive/general pedagogies in schools-led and in university-led programmes?

This symposium seeks to address these questions by bringing together researchers who are engaging with the issues from varied perspectives.

Mintz will report on a DfE funded pilot in which a cohort of 40 ITE students followed a specialist SEND two year route, including a special school placement experience. The evaluation of the pilot involved pre and post questionnaires, supplemented by a semi-structured interview; both instruments focusing on the development in attitudes, beliefs and knowledge about SEND and inclusion. Key data on the impact of special school experience on inclusive practice in mainstream will be presented.

Lawson will present policy analysis work in relation to a general-specialist teaching continuum. Aspects of the national SEND, initial teacher education and schooling policy and provision landscapes in England, such as the diversification of routes into teaching, diversification of schools, increasing complexity of pupil need, and the SEND Code of Practice will be examined in relation to their push-pull influences on this continuum and their implications for teacher education in the area of SEND.
Hick will report on a study of teacher educators’ understandings of inclusive pedagogy, comparing approaches found within school and university settings. Through semi-structured interviews with teacher educators, the project aims to illuminate the following questions: How do teacher educators, including colleagues in Universities and in schools, understand, articulate and interpret notions of inclusive pedagogy within their practice? What do they perceive to be the constraints and affordances of their position in developing and embedding inclusive pedagogy within their practice?


Papers:

1. Lawson 'ITE and special educational needs - policy landscapes and impetuses'
2. Mintz 'The impact of special school experience on inclusive practice'
3. Hick 'Where is inclusive pedagogy going in ITE?'
   Norwich 'Discussant'