'But I don’t want to be a teacher': Workbased Learning in Education Studies

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This study focuses on undergraduate education students' conceptualisation of their work-based placement experiences and perceptions of their professional identity formation. The respondents are second year students enrolled in a three year course in Education Studies and undertaking the core module which includes a compulsory placement of one day per week for eight to ten weeks in the Spring term, 2015.

Whilst the benefits of classroom experience for teacher training is well charted (Gilardi & Lozza, 2009; Lamote & Engels, 2010) there are growing numbers of students taking Education Studies who do not wish to seek employment as classroom teachers. The literature on workbased learning suggests there are positive links between experiential and work-based learning and vocational identity and career decision self-efficacy (Esters & Retallick, 2013). In relation to initial teacher training, this means that students can test their vocational aspirations in terms of school type, Key Stage and year group. Understandings of the benefits of placements for education students seeking alternative career routes is less clear.

Drawing on literature from the fields of student experience and Higher Education, professional identity formation, work-based and vocational learning, this study compares the placement experiences of students in school-based and non-school settings and considers how far the placement experience supports the professional formation of both groups.

Respondents' expectations of the placement, current skills and aptitudes appropriate for the workplace, and perceptions of potential personal, professional and career choice/development will be collected via initial questionnaires sent to all students on the core module at the beginning of the Spring term. Interviews and focus groups with both groups of participants during and after the placement will identify how far these expectations, skills and opportunities are matched and/or developed by the placement experience itself.

It is anticipated that the knowledge generated will be 'knowledge for action' (Wallace and Paulson, 2003) both for the students and the Department of Education Studies such that the Education Studies programme can be better able to meet the learning and professional requirements of all students engaged with programme at a time when student satisfaction and employability are key drivers of Higher Education courses.