FRAGMENTATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION - AN EXAMINATION OF CURRENT POLICY AND PRACTICE IN ENGLAND

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This small-scale pilot study examines the impact of recent changes within initial teacher education (ITE), following the rapid growth of School Direct. The impact of this initiative has yet to be fully understood or experienced, but there is a clear sense that ITE provision is increasingly being fragmented. Given the importance attached to teachers and recruiting new teachers, this initiative need to be examined. Howson and Waterman (2013) and Howson (2013) argue that the turbulence created by current government reforms is in danger of de-stabilising ITE.

The study has two broad aims: to examine the policy context in which these developments are taking place, and to explore the process of change from different stakeholders.

The following research questions will be explored:
1. Why was School Direct introduced as a route for ITE?
2. Why did different stakeholders become involved with School Direct?
3. To what extent has the move towards School Direct been a positive one?

Question 1 is addressed through a documentary analysis of policy. Questions 2 and 3 are addressed through semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders. These are two HE staff involved with School Direct, four staff from schools with responsibility for School Direct, and six trainee teachers on a School Direct programme.

The sample is purposive, rather than representative to ensure specific views are examined, including those in primary and secondary phases. The interviews will be coded inductively.

This study draws upon existing theories about partnership and collaboration in ITE, and is placed in a neoliberal/neocconservative policy context where the drive is towards more school involvement, marketization of ITE and a conceptualisation of teaching as a practical activity best learned ‘on the job’.

Theories about professional identity will also inform the research, as the roles of schools and HEIs, and the work of individuals within those institutions are re-examined.

The study will provide insights into a major shift in government policy towards ITE. School Direct has experienced a major expansion in the allocation of numbers for this route into ITE, but it as yet relatively new and untested. As such there are challenges in its implementation which this study will examine, but School Direct also represents a significant shift in attitude towards ITE and poses new questions about how teachers should be trained and who should be involved in training teachers.