Research has repeatedly shown that the most economically disadvantaged pupils have the poorest educational outcomes (e.g. Marshall, 2002). However, existing research on teachers' perceptions and attitudes to social class and poverty suggest that many educators lack a critical perspective on contexts of poverty and locate the causes of underachievement within the pupil or the home rather than within institutional structures and practices (e.g. Gazeley and Dunn, 2007; Lupton and Thrupp, 2013).

Research in the US (Cox, Watts and Horton, 2012) has indicated that student teachers attitudes to poverty is often deeply ingrained, with younger students being noticeably less receptive to interventions aimed at raising consciousness and empathy for impoverished pupils than those with more varied life experiences. However, in the UK, very little research addresses the issue of student teachers' perceptions of poverty and the role of teacher educators in addressing issues of poverty in the classroom.

This paper reports on the findings from a research study at the Oxford University Department of Education (OUDE) covering the two academic years 2012-13 and 2013-14. The aim of the research study was: to explore secondary school student teachers' developing understandings of and attitudes towards poverty and attainment; and, to develop our understanding of the ways programmes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) address student teachers' perceptions of poverty. Three key research questions framed the study:

- How do programmes of ITE frame and seek to address the link between poverty and poorer educational outcomes?
- How do student teachers understand and empathise with the social, cultural, and emotional contexts of children living in poverty?
- To what extent do student teachers’ understandings of and attitudes towards poverty change/develop during their programme of study?

Data include whole course surveys, focus group discussions, and individual interviews. Theoretically, the paper draws on McIntyre's concept of practical theorising (1995) to describe student teachers' attempts to question theories of poverty and educational achievement within the contexts of their placement schools.

This conference paper has three main aims: firstly, to report the extended findings from this study; secondly, to explore the next directions for the research project; and, finally, to prompt a discussion about the future of ITE programmes in ensuring that the new generation of teachers are fully prepared to meet the needs of all pupils, including those living in poverty.