

**Self-evaluation Framework for Initial  
Teacher Education Symposium  
Report of the Symposium**

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## Executive Summary

### *The Report*

The purpose of this reflective report is to identify issues and questions for the ITE providers in taking forward the Self-Evaluation Framework for ITE (SEFITE).

### *Quality assurance in initial teacher education: accountability vs development*

The nature of quality and the processes of quality assurance:

- Existing comprehensive quality assurance processes in higher education through Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)
- The correlation between quality assurance processes and the quality of ITE provision
- ITE building internal capacity for self-evaluation and review
- The correlation between QA systems and processes and the overall quality of teacher education
- Longer term impact on school education and the experiences and conditions of learning for school pupils.

The relationship between two quality assurance systems

- QAA processes are comprehensive covering teaching and learning in tertiary education
- The SEFITE positions ITE providers in the wider Scottish education system
- Quality assurance as a shared responsibility within and across organisations through partnerships.
- Limited opportunities to build relationships and develop common understandings of student development

### *Student Experiences of Partnership*

- Teacher educators building partnership relationships to foster the professional growth of student teachers
- Partnership as a 'work-in-progress' and therefore a major concern and activity for teacher education
- Concerns about students' experiences in practicum: very positive or negative
- Utilising and building on student teachers' practicum experiences in university classrooms.

### *Student Teachers' Experiences of the Curriculum*

- The extent of content and curriculum coverage to be included in ITE programmes
- Practical challenges of time constraints, programme structures and internal expectations
- The task of building knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable student and beginning teachers to extend their knowledge and skill throughout their careers.

### *Developing Effective Pedagogy*

- The pedagogic practices of teacher educators to build and enhance the pedagogic practice of student teachers
- The development of innovative pedagogic practices as teacher educators

- The importance of building relationships, the 'professional noticing' and 'professional notating' of children's learning.

#### *Building practice-based learning in ITE*

- Initial teacher education is a particularly potent period of professional growth.
- Integration of the various facets of the university-based initial teacher education.
- Barriers in transferring content knowledge and pedagogy content knowledge gained in the university classroom to the classroom in school
- 'Practice-based learning' as a central construct

#### *Owning and using quality assurance*

- Balancing accountability with developmental processes through quality assurance
- The practice of collaborative peer review
- Student teachers providing and making sense of feedback
- Teacher educators generating and asking questions of their own practice

#### *The role of teacher educators with the wider education system*

- The specialist role of the teacher educator working within higher education.
- The expertise of teacher educators in the development of numeracy across Scottish education

#### *Building Communities of Practice*

- Teacher educators through collaborative activities build a sustained community of practice

## **Introduction**

A Symposium on the Self-Evaluation Framework for ITE and Numeracy was held on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2019 in Stirling. The Symposium consisted of two keynote presentations, firstly Professor Margery McMahon on Quality Assurance in HEI and secondly, Dr Paul Adams on Conceptualising Quality from the MQuITE research project. This was followed by workshops with each ITE provider running a workshop on the development of numeracy within their ITE programmes and one further workshop from a current collaborative research project undertaken by ITE providers on the Scottish Attainment Challenge. In the workshops leaders were asked to reflect on three key themes from the Self-Evaluation Framework for ITE. These themes were: 'Student Experience of the Curriculum'; 'Student Experience of Partnership' and 'Developing Effective Pedagogy'.

I was invited by the Organising Committee to act as discussant at the end of the Symposium to highlight some of the emerging issues. Subsequent to the Symposium my task has been to write a reflective report. The purpose of this paper is not to provide a detailed account of the proceedings of the Symposium but instead to identify issues and questions for the ITE providers in taking forward the Self-Evaluation Framework for ITE.

## **Quality assurance in initial teacher education: accountability vs development**

There are existing comprehensive quality assurance processes in higher education through Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education with the quality of the student learning experiences being a central focus. The QAA framework includes the review of provision and reporting of findings internally within institutions and externally across the higher education sector. There is, however, an added dimension for faculties/schools of education and teacher preparation programmes within universities, their position and contribution to the wider education system in Scotland. Over the past decade or so, an improvement agenda has driven policy in the Scottish education system. As part of this reform programme, understandings and expectations around what it means to be a teacher and a leader in school are dynamic. These policy developments and evolving expectations are a central concern for ITE in the preparation of teachers and need to be evident in the processes and indicators for assuring the quality of provision.

At the outset, a number of key issues were identified around the nature of quality and the processes of quality assurance. Professor McMahon highlighted studies exploring the correlation between quality assurance processes and the quality of provision in initial teacher education. She noted Menter and Tatto's (2019) finding that teacher education programmes that rely on external evaluation and scrutiny do not build the capacity for their own processes of reviewing nor for improving their own practice. Further, the correlation between QA systems and processes and the overall quality of teacher education, noted by Ingvarson and Rowley (2017), has a longer term impact on school education and the experiences and conditions of learning for all learners – student teachers and school pupils.

In highlighting the importance of quality assurance, Margery McMahon raised the question whether there were now two quality assurance systems in collision – the quality assurance framework and processes of the QAA and the Self-Evaluation Framework for Initial Teacher Education. While the extant QAA processes are comprehensive, these cover all subjects taught in tertiary education and are therefore of a more generic nature. These processes

cover the specific concerns of teaching and learning in tertiary education and so are important for university-based teacher education programmes. However, there is an additional dimension for ITE providers, their role in the wider Scottish education system including in Pre-5 and school education. Margery McMahon proposed that we should see these two QA systems as complementary whereby the processes underpinning the QAA programme point to the need for collaborative and coordinated approaches, the focus on enhancing provision and the importance of seeing quality assurance as a shared responsibility within institutions and across the system notably through the building of partnerships.

The issue of partnerships in ITE was an area also noted by Dr Paul Adams presenting on MQuITE project. Findings from this project pointed to student teachers valuing both their university-based elements and their school experience. While both university ITE providers and schools looked for greater partnership, various factors hindered this including constraints on time for meeting and school staff shortages. Any meetings between school staff and university staff focused largely on the assessment of the student teachers. These circumstances provided only limited opportunities to build relationships and develop common understandings of student development, school and classroom expectations and university programmes and expectations.

- How might university-based initial teacher education bring a nuanced quality assurance focus which reflects the specific concerns of Scottish education, to the heart of provision for the preparation of student teachers?
- How can ITE providers draw from both the QQA process and the Self-Evaluation Framework for ITE to ensure a developmental approach underpins quality assurance?
- How can quality assurance processes augment partnerships to foster greater mutual understanding and complementary practices across teacher education and school education?

### **Student Experiences of Partnership**

Partnerships are a core element of university-based teacher education and it is evident that substantial work has gone into building effective working relationships with schools and with teachers. Paul Adams highlighted some of the significant issues around partnership emerging from the MQuITE project. The importance of the teacher educators being engaged in building these relationships and in developing common understandings and skills to foster the professional growth of student teachers was a key theme in a number of workshops. However, what was also noteworthy from the workshops were some of the concerns about students' experiences in practicum. Ultimately, partnership is not a set of clearly delineated practices to be overtaken but always a 'work-in-progress' and so has to be a major concern and activity for teacher education. Often these partnerships are 'pitched' at school level but the focus for the student teacher is partnership in the classroom/department and the establishment of a working relationship with a specific teacher or group of teachers. Different workshop discussions highlighted both the very positive and the negative experiences of student teachers during their school experiences.

Woodgate-Jones (2012) charts the way in which teachers view positively student and beginning teachers coming in with new ideas and up-to-date practice and see benefits in this for their own practice. However, rather than utilise the knowledge and practice developed

through their teacher preparation programmes, the student teacher looks to be able to 'fit in' in the existing culture and practices. Reconciling these seemingly contradictory perspectives is critical – not smoothing over the differences but enabling student teachers to move between the two sites of learning, move between their learning with the class teachers and with their teacher education tutor. There were a number of examples in the workshops of the ways in which student teachers' experiences in school were utilised in the university classroom including examples of short intensive experiences followed by peer reflection analysing experiences and deepening understandings of teaching and learning in numeracy, practices that could be applied to any area.

- How do ITE providers enable student teachers to bridge the gap between their learning in the university classroom and their learning in the school classroom?
- The Self-Evaluation Framework for ITE provides a common set of criteria, common language and policy intentions: how can this framework be used to strengthen partnership between schools and university ITE providers?

### **Student Teachers' Experiences of the Curriculum**

One of the issues at the centre of the QAA framework over the last 15 years has been a focus on the learning experiences of students and the need to build knowledge and skills whether this is under the guise of employability or civic responsiveness. Again, the challenge for ITE is how to shape these concerns; the quality of student learning experiences is also a means of ensuring quality in the future learning experiences of pupils in school. Practical challenges of time constraints, programme structures and internal expectations were highlighted in some workshops. There are perennial resource constraints and so there are always challenges in determining how much content is needed – is it full coverage of the school curriculum or is it building knowledge, sets of skills and attitudes that will enable student and beginning teachers to build and extend their knowledge and skill throughout their careers.

- What is the balance between the development of conceptual understandings underpinning the mathematics/numeracy curriculum and the development of skills and understandings of how pupil learn?
- What is the balance between the conceptual understanding of numeracy on the part of the student teacher and the development of their understandings and skills in shaping the social and cognitive processes of learning in a classroom?

### **Developing Effective Pedagogy**

In the wider system of Scottish education there are changing expectations of the role of the teacher and the leader in school. Therefore, these evolving understandings of what it means to be a teacher and the practice of teaching are significant for teacher preparation. Some workshops pointed to the development of innovative and effective pedagogic practices with teacher educators trialling different approaches to building the understanding of numeracy and pedagogic practices of student teachers. Examples in the workshops included innovative practice including peer-based or social cohort learning, collaborative reflective approaches, experimenting with different practices and then the analysis of practice and outcomes. Further, a theme running across some of the workshops was the importance of 'professional noticing' and 'professional notating' of children's learning being at the core of the development of student teachers' pedagogy.

- Paul Adams cited Mayer's (2019) idea of student teachers 'learning teaching': what are the pedagogic practices of teacher educators to build and enhance the pedagogic practice of student teachers?
- How are experiences in both the university classroom and school classroom scaffolded to enable student teachers to observe and analyse pupil learning – the noticing and notating of pupil learning?

### **Building practice-based learning in initial teacher education**

TSF (Donaldson, 2011) strengthened the idea and practices around career-long teacher education and positioned initial teacher education as part of this process. Nevertheless, initial teacher education is a particularly potent period of professional growth and the question for ITE is how to maximise this phase of career-long professional learning. A theme across a number of workshops was the different locations in which student teachers develop as teachers. This raises questions about the assumptive models of student teacher learning, the sites of learning and how we integrate the various facets of the university-based initial teacher education. Among the challenges highlighted in several workshops, were the barriers in transferring content knowledge and pedagogy content knowledge gained in the university classroom to the classroom in school. Concerns were raised about the efficacy of the transfer of learning between these different sites, with knowledge developed in the teacher education classroom to then be applied in the place of practice – a construction of professional education that Schon (1983) was deeply critical of, arguing for greater flow and the importance of developing practice in different contexts.

More recent developments in professional education have placed 'practice-based learning' as a central construct where the development of practice is the centre point and is scaffolded by theoretical and research perspectives to build conceptual understanding, peer learning and to foster greater reflectivity. It is through such processes that the evolving identity of the student teacher is fostered. These processes are characterised in the MQuITE project as 'being, belonging and becoming', where 'knowing, doing and identifying' are key learning processes in initial teacher education. Across some of the workshops innovative ways of connecting two key sites – the university classroom and the school classroom were explored. In these cases each location acted as a critical tool to analyse experiences and learning in the other location, helping to test ideas and practices, deepen understanding and build skills in creating the conditions for effective learning for all.

- What is the balance in ITE curricular programmes between knowledge based approaches and practice-based learning?
- How much attention should be paid to not only the 'knowing' and the 'doing' but also the process of 'identifying' as the student teacher develops their identity and as part of this, their sense of self-efficacy in being able to promote children's learning?

### **Owning and using quality assurance**

A significant concern is that quality assurance is seen as a form of external scrutiny. However, this is only one limited perspective, perceiving quality assurance as something 'done' to teacher education and teacher educators. There is a need, then, to balance accountability with developmental processes. As Paul Adams proposed, an important dimension of quality

assurance is as a developmental tool for teacher education as a sector and for teacher educators. Models of expertise in practice (Schon, 1983, Berliner 2001, Collinson, 2012) illustrate the importance of reflection in, on and about practice and so the challenge for teacher education is how teacher educators use the quality assurance frameworks and processes to extend their thinking and practice – both individually and collectively. Particularly important is the opening up of practice to peer review, as was the case with the Symposium. Peer review processes embedded in the QAA higher education system offer further models of collaborative peer review. Approaches such as subject periodic review, and enhancement-led reviews, enhancement themes hold possibilities for the strengthening of ITE provision.

The gathering of feedback from student teachers is an obligatory element of quality assurance across university-based teacher education. However, it is important that the role of student teachers is not limited to one of providing feedback by completing a questionnaire or representing the class on a staff/student committee. Student teachers can be part of conversations to make sense of this feedback. From the workshops there were examples of rigorous and searching approaches to gathering and using evaluative data. Evidence from some of the workshops point to engagement of student teachers in review and development, other examples illustrated the way in which student teacher feedback can be used by programme teams to ask searching questions of their own practice. Quality assurance in these instances, is one not of scrutiny but of teacher educators generating and asking questions of their own practice and where student data helped illuminate issues. A quality assurance framework becomes a tool to promote a conversation whether internally within the specific ITE provider or across the teacher education sector.

- How can ITE providers work collaboratively to bring together processes and themes from the QAA frameworks with the areas identified in the Self-Evaluation Framework for ITE and generate a developmental quality assurance approach for initial teacher education?
- In what ways can ITE providers own the Self-Evaluation Framework for ITE including testing the framework in action in a variety of contexts and in the exploration of different dimensions of ITE?
- In what ways can ITE providers use the Self-Evaluation Framework for ITE help to identify and explore common areas of interest with partners including schools and LAs?
- In what ways can ITE providers use the Self-Evaluation Framework for ITE with students to provide qualitative feedback about their experiences and preparedness?

### **The role of teacher educators with the wider education system**

TSF (Donaldson, 2011) emphasised the role of all teachers as teacher educators contributing to the education of student, beginning teachers and their teacher peers. This emphasis on the contribution of all teachers to the professional growth of other teachers has been important in building cross-sector partnerships around teacher development. However, we need also to underline the specialist role of the teacher educator working within higher education. Discussions during the Symposium amply illustrated that teacher educators have a crucial role to play in the development of numeracy across Scottish education. Here the expertise of teacher educators is critical in crafting the professional learning experiences of student and

teachers to support this strategy. Equally important is the role of teacher educators in drawing from the wider field of teacher education/mathematics education through scholarship, research and practice to adopt a future orientation and proactively build 'next practice' for Scottish education (Dempster et al., 2011).

- In what ways should the outcomes of the Symposium be utilised in each of the ITE provider institutions?
- A keynote of the Symposium has been collaboration and so how can this collaboration be sustained and indeed extended within and across sectors.
- In what areas could there be further collaboration across ITE providers to build their own expertise and thereby contribute to ongoing improvement of pupil learning experiences?

### **Building Communities of Practice**

Since Little (1990) characterised teaching as privatised practice much has been written about the importance of collaboration particularly in enabling teachers to open up their practice to their peers and in engaging in dialogue to build pedagogic practice. Pedder and Opfer (2013) highlight the reluctance of teachers to critique each other's practice but nevertheless, stress the need for teachers to 'go public' setting out their practice to peer review and critique as a means of fostering professional growth. The sharing and review of practice in relation to ITE and in this case specifically numeracy, highlights the significance of communities of practice in this venture. The Symposium is a useful approach to collaboration through which practice and self-evaluation processes can be enhanced.

A key concept, though often implicit, in professional learning and practice is that of expertise and studies by Schon (1983) and Ericsson and Charness (1994) highlight the power of the developmental processes of reflection and deliberative practice in building and sustaining of mastery of accomplished practice. In this expertise is conceived of as an individual attribute. Such activities generate the tacit knowledge necessary for the flow of practice of an expert professional. Tacit knowledge can also be a collective property (Collins and Evans, 2007). In addition to individual contributory expertise, (the classic form of expertise), forms of interactional expertise are being charted across different professions including education. Communities of practice are premised on tacit knowledge generated collectively and are characterised as building high levels of shared skill. The question then is how can teacher education and teacher educators through collaborative activities such as the Symposium, constitute a sustained community of practice. In this process such collaborative activities would contribute to the generation, sharing and use of pedagogic practices that strengthen the provision of initial teacher education.

- How has the engagement in the Symposium strengthened the practice of the participants as teacher educators and the practice in their own institution – whether this is in a teacher education institute, national organisation, local authority or school?
- In what ways might the activities such as a Symposium be used by the ITE providers as a part of a QA collaborative sector-wide process?
- Further, how could events generate innovative approaches to building knowledge and skills of student teachers in relation to their roles and responsibilities in numeracy – or indeed in other dimensions of the responsibilities and roles of teachers?

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