

# SUMMARY

## Background

The focus underpinning this systematic review is the assessment of student teachers on Initial Teacher Training (ITT) courses. The background to the review is complex. Assessment has been the subject of much scholarly debate in recent years, the emphasis being on the processes, aims and outcomes of assessment. Comparative studies have been undertaken and have offered up alternative models for assessment, creating a new level of awareness and self-consciousness in the United Kingdom (UK). A number of issues dominate the subject and are central to this review. They include gender (Moyle and Cavendish, 2002), the emphasis on fair testing (Martin, 1997), the new idea of multiple assessments (Willis and Davies, 2002), the tension between standardisation and individualisation (Reyes and Isele, 1990), the demands for replicability (Hartsough 1998) and for non-discriminatory practice (Chambers and Roper, 2000), and so forth. A division, often awkward to uphold, between formative assessment and summative assessment has been drawn, the former being championed as a fairer, more personalised form of assessment than the latter (Adams, 1995).

## Aims and review question

The aim of this review is to explore and examine models for formatively assessing student teachers within the context of school-based experience, focusing on specific locations within the English-speaking international community and isolating studies published between 1987 and 2002. One of the aims of the review is to identify components of effective practice as well as effective models for formatively assessing student teachers. 'Effective' is defined in the review as pertaining to 'validity' (assessing the right criteria) and 'reliability' (assessing in a transparent, consistent and replicable way). A number of outcomes were expected: a systematic review and synthesis of existing research in the topic area; a database of evidence extracted from existing research; a descriptive map offering an orientation on the topic area; a small body of trustworthy and relevant studies; and, an indication of the gaps in research in the topic area.

## Review question

- What is known about successful models of formative assessment for trainee teachers during school experience and what constitutes effective practice?

## Results

The portfolio is identified as the most successful and effective formative assessment tool currently available that has been analysed and evaluated. Having followed the stages of the EPPI-Centre process, two studies, both focusing on portfolios, were

data-extracted and synthesised (Berg and Curry, 1997; Willis and Davies, 2002). Although the content and trustworthiness of the two studies was generally low, and indicative of the general lack of good research in this area of assessment, there were some useful findings. Portfolios were found to increase personal and professional growth and development, allow teachers to express themselves creatively, provide an unprecedented insight into the mind of the student teacher, create a strong bond between the assessed and the assessor, as well as to increase the confidence, reflective capacity and self-awareness of the trainee.

Whilst the review confirms the need for further investigation of, and experimentation with, portfolios, a few problem areas were identified. Firstly, excessive use of the portfolio may cause the education community to lose sight of pedagogical ability and focus attention overly on cognitive ability and clarity, as well as reflective capacity. Secondly, there is a tension between the time the portfolio takes to undertake properly and its ultimate worth (Reis and Villaume, 2002). This time-versus-worth dynamic may have been best explored using a controlled trial. Neither study, however, uses one. In conclusion, the review emphasises the general lack of quality research in the field and highlights the need for more focused research to be undertaken.