

SUMMARY

Background

The term 'partnership', in the context of this systematic review, refers to the various models of collaboration and co-operation implemented between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and schools, with the objective of providing quality Initial Teacher Training (ITT) experiences for trainee teachers.

Successful partnerships in initial teacher training (ITT) are important in ensuring the best experiences for ITT students across primary and secondary courses.

In 1992, Government Circulars 9/92 (England) and 35/92 (Wales) were issued to all those secondary schools and higher education institutions (HEIs) offering ITT. These circulars set out the Government's requirements from September 1992 for the accreditation of secondary phase ITT. A similar document for primary ITT providers was issued in 1993. There was much that was new in these documents and their implementation required a fundamental change to the design, organisation, and management of ITT. The changes engendered by these circulars form the basis for the current United Kingdom (UK) partnership system.

The purpose of the review was to identify and synthesise research evidence pertaining to the school-based elements of partnership and how they support trainee teachers following the changes implemented in 1992/3.

Aims and review question

The aims of the review are to have an informed and informative literature review which (a) highlights the varying facets of the schools' participation in partnership, and (b) establishes which of these facets appears to be the most effective in supporting student teachers throughout their ITT courses and provides them with the best professional basis upon which to continue successful careers in teaching.

Review question

The review question was:

- Which school-based elements of partnership in initial teacher training in the UK support trainee teachers' professional development?

Methods

The review was conducted using the procedures for systematic review of research in education as developed by the EPPI-Centre. A wide-ranging search was carried out

for studies that were written in English, conducted after 1992, and conducted within the UK, United States of America (US), Australia, Canada and Europe.

Stage One involved searching the databases Ask ERIC, ERIC via BIDS, and BEI via BIDS using a controlled vocabulary. **Stages Two and Three** involved screening abstracts and titles and including or excluding studies according to inclusion and exclusion criteria. **Stage Four** involved obtaining the full texts and keywording them using the *EPPI-Centre Core Keywording Strategy* (version 0.9.6: EPPI-Centre, 2003) and the APU Partnership review-specific keywording sheet to produce a descriptive map. Stage five involved applying narrower inclusion criteria after the descriptive map stage (to reduce the number of studies) followed by the in-depth review. The studies identified for inclusion in the in-depth review were data extracted using the *EPPI-Centre Guidelines for Extracting Data and Quality Assessing Primary Studies in Educational Research* (version 0.9.5: EPPI-Centre, 2002). In light of the data-extraction outcomes, the quality and weight of evidence of the studies were addressed. To do this, the studies were rated according to the three dimensions: (A) soundness of the study (i.e. internal coherence and implementation of design), (B) research design and analysis employed, and (C) external relevance. On the basis of how a study was rated on each of these three dimensions, an overall weighting (D) was given.

Results

The initial search resulted in 660 potentially relevant studies. Successive stages in the systematic review involved excluding some studies for reasons that were documented. Of the original 660 studies, 82 were used to construct the descriptive map. Following the descriptive map, two studies were identified as being the most relevant to the review question.

Findings from the descriptive map show the following:

- The proportion of studies into partnership is well balanced between the US and the UK.
- There is a slightly higher proportion of studies conducted within secondary schools than within primary schools.
- There are more detailed studies of HEIs' roles in partnership than the schools'.
- Research into the role of the supervising teacher is prevalent.

Findings from the two studies in the in-depth review suggest the following:

- Trainee teachers' professional development is supported by regular constructive feedback. Regular oral feedback offers the chance for constructive dialogue between the trainee teacher and supervising teacher on issues of immediate concern and practical relevance. Written feedback is linked more with long-term development and identification of aspects that the trainee should strive to improve in the longer term.
- The following professional skills are supported and developed via paired school experiences (experience in which two students are placed together in a single

classroom): organisation and management, compromise, communication, problem-solving, sharing tasks and teamwork.

The weight of evidence result for each study was deemed to be low so the results need to be tested by further studies.

Conclusions

There appears to be a dearth of research into what schools actually do in partnership. This could be attributed to two factors. Either, there has been no in-depth research into what it is the schools actually do; or, the reality is that schools do little in the organisation and management of the partnership, apart from to provide a classroom and a supervising teacher. The latter may go some way to explaining the plethora of studies concerning supervising teachers.

The review would suggest the need for a clearly formulated empirical study with the express aim of examining how schools within a partnership system support students, which would identify not just perceptions of experience but criteria for specific – and effective – practices.

Implications

If this systematic review, as we believe, reflects accurately the dearth and poor quality of research into the school-based elements of partnership, then partnership – even where it includes the many facets in the original Government Circulars – still may not achieve a level of depth and quality to support trainees as future teachers.

As indicated above, an in-depth conceptualisation of partnership is required which involves a collaboration of those agents within the partnership, i.e. the schools, trainees and HEIs who could contribute to building a clearer understanding of this complex area.