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Dual identities: enhancing the in-service teacher trainee experience in the lifelong learning sector

A guide for employers

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Who is this guide for?

Around ninety per cent of teachers, trainers or tutors in the Lifelong Learning sector (LLS) are initially employed without a teaching qualification and complete their teacher training on a part-time in-service basis. In many ways this is beneficial — employers gain teachers' who come straight from the workforce with up-to-date vocational knowledge and skills, learners benefit from this expertise, and many trainee teachers value being able to earn an income while training. There are also challenges that derive from this situation, above all the rapid transition from novice to full professional role that is required of teachers entering the sector. This guide is written to help employers in LLS to support their staff while they are training.

How did this guide come about?

This guide derives from a project funded by *ESCalate* and the *Consortium for Post-Compulsory Education and Training*. *ESCalate* is the education subject centre of the Higher Education Academy and supports national developments in teacher education and education studies. The *Consortium for Post-Compulsory Education and Training* is a network of twenty-seven providers of teacher education for LLS throughout the north of England. The project researched the dual role of employee and learner that LLS trainee teachers experience. Twenty trainees, four teacher educators and two senior human resources managers were interviewed over a period of six months. The research focused on the tension and symbiosis that trainee LLS teachers may experience through being simultaneously trainee and teacher at the beginning of their

* The word 'teacher' is used as a generic term. It is recognised that teachers in the lifelong learning sector may also be described as a tutor, trainer, instructor, lecturer or another similar term.

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career. The findings indicate that the organisation's attitude towards teacher training courses and trainees in their workforce is influential in the early development of a teacher's practice.

Why use this guide?

The LLS has traditionally prioritised the vocational or subject expertise of teachers over their pedagogical proficiency. Consequently, there has not been a strong culture of professional development of pedagogy in the sector. Furthermore, many new staff have to manage heavy workloads at the expense of expanding and developing approaches to teaching. If coping is given precedence over exploring practice, the pedagogy of teaching in LLS cannot develop—and poorly trained teachers may lead to poorly trained learners.

Though the absence of a culture of development in the sector requires attention, any recommendations to organisations about initial teacher training (ITT) must be made cautiously. There is much over which employers have little control, not least the pertaining regulatory regime, and the sector's diversity requires intervention that is sensitive to local influences. Moreover, any changes risk adding to the already full workload of staff in LLS and may only

aggravate the situation. With those caveats in mind, the following points are intended to contribute to a culture of pedagogical development and are offered as suggestions of good practice for employers in the sector.

Recognise trainee teachers as a defined category of employee.

Just as schools have procedures and expectations for newly-qualified teachers, so should LLS organisations. New teachers should be encouraged to see themselves as trainees and so have the licence to experiment and to learn from mistakes.

- Induction should involve pedagogical development alongside familiarisation with the institution and its systems. It should involve the teacher education tutors and the trainee's manager as well as the HR department.
- Observations of teaching carried out as part of quality assurance should explicitly consider teachers who are in training differently from their colleagues.

Increase trainee teachers' workload incrementally.

Teachers in training should initially have reduced workloads which can gradually be increased. This would allow trainees to observe colleagues, to research and plan lessons carefully, and to think about how they might develop their practice informed by discussion and their own experience. Such a change would help shift the emphasis from learning to cope with classes to the full development of pedagogy.

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- Full-time and fractional teachers should be timetabled to teach for approximately two-thirds of their scheduled class contact time during the first term of their ITT course and for three-quarters of their scheduled class contact time for the remainder of their time on the course. Part-time hourly paid teachers should be provided with similar levels of remission from class contact.

Formally recognise the key role of teacher educators.

Teacher educators are seminal in both the support and development of trainee teachers. However, teacher educators need to have the opportunity to challenge and stretch trainees as well as support them.

- To allow time for this, teacher educators should be timetabled to teach for approximately three-quarters of normal class contact.

Enhance the status of mentors.

Mentors are central to the government's reform of ITT in the LLS, for the general support of trainees and above all for subject specialist pedagogy. A good mentor can greatly enhance the development of new teachers, and yet the procedure to become a mentor and what the role involves are uneven and random.

- Ideally, mentors should be volunteers.
- Mentors should have the opportunity to train and have remission of teaching to enable them to spend time with the new teacher. Therefore, each mentor should be allowed one hour per week remission for each trainee under his or her mentorship.

Prioritise the teacher training course.

Trainees were sometimes instructed by line managers not to attend ITT classes so as to cover for absent staff. This reinforces a perception of teacher training as extra, not integral.

- Senior managers need to set the tone: they should explicitly and consistently prioritise the ITT course and ensure that trainees and their line managers are aware of its importance – both for individual and organisational development.

