

ABSTRACT

Teacher training is at a turning point in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as more routes into the profession are opened up and government policy shifts away from university-led to school-based teacher education. These expansions of routes into teaching provide different opportunities for constructing identity. In the light of these changes, it is therefore timely to consider trainee teacher identity and the impact policy has on this, specifically, the extent to which the requirement to complete Initial Teacher Education at Masters level shapes or reflects teacher identity.

Alongside this, teacher professionalism and autonomy has been significantly undermined (Sachs (2003), Whitty (2006) and Ball (2004)) and emphasis moved to the importance of academic qualifications in order to train to be a teacher (DfE 2010). The trainee teachers in this study brought with them their ideals of what it is to be a teacher, based on their own experiences of education (Beijaard et al 2000, Flores and Day 2006). This was shown to be often at odds with their experience whilst on placement.

The research used a narrative case study, informed by a grounded theory approach, linking with the underlying theoretical perspective of interpretivism. Narrative inquiry is well suited to identity research (Kohler Reissman 2000) and in particular, teacher identity (Goodson 1995) as teachers individually and socially lead storied lives (Connelly and Clandinin 1990). Questionnaires, interviews and email correspondence were the main form of data collection. From this, I developed categories based on Shain and Gleeson's (1999) work to investigate how studying at Masters level shaped trainee teachers identities.

Key findings from the research showed that in the narratives the trainees told, their identity was shaped by how much they valued educational research, whether or not they thought it relevant to them in their development as teachers and if they embraced the opportunity to gain Masters level credits. Head teachers were unaware of the inclusion of Masters level credits in the PGCE. Consequently the qualification trainees attained had no impact on their employment experiences. As government continues to push for increased academic qualifications in order to enter the teaching profession, and as more teacher training is moved into schools, heads voiced concerns about how well equipped the schools were to manage and deliver the theoretical aspects of teacher training. This contested context of where teacher training takes place, what should be included and the impact on the development of trainee teacher identity is an ongoing debate to which this research contributes.