# Dual identities: enhancing the in-service teacher trainee experience in further education

# A guide for employers

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In contrast to the situation in schools, around ninety per cent of teachers in Further Education (FE) colleges 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 with up-to-date knowledge and skills, learners benefit from their subject expertise, and many trainee teachers value being able to earn an income while training. However, there are also a number of challenges that derive from this situation, above all the rapid transition to full professional role. This project, funded by ESCalate and the Consortium for Post-Compulsory Education and Training, researched the dual role of employee and learner that trainee FE teachers experience. Data was gathered from trainee teachers, teacher educators and human resources managers to focus on the tensions and benefits this situation presents. The findings indicate that the organisation’s attitude towards teacher training courses and trainees in their workforce are significant in the early development of a teacher’s practice.

FE has traditionally prioritised the vocational or subject expertise of teachers over their pedagogical proficiency. Consequently, there has not been a culture of professional development of teaching in FE. Furthermore, new staff may have to quickly manage heavy workloads at the expense of expanding their approaches to teaching. If coping is given precedence over exploring practice, the pedagogy of FE teaching cannot develop.

Though the absence of a culture of development in FE requires attention, recommendations to organisations about the initial training of teachers must be made cautiously. There is much over which employers and teacher educators 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 FE colleges, which may only aggravate the situation. With those caveats in mind, these recommendations are intended to contribute to a culture of pedagogical development in colleges and are offered as suggestions of good practice for employers in the FE sector.

#### Recommendations

* **Recognise trainee teachers as a defined category of employee.**  
  Just as schools have procedures and expectations for newly-qualified teachers, so should FE organisations. New teachers should be encouraged to see themselves as trainees and so have the licence to experiment and to learn from mistakes. Therefore, induction would involve pedagogical development alongside familiarisation with the institution and its systems. It would 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. We found some new teachers who had had their confidence dented by insensitive and inappropriate feedback from observers.

* **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 development of pedagogy. To allow this to take place we recommend that full-time and fractional teachers are timetabled to teach for approximately two-thirds of their scheduled class contact time during the first term of the their ITT course and for three-quarters of their scheduled class contact time for the remainder of their time on the course. We also recommend that part-time hourly paid teachers are provided with similar levels of remission from class contact.
* **Formally recognise the key role of teacher educators.**This research highlighted the crucial role that teacher educators play in both developing and supporting trainee teachers. However, teacher educators need to have the time to be able to challenge and stretch trainees as well as support them. Therefore, we recommend that teacher educators be timetabled to teach for approximately three-quarters of normal class contact time for teaching staff.
* **Enhance the status of mentors.**

Mentors are central to the government’s reform of ITT in FE, 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; they should have the opportunity to train and to have remission of teaching to enable them to spend time with the new teacher. We recommend that each mentor be allowed one hour per week remission for each trainee under his or her mentorship. This would help to enhance the role of the mentor and strengthen a culture of professional development.

* **Prioritise the teacher training course.**

Trainees were sometimes instructed by line managers not to attend Cert. Ed./PGCE 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.

The full report is available from ESCalate.