



Editorial

● Alex Sinclair ● Jane Turner

Since the Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) (2015), which outlined the quality and effectiveness of ITT courses in England, there has been much change. This edition of STE begins with a potted history of that change, not to give specific detail about what has followed, but to provide an overview of the training landscape and thereby a context for the authors, who are teacher educators, early career teachers or trainees. You will notice that many of the articles are from a personal viewpoint and, as such, emotions are high. Indeed, as Editors working within this landscape, it has been difficult to remain neutral while writing this introduction.

A very brief history of what is happening in teacher education

After the Carter Review came the Core Content Framework (CCF), which was published in 2019 (DfE, 2019) for implementation by 2021. The CCF (2019, p.3) rightly states that *'the quality of teaching is the single most important in-school factor in improving outcomes for pupils'*. With the aim of addressing this and developing 'great teachers', it sets out in much detail the training necessary to achieve this intention. Training requirements are described by 'Learn that...' and 'Learn how to...' statements and the content's inclusion is justified by reference to *'current high-quality evidence from the UK and overseas'* (2019, p.4). There has been disquiet about the type of evidence that is referenced in the CCF and the narrowing of what has been included, and thus mandated, especially with the predominance of research focusing on a narrow set of cognitive science principles. In addition to this, questions have been asked about how often (or if) what is included will be reviewed and by what process and by whom. This potential lack of flexibility is especially pertinent following the Education Endowment Foundation's (2021) report detailing the need for further research to demonstrate the application of cognitive science approaches beyond the limited subject areas and ages of the original studies.

As part of their judgement of providers, Ofsted (2022) will assess how well an institution translates the minimum requirements of the CCF into a personalised curriculum. Interestingly, they refer to the process as initial teacher *education* and not, as the DfE do, training. For some, this is not an issue of semantics but of ideology and is discussed by two of the authors in this edition.

Then, in 2021, the ITT Market Review (DfE, 2021) advised that there was the need for a new accreditation process to ensure that all providers had the capacity to deliver a new set of 'Quality Requirements' (much of which is to demonstrate the implementation of the CCF). A very short consultation period followed (much of which spanned the summer break), and a number of major concerns were highlighted by a range of institutions and organisations (ASE's response to the Review can be found here: <https://www.ase.org.uk/download/file/fid/56017>). Despite this, most of the recommendations were accepted and now all ITT providers have to apply for accreditation if they wish to run courses in the academic year of 2024 and 2025.

Stage 1 of the process has seen two rounds of applications. Some providers expressed concerns and did not engage until further clarifications and assurances were provided. Others were initially unsuccessful and were required to apply again, by which time the requirements for accreditation had changed. Several providers were not successful with their second application and subsequently are prohibited from providing teacher training courses in 2024, although some may enter into a partnership arrangement with those that have been accredited. Those that have progressed this far are currently at Stage 2, having to further prove their ability and capacity with no guarantee of accreditation.





Editorial

● Alex Sinclair ● Jane Turner

Several questions from the sector have surfaced. The following list, although not exhaustive and in no particular order, is a summary of them:

- Was there a need for such substantial reforms?
- Does the system have the capacity to cope with the extra burden placed on busy mentors in school?
- What evidence has been used to ensure a strategy's inclusion in the CCF?
- Will the accreditation process provide enough places for all those wanting to train?
- Is this an ideological strategy to drive teacher training out of universities?

Probably the biggest concern raised by teacher educators from these many changes is the reduction of teacher autonomy through a reductive approach to training. The ITT Market Review was prescient in anticipating this, although, as of yet, it is not clear if those worries have been allayed:

'We know there are those who fear that a strong emphasis on evidence in teacher training and professional development will reduce teacher autonomy by dictating a set of narrowly prescribed or mechanistic teaching behaviours, which will be expected of all teachers. We do not share this perspective. On the contrary, our view is that while teaching is without doubt a highly skilled activity, training which is based on evidence, including relevant aspects of cognitive science, or the science of learning, will enable teachers to be more critically reflective and more, rather than less, professionally autonomous and self-efficacious' (DfE, 2021, p.12).

Some of the articles in this edition of *STE* provide first-hand experience and reflection on the process and outcomes of the changes and will challenge readers to consider whether the concerns expressed are valid, or whether, as the DfE clearly hope, they have been assuaged.

We start with **Andrew Chandler-Grevatt's** passionate article about his experience of working towards accreditation. He airs his frustration about the process and considers the significance that this may have for trainees and the sector. This is followed by another personal account from **James de Winter**, who keenly focuses on the impact that the CCF may have on secondary science trainees. He discusses whether the uniqueness of each science discipline will be lost and questions the effect on a trainee's understanding of the way in which different subject teachers think and the subject-specific pedagogies required. **Ben Looker** provides an institutional perspective. He writes pragmatically about how he and his colleagues from the University of Worcester have ensured that the CCF has become embedded in their PGCE curriculum.

A conversation between ITE tutor **Sally Spicer**, Associate Professor at the University of Warwick's Centre for Teacher Education, and one of her PGCE alumni from 2017/18, Joshua Piggott, who is now primary science subject leader and Year 3 (age 8) teacher at St Nicholas CE First School, Codsall, Staffordshire, begins a section of this issue that focuses on new teachers' experiences as they begin their careers in school and reflect on the challenges that they have faced. This theme is continued in an interview between **Ruth Amos**, Lecturer in Science Education at UCL Institute of Education and her ex-student, Molly Westwood, which provides a secondary teacher perspective. Molly's PGCE experience was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as was the beginning of her career in school.





Editorial

● Alex Sinclair ● Jane Turner

The following article describes an innovation in primary science ITE, the Primary Science Enhancement Award, following one teacher's experience of this additional programme, in which she took part during her initial teacher education at the University of Hertfordshire, and its impact on her early career. The PSEA is run by the Primary Science Teaching Trust, whose Outreach Director **Alison Eley** summarises the programme's aims and development in the first part of the article. The second part records a conversation between Associate Professor David Allen, Teaching and Professional Lead for Primary Science in ITE at the University of Hertfordshire, and Jade Plum, who is now in her second year of teaching at Cromwell Academy in Cambridgeshire.

We finish this edition with perspectives from primary trainees. First, an article from **Naomi Owen and Naomi Scott**, who are studying at St Mary's University, Twickenham. Finally, and to buck the Anglocentric focus, we conclude with an article from **Charlotte Parmenter**, who is training at the University of Strathclyde.

We hope that the articles in this issue will stimulate readers' thinking around recent developments in Initial Teacher Education. Please continue the conversation by sending us your comments at the e-mail addresses below. You can also book a place at the ASE Futures Annual Conference taking place in Birmingham on June 29th and 30th (see page 7 for details), where the debate around teacher education will be informed, collegiate and lively.

References

- Carter, A. (2015) *Carter review of initial teacher training (ITT)*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/399957/Carter_Review.pdf Accessed 20.03.23
- DfE (2019) *ITT Core Content Framework*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974307/ITT_core_content_framework_.pdf. Accessed 20.03.23
- DfE (2021) *Initial teacher training (ITT) market review report*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/999621/ITT_market_review_report.pdf Accessed 20.03.23
- Education Endowment Foundation (2021) *Cognitive science approached in the classroom: a review of the evidence*. Available at: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Cognitive_science_approaches_in_the_classroom_-_A_review_of_the_evidence.pdf Accessed 20.03.23
- Ofsted (2022) *Initial teacher education (ITE) inspection framework and handbook*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/initial-teacher-education-ite-inspection-framework-and-handbook/initial-teacher-education-ite-inspection-framework-and-handbook> Accessed 20.03.23



Dr. Alex Sinclair and **Associate Professor Jane Turner** are Editors of *Science Teacher Education (STE)*.

E-mails: alex.sinclair@stmarys.ac.uk and j.turner@herts.ac.uk

