

Chapter 10: Who is Teaching Me and What Do They Know? Student Teachers' Perceptions of their Teacher Educators and Mentors

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Abstract

Using a survey and interviews, this chapter explores how 442 student teachers on pre- courses in England construct and value the identities and knowledge bases of those teaching them. Whilst there were some minor differences in responses across different groups, the general patterns were as follows: experiential knowledge of school teaching was highly valued capital in the eyes of student teachers, meaning that teacher educators who had recent teaching experience in the school sector and mentors working in practicum schools were seen as 'experts' in teaching. Other types of knowledge, particularly those gained through research or scholarship, were often over-looked or marginalised. Certain kinds of inter-personal skills and dispositions were highly valued in both mentors and teacher educators, particularly adopting an ethos of care and responsibility for student progression.

10.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on an interpretative study, exploring how student teachers on pre-service or Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses in England construct the identities and knowledge bases of the educators teaching them in Higher Education (HE) and/or in schools. This study was part of a larger research project, The Academic Tribes and their Territories (A3TE) originally funded by the Society of Educational Studies.

Much research on teacher educators and mentors prioritises these educators' view points (see Davey, 2013; Mayer et al., 2011); very little of it analyses student perspectives. This study aims to show how student teachers perceive their teacher educators and mentors; in particular, what identities, forms of knowledge and attitudes they privilege and value during their ITE. This study therefore addresses an under-researched area in teacher education. We argue that this type of study matters because how students perceive their educators and their knowledge, experience and attributes affects their engagement as learners and what and how they learn in the complex process of becoming teachers. The context for this research is the contested and politicised field of ITE; this field is ambiguous and ill-defined, often subject to changing influences from central government, schooling and HE. Because of these changes, there is also considerable flux and contestation in what counts as valued 'capital' in the field. Certainly, this field has been subjected to repeated interventions by central government and

its agencies since 1984, as part of focuses on raising educational standards in schools. These interventions, together with the creation of regulatory structures, inspection regimes and quasi-governmental organisations to monitor ITE have changed all aspects of the field, making it more a practice-focused, school-led and fundamentally more instrumental enterprise (Murray & Mutton, 2015).

As a result of these changes, ITE has moved away from the dominance of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)ⁱ, as seen in most of the twentieth century, and towards schools as far more influential stakeholders. The term ‘teacher educator’ was still usually applied to - and claimed only by - those employed by HEIs on full- or part-time contracts (Murray, 2002) until recently. That ‘traditional’ occupational group has now been joined by teachers working as school-based teacher educators and/or mentors. This expansion has been driven in large part by new school-led routes (including the highly influential School Direct route in which schools take responsibility for recruiting student teachers, providing the majority of their school experience and arranging any other necessary training towards qualified teacher status) and the marketisation of the school system itself (Whitty, 2014; Murray & Mutton, 2015). School-based teacher educators now include senior school staff co-ordinating, implementing and developing the ITE provision in the schools, and subject specialists in secondary schools or class teachers in primary schools who undertake roles in inducting student teachers, guiding and mentoring their progress, observing their teaching, giving feedback, and finally assessing them. The latter sub-group is usually still called ‘mentors’.

Mentors - and all school-based teacher educators - are of central importance to the quality of ITE because, as part of a growing emphasis on the practicum and experiential knowledge, all programmes now include large amounts of time in school. On a Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) course, for example, all pre-service teachers have to spend at least 24 weeks of their 36 week programme in schools; under-graduate degree programmes typically include at least the same amount of time in school, if not more. On school-based routes, the amount of training time spent in school is often greater still - up to 100%. In designing, implementing and assessing student teacher learning on these long teaching experiences, school-based teacher educators are central. Depending on the type of programme offered in their schools and whether or not that includes partnership with a Higher Education Institution (HEI), these school-based educators sometimes work alongside the traditional cohort of HE-based teacher educators.

Our conceptual framework for this study sees both teacher educators and mentors as agents involved in (re)producing - that is both producing and reproducing - the discourses and practices of school teaching and teacher education with and for student teachers. In order to achieve this, through their pedagogies and all other aspects of their practice, they deploy their knowledge strategically and make visible aspects of their identities as educators to student teachers and teachers. Following Day et al., (2007) we draw on a formulation of identities as multiple, a shifting mix of personal biography, culture, social and institutional influences and values which change according to contexts and roles.

10.2 Research Design

This was an interpretive study, drawing on established qualitative research methods for embedded case studies (Yin 2002) and conducted along ethical guidelines approved by the participating universities. The research design enabled focuses on the student teachers' views of their educators and the institutional contexts, specifically the Schools of Education and schools, in which they learned. This element of the design was important in that we wished to investigate whether students learning to teach in different institutions - and on different types of courses - perceived their educators' identities and knowledge in varying ways.

The HEIs from which the student samples were drawn were one 'old' or pre-1992 university and two post-1992 or 'new' universities. Both the latter institutions will have experienced 'academic drift' defined here as the process by which institutions once classed as 'public sector institutions' (polytechnics, diversified Higher Education Institutions and teacher education colleges) have made their way into the university sector in England between the 1960s and the current time. The School of Education within University A provides an extensive and diverse range of education programmes; the host university is a large institution offering courses across many disciplines. The second School, in University B, is smaller and less diverse, set within a small university, which specialises in liberal arts and vocational programmes. University C is an 'old' and elite university. Placed high in national league tables for both research and teaching, it offers a wide range of academic and professional courses. The School of Education is small, offering only one year secondary teacher education programmes (preparing students to teach pupils aged 11-18) alongside a range of research degrees at Masters and doctoral levels.

Through non-coercive ethics procedures, all student teachers studying on pre-service programmes at the three universities were asked to complete questionnaires, consisting of a series of closed questions, using Likert scales, and opportunities for free text responses. The resulting sample was a total of 442 students, 246 on secondary courses and 196 students on early years or primary courses (preparing to teach pupils aged 3-11). The majority of these students (86%) were studying on PGCEs of 38 weeks' duration; this was, at the time of the empirical work, the dominant mode of pre-service provision.

Table 10.1: Distribution of questionnaire sample across universities and programmes

University	Type of university	Programmes	Total number of respondents per programme	Total per university
C	Pre-1992	Secondary (11 - 18)	94	94

B	Post-1992	Secondary	63	95
B	Post-1992	Primary(elementary, 5-11) and Early Years (3-5)	32	
A	Post-1992	Secondary	89	253
A	Post-1992	Primary	164	

Totals - secondary 246; primary - 196; overall total 442

Individual semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of 28 students were used to explore resulting issues in-depth. The sample group here was chosen to give insights into the variations found in the questionnaire data across universities, programmes and age phases. All interviews were conducted face-to-face. The questions in the interview schedule ensured that all aspects of the research questions were covered fully, at the same time as leaving space for idiosyncratic questions and responses. Because of the potentially sensitive nature of the data, all participants were given additional assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, so pseudonyms for institutions and individuals have been used here.

This chapter draws on the data from both the questionnaires and the interviews, which were fully transcribed. That data was then subjected to an initial content analysis, generating a number of emergent themes through the use of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These initial codes were refined by repeated analysis and used to define recurring themes, resulting in the creation of core categories to be included in the findings.

The resulting data set from this study is large and complex, enabling us to look at variations across the different types of universities, programmes and age phases involved. In this chapter we aim to give insights into the main patterns our analysis found for each of the main research focuses. For simplicity's sake, we have chosen to reflect 'traditional usage of the term 'teacher educators' to mean those employed by HEIs on full- or part-time contracts and 'mentors' to mean teachers taking on the support of student teachers in schools.

10.3 Findings

10.3.1 Professional Identifiers and Roles

In order to ascertain how the student teachers perceived the identities and roles of their educators, the questionnaire gave a number of terms in common use in HE in England to describe first teacher educators (for example, lecturer, academic, teacher educator, tutor, mentor, teacher trainer, teacher) and then mentors (for example, teacher, teacher trainer, mentor, teacher educator, supervisor), and asked which terms students thought most appropriate to describe the educators working with them.

When talking about those educating them in schools, the majority of the students (94%) opted either for the descriptor 'mentor' or for the dual terms 'mentor' and 'teacher'. There were no notable differentiations in responses between different universities, types of programmes or age phases. In the free text box responses where students could add descriptors of their own, some added terms such as 'guide', 'head of department', 'year leader' and 'facilitator' in describing their mentors, but most left these boxes blank.

The findings on teacher educators' roles and identities showed more diversity. Students on PGCE courses, particularly on secondary programmes, were most likely to choose the descriptor 'tutor' for their teacher educators. In English this is a term which often carries elite connotations of individualised teaching and the close supervision of student learning and welfare. This choice of term may reflect the tendency for some secondary courses to be taught in small groups and predominantly by one person, a model of subject-specific pre-service often referred to as 'cottage industries'. In these teaching situations, the teacher educator may know their students well and take over-sight of all aspects of their learning.

PGCE primary students across Universities A and B were equally likely to select the terms 'tutor' and 'teacher educator'; this may have been in part because these students are on multi-subject courses and are therefore more likely to be taught by a team of educators, with less opportunity to form close professional relationships with just one individual. The only students in the sample on under-graduate primary programmes (at University B) were more likely to select the terms 'teacher educator' or 'lecturer' (the latter being the term most often used for any university teacher in England); these choices may reflect the longer time that these students spend studying in universities, the modes of teaching they experience and their self-identification as under-graduate students.

Students at University C were the most likely to choose the descriptor 'academic' or to add the term 'academic tutor' in the free text box. One student, for example, stated, 'I would describe her as an academic tutor because I know she does research as well as teaching us.' For another, 'academic and pastoral tutor' was the right descriptor for his educator because, 'he guides all aspects of our work this year and he always knows what is happening with us.' Here, as in other findings, students from University C - the most research-intensive institution in our sample - were more likely to stress academic aspects of teacher educators' work. Few students at University A or B used the descriptor 'academic'.

Only 43 students across the sample group selected the terms 'trainer' or 'teacher trainer' for teacher educators, a surprising finding given that this term is part of the dominant government language of ITE in England.

10.3.2 Knowledge for Teaching Teachers

a) Experiential knowledge

When asked to identify the knowledge which mentors required, all the students in the sample group, without exception, emphasised that how to teach effectively was the most important thing. The mentors' knowledge of the school, classroom(s) and pupils and their pedagogical skills were all seen as part of that effective teaching. This type of recent and highly relevant knowledge was highly valued - experientially-based, up to date and highly relevant. In particular, mentors' practical expertise and experience were seen as invaluable in inducting students and supporting their learning development:

Coming to a new school can be a.....a mystery or worse for us, everything seems so different and strange but if you get a good mentor they know the subject department best all its politics and the kids and they give you a good induction into the school from there you can get to know it and how it works.

You can improve your teaching with your mentor's help - they know the school, the uni supervisor (*teacher educator*) doesn't so the mentor knows the children and how they learn best. They are best at teaching me how to teach *these* children (*emphasis in the written original*).

'Good' mentors were usually seen as good teachers with strong local knowledge of the placement school, with high level skills in working with student teachers. As part of this, many students clearly prioritised the mentors' knowledge of teaching in their *particular* placement school, placing less value on the breadth and depth of experience they might possess. For these students, typically, it did 'not matter if they have taught in many different types of schools' as they were interested more in 'how to learn to teach now in this school' (*emphasis in the written original*).

Here the students' views of their mentors' knowledge and roles came across as narrow and often concerned with transmission-orientated ways of knowledge transfer, in which the mentor had powerful knowledge of the practicum school to be acquired - preferably rapidly - by the student. Few students were concerned about the amount of experience of mentoring itself which their mentors had had, but nearly all had clear expectations that they would be good role models. Many students had positive experiences of mentoring; others were less satisfied:

I think Judith (*the mentor*) is a great class teacher. She really knows this class and how to teach them, all the children's strengths and weakness she knows them. She's a great role model for me I learn so much being in her class.

She definitely wasn't the strongest teacher in the year group so I wondered why she had been chosen as a mentor, she couldn't control the class and she didn't seem to be very good.

Few students were concerned about the length of teaching experience their mentors had. As one student said, 'you don't need to have been teaching for that long to be a really good teacher - and that's all that matters.' Other students expressed some scepticism about more experienced teachers who may have been 'burnt out', 'past their best' or 'beyond their sell-by date' because they had been 'teaching too long'.

For 10% of students *less* experienced teachers were explicitly stated to make better mentors than the *more* experienced. The reasons for this varied, but the increased levels of empathy which less experienced mentors were likely to have for students were frequent themes in the data.

I've had two mentors now who only had three or four years of experience in school but really knew their stuff.... because they'd been through the PGCE so recently themselves they really empathised with me.

When asked to identify the knowledge which teacher educators needed, nearly all the students (98.5%) across the sample group emphasized that knowledge of schooling was the most important attribute, with most seeing it as important that it was gained through the *experience* of having been a teacher. Some students were incredulous that this needed to be stated, 'It seems obvious to me - I don't see how you could teach teachers or be able to do it if you had never been a teacher yourself - what would you know about what it is like in schools?'

Other students justified their opinions in various ways, often by counter-posing the 'reality' or perceived 'value' and 'authenticity' of teaching experience with the explicit or implicit distance of other ways of knowing, particularly 'learning from books'. 'Experience is vital not just text book advice or theory - it's more real', said one student. Another wrote, '(t)hey (*teacher educators*) need to know and be familiar with real day to day teaching issues - you can't learn that from a book or research'. The sentiments of approximately 25% of students are summarized in this quotation, 'I don't want to be taught by someone who only knows the theory of teaching, that's too remote, it's not going to work for me. I need to know about the reality of teaching and how to cope with it.'

Most students felt that a number of years in school teaching were needed to provide a good basis for pre-service work; as one student said, it should be 'enough time so that they, (*teacher educators*) know what they are talking about but not so much that they are burned out.' Other students ventured to give exact timeframes as in the following quotes: 'they should have five years or so of experience' or 'I would say ten years is enough'.

Not only was experience seen as vital but just over 75% of students felt that it should be *recent* in order to ensure relevance and contemporaneity. Here the emphasis was often on how fast schools changed and how important up-to-date knowledge therefore was in teacher education. A student at University C wrote, 'More than five years out of school and I'd feel that they (*teacher educators*)

might not know what they are talking about anymore.’ Two other students, one primary and one secondary at University A wrote,

Without recent and relevant experience I believe tutors may not be able to keep in touch with teaching in a school environment - it all changes so fast that you could be out of date really soon maybe without knowing it.

To teach others to teach you have to have up to date knowledge. I don't want to be taught by someone who only knows what schools and kids were like ten years ago or twenty, what would the point of that be?

Asked if experience of teaching teachers was important, most students conflated teaching in schools with teaching as a teacher educator. Typical examples of this tendency included, ‘They’re teachers they know how to teach, the skills are just transferable’ or ‘A good school teacher is all you need.’ Another student wrote, ‘Knowing how to teach in schools is enough to know how to teach us.’ This type of student opinion was also linked to the devaluation of ‘learning from books’ as not ‘real’, as discussed above. The majority also saw the time which teacher educators had spent teaching in HE as irrelevant to them.

Only 15% of the total sample group showed clear recognition of any differences between their teacher educators’ knowledge of teaching in schools and knowledge of teaching teachers (Loughran, 2006)- second order knowledge (Murray, 2002). For most then the knowledge and pedagogical skills of teacher education itself - - went unrecognised (Murray et al., 2011). As one student typically stated, ‘a good teacher is a good teacher is a good teacher, wherever’.

The interview data showed that students clearly expected their teacher educators to model ‘good teaching’ for them. Here the emphasis was often on teacher educators being *explicit* role models (European Commission, 2013; Loughran, 2006), that is teaching in ways appropriate for implementation in schools.

b) Subject knowledge

For the majority of secondary students, ‘subject knowledge’ had very high priority as a key knowledge area for both teacher educators and mentors to possess. This knowledge was usually attributed to the educators’ under-graduate and/or post-graduate study of their subject (what was sometimes termed ‘pure subject knowledge’) by 34% of students and/or to their knowledge of how to teach the subject in school (what has been termed ‘subject knowledge for teaching’).

One student at University C talking about his science teacher educator typically talking about ‘pure’ subject knowledge said, ‘He has excellent subject knowledge - his first degree was from Cambridge followed by a Masters degree in biology at Kings.’ Secondary students at this university were more

likely to cite this type of 'pure' subject knowledge as important, often attributing it to past study at high ranking UK universities. Other secondary students across all three universities (51%) stressed the importance of educators having excellent subject knowledge for teaching; for both mentors and teacher educators this was largely seen as generated by a fusion of 'pure' subject knowledge and experiences of teaching in schools.

Primary students were much less likely to see subject knowledge as important, with less than 15% mentioning the 'pure' subject knowledge of their teacher educators and only 42% prioritising 'subject knowledge for teaching'. Most of the primary students wanted their teacher educators to have knowledge of child development and learning patterns. This knowledge was variously defined by the students as 'knowledge of how children learn', 'understanding about child development' and 'good knowledge of child psychology', with the sources of this knowledge clearly seen as experiential.

c) Sources of knowledge generation

The majority of the total student sample (51%) showed limited recognition of ways -beyond the experiential - in which their mentors and teacher educators might generate the required knowledge of how to teach. But some students recognised that their mentors learnt from their engagement in activities such as marking exam papers, being part of a teacher support group, working for exam boards or visiting other schools as an advisor. There were only five responses across the entire questionnaire sample which mentioned these mentors being engaged in research or scholarship. Two of these responses talked about the Master's level qualifications for which the mentors were studying. For teacher educators, writing text books, knowing the most up to date subject-specific books, being on examination boards and researching with schools and pupils were recognised as valuable sources of knowledge generation. The value of research was particularly stressed by students at University C. Here one student on a science PGCE course wrote, '(m)y tutor has done a lot of research on how kids learn in science and that informs what he teaches us you can see when he is in schools with us that the teachers really respect his expertise too.' For some students, at both A and B, 'going into schools to research' was also acknowledged to be a valuable source of knowledge generation.

Another - and more widely recognised - source of knowledge generation for students was teacher educators' broad knowledge of schooling, gained through visiting many classrooms during the student practicum. As one student at University A wrote:

I know that my tutor has visited many schools and seen lots of classrooms since she left teaching herself, that gives her very valuable perspectives to pass onto us not just about one school but knowing about a whole variety of ways to teach.

Another student (University B) said 'seeing us (*her students*) teaching in lots of schools and having to work with us and the teachers is good experience too.'

d) Inter-personal skills for educating teachers

Teacher educators' and mentors' inter-personal skills were highly valued by nearly all the questionnaire sample group, with 88% mentioning these as essential attributes for both professional groups. Examples given of such skills included high level verbal and non-verbal communication skills with individuals and groups, strong listening abilities, good emotional intelligence, high levels of empathy and abilities to build confidence and bolster self-esteem in their students' professional lives. Mentors' inter-personal skills and their consequent abilities to support student learning were often highly praised in the questionnaire and interview data, with some referred to as having 'fantastic inter-personal skills', and being 'so skilled' and 'my main support system'. But considerable variability in the quality of mentoring experiences was also clear from the students' responses, with some being scathing about their mentors' skills:

I don't think he should have been a mentor as he didn't seem to like us trainees at all. In fact I think he sometimes resented having to spend time with us instead of the children. Even though he's a teacher he didn't exactly have good people skills, not with adults anyway.

Typically, students who had had negative experiences complained about 'my learning time getting squeezed', 'often being ignored' or 'not getting enough help when I needed it'. Some of these students clearly recognised the significant time constraints on their mentors but still regretted the impact these had on their personal learning:

I understand her main job is teaching the children and I had to come second but it was often hard to find a time when we could talk. She always had to be busy, busy with her own teaching and the children.

In the questionnaire data, teacher educators were seen as taking greater degrees of responsibility for student learning and progression than many mentors were able to do, but then as one student at University A succinctly noted, 'making sure we get through the course is their main job'. The interview data also showed students' views of teacher educators' empathy, care and a sense of responsibility for learning and support during an ITE experience that was often constructed as 'tough', 'a struggle', 'challenging to say the least', especially when on placements. Here the teacher educators became the students' 'representative' or 'voice'.

You need the uni people (*teacher educators*) to have good inter-personal skills as well as being good teachers because they'll be doing a lot of propping up especially during placements.

XX (*name of teacher educator*) was amazing in getting me through first placement. I couldn't have done it without her - visiting me, phoning me, emailing me anything she could do to keep me going in and staying on the course.

Teacher educators were also seen as having good problem solving and decision making skills, which they often needed when negotiating with schools on behalf of their students.

10.4 Discussion and Conclusion

This is a large-scale study, conducted using a robust research design. It gives considerable insights into how these student teachers perceive their teacher educators and mentors, in particular, which identities, forms of knowledge and skills from those educators they privileged and valued during their ITE. As stated above, this type of study matters because how students perceive their educators affects the nature of their engagement in the learning process, their ability to take advantage of the learning opportunities offered and therefore potentially the quality of outcomes of pre-service. This study therefore makes a definite contribution to research in and on teacher education.

Nevertheless, the study has a number of acknowledged limitations, including the fact that only a questionnaire (often seen as 'blunt' instrument for exploring nuanced perceptions) and a semi-structured interview schedule were deployed as data collection methods. Certainly, the questionnaire format did not enable us to explore sometimes surprising student perceptions in depth. We should also note the researcher positionality here in that both questionnaires and interviews were implemented by teacher educators, albeit usually individuals not teaching those particular student cohorts.

The findings show some differences in responses across the types of universities, programmes and age phases. For example, secondary students were more likely to value subject knowledge for teaching and 'pure' subject knowledge than primary students who gave a higher value to 'knowledge of how children learn'. A further example of difference is that students from the elite and research-intensive University C were more likely to recognise and stress the academic identities and work of their teacher educators, whilst students at the other universities placed less emphasis on these things. The implications of these differential findings will be analysed and reported in future publications.

But over and above these differences, we can determine some general patterns across the whole sample group. These were that experiential knowledge of school teaching had become highly valued capital in the eyes of student teachers, making them keen to have teacher educators who had recent and relevant teaching experience and mentors who had expert knowledge of the practicum school and its classrooms contexts. Subject knowledge for teaching was largely attributed to a mix of personal study, usually at first degree level, and teaching experience. Other types of knowledge, particularly those gained through research or scholarship within the discipline of education, were often overlooked, marginalised or de-legitimised by the students for both mentors and for teacher educators,

particularly at Universities A and B. Certain kinds of inter-personal skills and dispositions were highly valued for mentors and teacher educators, particularly adopting an ethos of care and responsibility for student progression.

Many studies identify that student teachers, particularly those on one-year programmes, prioritise the acquisition of the practical knowledge and skills they will need to survive in the classroom. The current assessment procedures during placements in English schools and the emphasis on Newly Qualified Teachers needing to be 'classroom ready' by the end of their training only intensify and formalise this pressure. It is then hardly surprising to find students identifying pre-service as a time of high stress and adopting an instrumental view of their learning processes. Many of these students seem to perceive the need to 'master' a set body of knowledge and skills in order to become teachers; there are clear links here to what Winch et al., (2013) have termed the 'teacher as technician' model where teachers have technical know-how of 'what works' and deploy this knowledge to create effective classroom practice.

In the instrumental learning processes which result the recent and relevant experiential knowledge of educators is prioritised over other types of knowledge, including 'theory' or broad research-informed perspectives. Some students clearly perceive a need for their educators, whether in schools or HEIs, to fulfill two basic roles: first, functioning as sources of knowledge to be acquired by the students; second, supplying the essential professional, practical and emotional support required for survival (Caires & Almeida, 2005; Orr, 2012).

These models - what might be termed 'tell me' and 'support me' - have certainly been found in other studies of student teachers. But many commentators discuss the inadequacy of these models, not least because they supply only a superficial and 'survival-orientated' reproduction of a narrow, restricted and instrumental knowledge base for teaching (Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Yandell, 2016). They allow little space for developing sound, long term knowledge based around personal practice, reflexivity and professional judgements - or for deeper understanding of schools and pupils. Learning about teaching is an on-going, career-long process then not a short experience of 'mastering' teaching as some participants in this study seem to imply; rather 'student teachers... must see themselves not as conquering heroes but as grappling with the challenges of teaching' (Kosnik & Beck 2009:145).

How teacher educators and mentors understand their work in developing student learning varies. In Shagrir (2015), for example, one of the three models of work described by teacher educators is 'to help and assist students to succeed in their studies' and in this role to 'make themselves, their experience and their qualifications available to help and support the students' (p.6). But a second group of teacher educators in the same study sees their roles as empowering students and helping them to grow and become independent learners through 'active and participatory learning' (p.7). A third group see themselves serving as mediators between 'the academic content learned and the practice of teaching' (p.8).

Many mentors, perhaps constrained by time and opportunities, may resort to a traditional, transmission mode of mentoring as the imparting of wisdom from more experienced professional to the newcomer. Other mentors, however, see their work in very different and complex ways, with a key role being to challenge student teachers and to encourage them to construct their learning with mentor support (for example, Jones et al., 2009; Van Velzen et al., in this volume). Yet for many of the students here, mentoring seemingly remains defined by a transmission mode, supplemented by requirements for 'support and guidance'. Whilst it is widely accepted that these learners need 'safe' environments for their practice in schools and good quality support and guidance, these are worryingly narrow ways of understanding what mentoring is, with little understanding of how mentors might involve student teachers in more participatory models of learning. These findings are of concern because they indicate that many students' understanding of mentoring - as one of the key educative processes in which they participate - are limiting for them as learners and at odds with at least some of their educators.

Mentoring has long been acknowledged as an under-valued role, conducted in varied ways and resulting in variable quality learning experiences for student teachers. The recent Carter Review into teacher education in England (DfE, 2015) underlines the growing importance of mentoring in a school-led system where the majority of student learning necessarily occurs in school contexts. Yet, even in the current school-led system, the work these professionals undertake may still continue to involve under-valued and often tacit knowledge and skills (DfE, 2015). This situation is not helped if the perceptions of student teachers frame mentors' knowledge and roles in narrow ways which ignore the wider accumulated experience and expertise of their educators.

The findings also indicate limited ways of understanding and valuing teacher educators' knowledge and roles. These students' perceptions reflect the growing emphasis on experiential knowledge of schooling as a key element of teacher educator professionalism in England (Ellis et al., 2012; Murray, 2014). Teacher education in England has undoubtedly made a strong turn towards practice and the practical, but there are still strong arguments for broad and research-informed models of teacher education in which 'theory', often mediated by teacher educators, is an essential element of learning with and from practice. The 'clinical practice model' (Burn & Mutton, 2013), for example, attempts to integrate practice in schools with research-based knowledge, using teaching methods which give students access to the reasoning and underlying knowledge of both university-based teacher educators and mentors.

But for many teacher educators there are still discrepancies between students' and teacher educators' perceptions and expectations, and as Brown et al. (2016: p. 7) comment, overall, 'university tutors both new and old, are now less able to compete with school-based teacher educators in meeting the demands of immediate practice.' There are also tensions between student expectations of classroom experience and up to date knowledge of schools and university expectations of high levels of research productivity. These tensions have led Brown et al., (2016) to state that teacher educators find

themselves in a crisis of legitimacy. Adding to these pressures, findings like ours identify that in their narrow focus on teacher educators' knowledge and identities, many students may risk overlooking the broader and more participatory learning experiences which the accumulated experience and expertise, including the broad and theoretically-based knowledge, of their HE-based teacher educators could bring them. This situation further undermines the perceived value of HE contributions to pre-service education.

This study raises further issues for both teacher educators and mentors including how can these educators best communicate their extended roles in teacher education and their strategies for offering support and guidance, whilst also generating knowledge in collaborative and co-constructed learning environments in school classrooms and university seminar rooms? And how can they communicate their professional identities, values and purposes to their students in ways which help to develop the more participatory pedagogical models which support high quality and research-informed learning in pre-service?

Finally, how can policy makers be encouraged to consider the implications of these professional identities and participatory pedagogical models in their formulations of teacher education for the coming decades? Undoubtedly, there is an urgent need to focus on professional learning for both mentors in schools (school-based teacher educators) and teacher educators in universities; both need support in understanding, negotiating and implementing the fast-changing contexts in which ITE in England takes place. This support for professional learning should have the aims of supporting these educators and improving their practice, thus long-term improving the quality of student teachers' learning. It deserves to be well-funded by policy makers and implemented across the system, reflecting national imperatives but also designed to offer learning support tailored to the local contexts and the diversity of provision found there.

Within national policy making on teacher education and even in policies and practices in university departments of education, the changing identities and positionalities of teacher educators and the implications for their practices in both pedagogy and research are rarely mentioned. And yet, as this study and the findings of the research in chapter 12, clearly show, this occupational group remains very influential 'on the ground' of teacher education, with high significance for student teachers and mentors in many contexts. These implications for policy, particularly the implications of how teacher educators, whether in schools or in HE, are positioned within policy making debates, are discussed in more detail in the finale to this book, chapter 14.

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ⁱ Most, but not all, Higher Education Institutions offering teacher education in England are now universities.