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Title: **How teachers of all disciplines use Masters degree studies in education to support learning in their professional lives**

FINAL REPORT

How teachers of all disciplines use Masters degree studies in education to support learning in their professional lives

Main aims: The project analysed three education Masters programmes at the Institute of Education, in order to isolate aspects that teachers and tutors perceived to be most important in impacting on teachers' professional learning. These MAs were: the MA Effective Learning; The MA Bilingual Learning; and the MA TESOL. In fact, the research explored a wider area than just the relationship between MA learning and professional practice to include teachers' learning prior to and after the MA learning and how these other experiences of learning inter-related.

Research question:

In which ways do Masters degrees in education at the Institute of Education support teachers' professional development?

Sub-questions:

How were Masters degrees perceived as supporting teachers' professional development across the disciplines in recent history?

How do tutors of Masters degrees at the Institute today perceive their role in supporting teachers' professional development across the disciplines?

How do past and current students from Masters programmes at the Institute perceive programmes as supporting their immediate and longer-term professional development across the disciplines?

In which ways are tutors' and students' perceptions in tension with current government policy trends for the future?

Research design

The research focused on teachers' own perceptions of how a Masters programme has changed their own learning. This research took a phenomenological approach to exploring student and tutor experiences at the Institute of Education from the past and present to build up an integrated picture of the process of professional learning. The main method for data collection was in depth interview, carried out by myself and my colleague, Dr. Sian Preece, over a period of 12 months.

As planned, eight tutors of Masters programmes in education were interviewed from the Institute of Education, London University (n=8). Tutors were questioned about their own experiences of learning in the past, and how they perceived these to impact on their own professional learning and teaching, and how perceptions are changing. Eleven Masters students currently studying at the Institute of Education were interviewed, including students at different stages of their studies (n=11). This sample was larger than anticipated and consisted of the following:

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Continuing or completed MA student	<i>Teaching subject</i>	<i>Name of teacher</i>	<i>Length of interview (minutes)</i>	<i>MA student engaged with</i>
continuing	English in FE	Patrick	60	MA TESOL
completed	History, English	Sally	57	MA Bilingual Learners
continuing	ICT, RE, head teacher	Umar	48	MA Effective Learning
continuing	English [Secondary English and AST]	Lucy	45	MA Effective Learning
continuing	Primary, English language	Taylor	45	MA Bilingual Learners
completed	PE	Priscilla	42	MA Effective Learning
completed	English	Ellie	40	MA TESOL
continuing	Year 6 Primary	Ahmed	38	MA Effective Learning
completed	History	Rodney	38	MA Effective Learning
completed	Cookery, music, psychology	Deborah	35	MA Effective Learning
continuing	Primary, Year 1	Vera	23	MA Effective Learning

Data analysis took place throughout the project through progressive focusing, identifying new themes and refining the research questions (Miles and Huberman, 1995). Development of theoretical categories and models were determined by pre-focusing on the area of study, by theoretical schema already developed in the area, and, more particularly, by engagement with the data themselves. Ethical procedures were developed and implemented, with appropriate institutional approval, at different phases of the project (cf. BERA, 2007).

Data from each cohort were analysed separately. As yet, only the data on teachers' interviews has been analysed and written up but the tutor data will also be analysed later this year. Issues across tutors and students will be compared and contrasted to draw out underlying patterns and common findings in the next few months.

Significance

This research is significant in that the relationship between university Masters programmes, and teachers' professional learning needs to be interrogated as part of the policy debate about the nature and effectiveness of teachers' professional development. Please read the attached journal article draft for a full exposition of our findings in relation to the teachers' interviews. This article will be submitted to Professional Development in Education Journal in the next few weeks. It is currently being reviewed by Prof. Michael Fielding.

In summary, we claim that our findings suggested the following:

- a) It was the relationships in which the teachers engaged during professional learning that seem to have determined its fruitfulness in terms of supporting fundamentals in education.
- b) These teachers sometimes experienced as highly supportive of human goals:
 - formal teacher education including the B Ed, PGCE, CELTA and MA;
 - formal support by senior management in schools;
 - observations by experienced teachers and of experienced teachers; and
 - teacher communities in schools
 - more personal and less structured interactions, such as with family, colleagues and students.
- c) *Where sight was lost of the personal during learning experiences, they were less likely to inspire the teachers in their future roles as educators.* The reason for this seems to be that firstly, the methods themselves did not provide opportunities for the teachers' human fulfilment; secondly, that the methods did not accord with the teachers' own beliefs that teaching is both a personal and a functional enterprise.
- d) The English Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, claimed that:

Teaching is a craft and it is best learnt as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman. Watching others, and being rigorously observed yourself as you develop, is the best route to acquiring mastery in the classroom (Education.gov.uk).

The teachers in our study supported Gove's claim where observation was based on collegiality and a desire to support the whole development of the teacher and his/her pupils. But where observation was carried out as an appraisal in an impersonal way, it seems that the teachers found it insignificant at best.

- e) The MAs our teachers engaged in seemed to provide for them some rich opportunities for the kind of learning that reflects personal goals in education. These features included, most strikingly:
- the spaces to interact with teachers from a range of backgrounds with diverse perspectives;
 - the encouragement to explore existing published educational research;
 - provision of teaching which could provide a model for one's own practice; and
 - support into carrying out action research into an area of practice that each individual found important .

f) In exploring and challenging the *status quo* it seemed that participants on the MAs might reassess their own experiences and practices, '... often in ways which are discomforting and problematic and always in ways that take us back to fundamentals' (Fielding, 2006, p.365).

Our recommendations for future action are:

- a) To try to make sure that opportunities listed in (e) are widely available, both in MAs and also in schools - especially as teacher education becomes more and more the task of schools.
- b) CPD structures such as Teacher Learning Communities in schools, who meet regularly to learn about, try out and critique new practices (see Hargreaves, 2013 forthcoming; Wiliam, 2007) may offer the possibility of dialogue among a range of teachers, input from outside the school plus chances to study educational research, carry out one's own research as well as the facility for collegial observations.
- c) In summary, many different versions of teacher development can support the functional to serve the personal in education, but the key point for any vehicle of CPD is that teachers and teacher educators have that conversation about how the functional is *servng* the personal, in an open, non-judgmental and radically critical way.

A further two journal papers will be submitted to academic journals in 2012/3 addressing higher education. These papers will focus on:

- a) Tutors' and teachers' experiences of professional identity formation through MA programmes in education
- b) Tutors' experiences of the functional and the personal in their own learning and in their MA teaching.

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Eleanore Hargreaves, Sep 2012