Citizenship and the Assessment of Trainees

Author: Ian Davies
Citizenship and the Assessment of Trainees

Ian Davies, James Arthur, Stephen Fairbrass, Paula Mountford, Lynn Revell, and Liz West.

Introduction

This paper reports on a collaborative project undertaken by 5 ITT partnerships for the purpose of highlighting some of the issues perceived as being significant in the assessment of trainees who are preparing to teach citizenship. The overarching research question for the ‘Citizenship and Assessment of Student Teachers’ (CAST) project was: ‘What is done in order to assess trainees of citizenship and why?’

There were a number of stages to the project. Initial discussions and a literature review (see http://www.citized.info/pdf/other/cast.pdf) (accessed 5 August 2005) were followed by a review of ITT documentation (generic and specific to citizenship) requested from all HEIs in England in which either specialist PGCE courses in citizenship were offered, or in which there was a strong commitment to providing citizenship inputs to initial teacher education students and questionnaire data (see appendix one) from those tutors. 18 HEI-based members of staff from 13 partnerships provided questionnaire data that were analysed by 2 colleagues from different HEIs and used in the development of a seminar (held February 2005) in which colleagues from five HEIs decided to collaborate on the next stage of research. During the period April-July 2005, four institutions took part in collaborative in-depth work. A balance was achieved between institutions across type of provision (specialist and in combination with another subject), size of cohort, geographical location (north/south), and context (city/small town).

Matthew’s College runs a discrete Citizenship course with placements principally across two counties. Trainees follow two placements, the first in the
Autumn term, builds up the number of days within school gradually to 4 per week by the end of that term and continuing into the Spring term on a 5-day pattern for 4-5 weeks. They then follow a 12-week placement in their second school from March to June teaching 60 % of a NQT’s timetable.

The Old City College programme offers five places for students to explore citizenship as a “useful adjunct” to their PGCE in History. These five students are part of a group of specialist 22 History trainees. The History (and citizenship) trainees will follow HEI workshops specifically focused on key areas of Citizenship as well as exploring citizenship and history. In their school-based training these trainees will predominantly teach history. However, opportunities to explore the teaching of citizenship through history or in discrete provision are sought in two placements: one before Christmas of two days each week and then a three week mini-block and a 17 week main placement. In the latter placement a timetable of 50% is sought with approximately two or three lessons or other opportunities to teach citizenship.

The Cotton programme offers specialist provision in citizenship education. Following a period of HEI-based induction there is a blend of HEI and school based training with a placement in the autumn term of eight weeks and a placement finishing in May of eight weeks.

The Coastal college offers specialist provision in citizenship education with days in school and the HEI in October and November and complete weeks spent in school in four blocks with a focus (e.g. on inclusion) highlighted for each segment, increasing expectations and weeks in the HEI to undertake complimentary work.

Those institutions provided relevant documentation to be used as research data and, additionally, the following occurred: one interview with an ITT tutor from each institution; review of a sample of reports about trainees written by tutors and teachers; review of a sample of trainees’ self evaluation documents;
one interview with a sample of trainees at each participating institution; and a review of a sample of trainees' written assignments.

**Recruiting and Selecting**

In Old City College the interview procedure includes several elements. In a group interview applicants are asked to talk about a self-nominated topic and to complete a questionnaire. This is designed to test their communication skills and to encourage them to consider the wider and relevant educational debates. In individual interviews HEI tutors interview applicants alongside a school-based tutor. Applicants are expected to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the National Curriculum for both History and Citizenship through identifying a potential classroom activity and thinking how this might be assessed. Tutors are looking for a commitment, not only to the themes of citizenship, but also to the learning methods, such as discussion, that can underpin young peoples’ examination of contemporary issues. The interview plays a part in highlighting training needs and tutors will give guidance on subject knowledge or school experience needs. A literacy check is undertaken by applicants completing a written exercise constructing teacher feedback for a pupil on a piece of pupil work on a historical theme. This enables tutors to identify the applicants' literacy and language skills and their awareness of the historical understanding of young people. It also gives some indication of the applicants' sensitivity towards the nature of feedback, such as pitch and tone of response.

At Matthew’s College a booklet is sent to all invitees prior to the interview to advise them of what is expected on the day. Interviews carried out by both history and citizenship PGCE tutors and usually a teacher from local school. A series of activities, some of which are common to all PGCE course at Matthew’s include correcting a passage of prose for SPAG and rewriting a complex prose passage for a year 7 reader. Candidates each prepare a five minute presentation for year eight audience that introduces to a Citizenship topic. Questions are then based on the presentation (e.g. “what would you do...
Each candidate produces a short written piece of 200 words on the theme of the ‘Qualities of the effective Citizenship teacher’. A formal interview is conducted to test previous knowledge/experience against the National Curriculum for Citizenship. Candidates are expected to ‘sell themselves’ and show ability to ‘enthuse’ and the potential to engage young people. Demonstrate how previous learning/experience equips them to be (Citizenship) teacher. Some standard questions are used with some generated by what happens at interview with selectors looking for a real sense of commitment/vision with regard to Citizenship. The interview also seeks to identify knowledge gaps (informs ‘needs analysis’) and there are specific questions on their attitudes to inclusion/equal opportunities. Candidates are informed about the demands made by the PGCE programme. A decision is made following discussion between History/Citizenship tutors and schoolteacher. Most offers are conditional and accompanied by a recommendation to go into school(s) (candidates may be asked to write a 2-side report about observations). Prior to the beginning of the programme a reading list relating to subject knowledge is given to all and specific advice to individuals based on the ‘needs analysis’ referred to above.

At Cotton College there is a careful review of the personal statement as given on the GTTR form. Although all aspects of the GTTR form are seen as important this statement is seen as being particularly significant insofar as it provides evidence of the candidate’s understanding and commitment to Citizenship. The nature of choices made in all HEIs shown on the candidate’s GTTR is used as an indication of commitment to citizenship and this is seen as more important than the ranking of particular institutions. The interview itself has a number of parts. There is a group session in which the candidates have an opportunity to interact with other candidates and HEI and school-based staff. Candidates complete a short course GCSE Citizenship paper. Questions in a closed individual interview focus on key issues to do with why they have applied to become a Citizenship teacher. They are also invited to explain how they would use a resource that they have brought with them for
the purpose of developing citizenship education. Feedback is provided to candidates.

**Written assignments**

ITT partnerships require a range of written assignments (from two to eight) with a mix of tasks that focus on subject specific and generic work. In addition to these essay based assignments trainees are required to complete a range of self assessment documents and portfolios showing examples of their classroom based work.

The following is required of all History/Citizenship trainees at Old City College:

- An assignment which asks trainees to reflect on key aspects of teaching, learning and assessment through observed practice. Trainees are asked to comment and reflect on the nature of teaching in both History and Citizenship.

- The second assignment is a portfolio of evidence which focuses on evaluation of the trainee’s own teaching and learning including a critically reflective appraisal of a sequence of lessons. In this assignment, trainees are explicitly required to focus upon the teaching of citizenship through history.

- A Special Study which is a part of the Whole School Issues strand of the PGCE Programme and enables trainees to determine their own generic focus.

- In-depth focus. This project enables trainees to nominate an area of particular subject specific interest on which they base a small scale research project within school. They are strongly encouraged to focus upon Citizenship but this is not a requirement. The focus is agreed in
consultation with the HEI tutor and can be tailored to individual training needs.

The eight written assignments from Matthew’s College (2500/4000 words each) include two that are general professional (generic to all the PGCE courses at the institution) and six that are Citizenship specific. The latter are summarised below:

1. A written assignment to respond to a question on the nature and place of citizenship in the school curriculum and designed to promote critical reflection
2. Portfolio of observations and tasks related to planning, teaching, learning and assessment (training log)
3. 2 assignments based on submission of sequence of lessons to show planning skills (with clear rationale), and subject knowledge. 1 for each placement.
4. Analysis of pupil progression (including from KS2/3, or KS4/post 16),
5. Assignment on assessment based on case study of two pupils/one topic taught over period of time.

The four assignments from Cotton College are: a task on interpreting citizenship involving a review of literature, a generic task involving reflections about teaching on primary placement, an assignment about their own teaching of citizenship, and, finally a task which allows for an exploration of professional issues. As such two of the four assignments are specific to citizenship education.

The written requirements from Coastal College are a range of reviews, a final portfolio containing evidence related to the achievement of the standards and two professional investigations each of 4000 words, the first that critically interrogates the teaching of citizenship and its representation in the school curriculum and the second that focuses on ‘teaching and learning in whole school contexts’.
Assessing Teaching

A range of people are involved in the assessment of teaching including the trainees themselves in their completion of self assessment schedules, teachers and HEI tutors.

Old City College
The trainees experience two school placements. The first occurs in the autumn term and, for a period of six weeks, requires the trainees to be in school on Tuesday and Thursday and in the final three weeks of term on a full time basis. During the latter period of that placement the trainees are visited by a member of HEI based staff to discuss issues. An end of term report is written by the school and discussed with the student in the HEI. That report is communicated both on paper and in a face to face meeting with the school to where the trainee will progress after Christmas. During the long placement the school will observe the trainee at least once each week with one of those observations being completed by the teacher who is responsible for all students in the school. The school submits written reports on four occasions. Normally one visit is made by an HEI based tutor during the long placement.

At Matthew’s College a generic form produced by the HEI is used for reporting on lesson observation although staff have added an extra ‘box’ to form to focus specifically on Citizenship. School staff write once each week (up to two sides of A4) with explicit reference to QTS standards focussing on strengths and weaknesses, setting targets for the next observation and ensuring that those targets are recorded in a ‘training log’. Tutors visit twice each placement and write a report on each occasion. The reports form the basis for discussions known as ‘tripartite review’ (TR) where tutor, mentor and trainee sit to discuss progress and where self-evaluation by the trainee is encouraged and there are opportunities to discuss standardisation across trainees.

At Cotton College at least one lesson of each trainee is formally observed per week followed by discussion with staff in which targets are set. Two reports at
the end of the placement are sent from the school to the College. The HEI-based tutor completes at least two visits to each trainee including at least one joint observation with a mentor/class teacher to promote standardisation and for the purposes of quality assurance.

At Coastal College the HEI based tutor will undertake one lesson observation during each practice and the school-based tutor will complete six observations per practice. The school and HEI-based professional mentors will each make one visit to each trainee.

**Issues**

The following issues emerged during the project:

- The difficulties – given the developing nature of citizenship education in schools - of finding suitable opportunities for assessment
- The challenges of considering the meaning of the standards both separately and in an integrated fashion. What does it mean to do well in relation to one standard (and what evidence is required) and what does it mean to develop appropriate work across the standards?
- What sort of model of progression could be established in order to guide assessment at different parts of the initial teacher education programme?
- The extent to which there is a clear focus by assessors on citizenship as opposed to generic matters. We suggest that the specific nature of citizenship education is developing perhaps less fully or explicitly as matters relating to generic teaching skills.
- In relation to the point shown above, there may be different reporting styles (citizenship not mentioned explicitly, citizenship as the context in which teaching occurs and, finally, an explicit exploration of citizenship).
Conclusions

Assessment of all areas within which teacher training occurs is complex and all embracing (what does not relate to assessment?). But in the new area of initial teacher education for citizenship education there are perhaps particularly demanding circumstances. It is very difficult to find school placements that allow for trainees to practise the citizenship education explicitly and consistently within a team whose expertise is secure. There are well-developed professional practices within ITT programmes that allow for a blended and progressive approach to the achievement of standards in a variety of contexts involving real partnerships between different personnel and within well-established quality assurance mechanisms. However, the emphases brought to assessment across HEI-school partnerships are different with some individuals focussing more on generic matters rather than focussing on citizenship explicitly. Some aspects of citizenship are not covered very often (e.g. work beyond the classroom). Reports at times do not explicitly refer to citizenship or use citizenship as the context or background rather than as the particular area of curricular and pedagogical expertise in which specific forms of knowledge are developed. Grades are in two of our three partnerships either not used at all or used generically and this seems worthy of further investigation. There is much to admire in the development of the new initial teacher education programmes for citizenship. Our view is that Ofsted’s view that high quality work is in evidence is right. However, we suggest that there is more that could be done to develop a more precise elaboration of citizenship ITT with greater insight into the nature of useful subject knowledge based on experience of those who can employ certain aspects of their degree knowledge and other experience to do good work with young people, more opportunities for specialist teaching in schools, a greater understanding of the essential elements associated with interactive teaching and learning methods, a clearer elaboration of what counts as evidence and what can be assessed as the trainee works with others beyond the classroom.
**Acknowledgements**

We are grateful to the co-ordinating committee and others who gave advice at various points of the project. Paul Adams, Professor Ian Menter, Dr. Nick McGuinn, Janet Palmer.