The Citizenship and Assessment of Student Teachers (CAST) project.

by Ian Davies, James Arthur, Janet Palmer and Nick McGuinn.

Correspondence
Dr. Ian Davies
Department of Educational Studies
University of York
Heslington
YORK
YO10 5DD
Tel: 01904 433452.
e-mail: id5@york.ac.uk

Summary

The Citizenship and Assessment of Student Teachers (CAST) project will through collaborative work with providers contribute to an empowerment of staff by clarifying, developing and sharing:

• a knowledge of what PGCE tutors in England do when selecting students for entry to courses, observing beginning teachers in the classroom, marking written assignments produced by beginning teachers and making links between their establishment of objectives, selection of teaching methods and assessment decisions.
• the levels of understanding and standards that are expected by tutors
• the models of itt preferred by tutors
• guidance on what issues need to be addressed in order to continue and further develop good practice.

Context

Assessment at all levels is widely acknowledged as one of the most demanding of all areas. Three broadly stated reasons can be given to justify the need for this project.
Firstly, assessment lies at the heart of all good teaching. It is the means by which we assert the achievement of acceptable standards, inform our teaching and assist students to become knowledgeable participants in their own professional development. This integrated understanding of assessment clearly implies the need to serve different audiences.

Secondly, work in this field is urgently required in light of the recently introduced itt standards. Currently, although there is some experience and associated 'craft knowledge' there is very little reliable research based evidence that could stand as a useful guide to characterise the meaning of the standards. As such the standards must be seen as assertions of professional common sense that have been legitimated by government. It is possible that this status may allow for misunderstandings or among some, a rejection of their worth. Improved knowledge of their meaning is likely to enhance the possibilities for understanding and acceptance by itt tutors.

Thirdly, it is necessary to undertake work on assessment in the new field of citizenship education. Almost no work on assessment of citizenship education exists. The assessment of citizenship students is subject to the frameworks in operation in each PGCE programme and these were not normally designed to accommodate citizenship. Assessment of citizenship education within itt is in its infancy. Some have even asserted informally that assessment is either impossible or inappropriate within the context of citizenship education. We need to undertake this vital work with some urgency.

Research Questions

The overarching research question for the CAST project is:

**What is done in order to assess student teachers of citizenship and why?**

The above will be illuminated with reference to 5 areas:

- Personnel
what issues emerge when comparing assessment undertaken by university staff, school staff and students themselves (the last in the form of self evaluation)

• Form
what issues emerge when assessment within the classroom is compared and contrasted with assessment of students' written assignments?

• Progression
what issues emerge when assessment takes place at different stages of the PGCE programme (from selection of students through to course completion)

• Pedagogy
what issues emerge when an exploring the bridges between teaching and assessing. To what extent are tutors undertaking assessment work with formative and/or summative purposes?

• Quality
What issues emerge when exploring the purposes of assessment across 'pedagogical' and 'quality' agendas? What systems and processes have been developed in HEIs for the purposes of establishing equity and due process?

Research methods

In order to explore the above it is necessary to work collaboratively with providers.

An overview of assessment practice in all institutions in England will be gained by means of requests for documentation and completion of a questionnaire.

Following analysis of the questionnaire data 5 institutions will be selected for in-depth work. A balance will be achieved across type of provision (specialist and in combination with another subject), size of cohort, geographical location (north/south), and context (city/small town).
The 5 institutions will submit all relevant documentation. Additionally, the following will take place:

- interviews with each pgce tutor at different stages of the course
- review of reports written by tutors and teachers
- review of sample of students' self evaluation documents
- interviews with a sample of students at each participating institution
- interview with each external examiner
- review of a sample of students' written assignments
- 1 observation of a student at work in school with attendance at the resulting feedback session.

Ethics
The project will be undertaken within the guidelines recommended by the British Educational Research Association.
Data from respondents will be used in public contexts anonymously.
The research team will be drawn from staff of 5 institutions with three leading and two in a collaboratively supportive role.

Issues emerging from an initial review of literature

The word 'assessment' is itself contested and controversial. For some other words are preferred: e.g. evaluation, reflection, review. The terms will need clearer definition and characterisation as the project proceeds.

There are issues discussed in relation to the persons who are charged with assessment roles. It is possible that there are differences in understanding between teachers and tutors and perhaps others (including parents, school students, external examiners) about essential standards and the weight to be given to specific forms of knowledge and particular abilities.
There are issues relating to the role of self assessment that are currently subject of
discussion and debate. Issues concern the expertise that is needed for self assessment
and the factors that would help or hinder the development of skilled practice.

The relationship between assessment and performance is complex. Some question the
extent to which assessment decisions can be taken as a meaningful indication of
preferred understanding and performance. Instead, some suggest that assessment leads
to the development of practice that is more closely aligned with what can be assessed.
The complexity of this relationship is played out in various contexts including the
selection of candidates who have applied to join a PGCE programme, their
performance while on that course and their subsequent performance as teachers. The
performance of teachers suggests a further complication: the relationship between the
work of teachers and their impact on the achievement of school students. Simply, do
those assessment decisions reached by those who are leading PGCE programmes
relate directly to the achievement of school students?

The link between assessment and standards is complex. The use of the term
'standards' is a relatively recent phenomenon replacing the contentious (insofar as, for
some, it reflected behaviourist notions) 'competences' or 'competencies'. Whether or
not the more recent terminology suggests that certain less tangible attributes cannot
easily be assessed is unclear. The relative weight to be given to subject understanding
as opposed to professional values is contested. What counts as evidence for the
achievement of some standards is unclear.

The relationship between on the one hand the form, content and process of assessment
and, on the other hand, national policy is complex. It is unclear whether those who
make assessment decisions within the context of national policy do so to achieve the
goals of policy makers. The goals of policy makers (as opposed to the standards that
are stated) are unclear.

Clear notions of progression have not been established and as such assessment
decisions seem to be related more to 'coverage' of areas of understanding or skill and
not to improvements in sophistication or skill.
The relationship between standards and the contexts in which those standards are achieved is unclear. Should a student teacher in a challenging school be seen to have achieved a specific standard if action has occurred at what some would deem a lower level than if undertaken elsewhere?

The relationship between assessment and the consequent flexibility that can occur within individual programmes or in a national system of teacher education is unclear.

The form in which assessment takes place is little understood. Some suggest the value of portfolio assessment but this is not the only form available.

It is unclear whether specific groups of student teachers succeed better than others in relation to achievement during assessment (does ethnicity, class and gender matter in relation to assessment decisions?)

The systems of grading that are used in different institutions may be a significant area to investigate. Some seem to grade relatively broadly (pass or refer). Some use a number of grades for written work but use fewer levels for performance in the classroom.

The ways in which assessment decisions are moderated and formally decided upon suggests that there are issues connected with quality assurance that need to be explored.

There is little understanding about the relationship between assessment in different subject areas. It is possible that science for example will be concerned more with safety than others. There is a need to explore the specific connections between assessment and citizenship education. It will be vital to explore 2 key questions: to what extent is it possible to see connections between the characterisations of citizenship that are employed by tutors and teachers and the emphases that are given to their assessment decisions; to what extent are processes of teaching (by connecting with democratic forms of understanding) given a higher priority than might be expected in other subjects? It is possible that, within the context of the existing
professional standards for qualified teacher status, the following could be seen as important specifically in the assessment of student teachers of citizenship:

- knowledge of political/social/economic/moral contexts (local, national and global).
- knowledge of political/social/economic/moral concepts (power, authority, justice).
- knowledge of political/social/economic/moral issues (gender/ethnicity/class).
- knowledge of political/social/economic/moral processes (change/continuity).
- knowledge of political/social/economic/moral perspectives (liberal/civic republican/communitarian).
- knowledge of what relevant understanding and skills might be acquired by young people.
- knowledge of how relevant understandings and skills can be promoted.
- knowledge of 'policy agencies' for citizenship (DfEs; TTA; QCA etc.)
- knowledge of relevant NGOs (e.g. Citizenship Foundation).
- professional values that allow for the positive exploration and promotion of equal opportunities within a diverse democratic society in the context of the framework of the statutory responsibilities of teachers.
- skills of planning for activities within the classroom, school and community in ways that rely on the promotion of knowledge as identified above.
- skills of teaching within the classroom, school and community in ways that rely on the promotion of knowledge as identified above and which emphasises the ability to achieve specific forms of ethos.
- skills that allow for the achievement of better understanding and action by all school students as they become better able to enquiry, communicate, participate and act responsibly in relation to the knowledge identified above.
- skills that allow for the monitoring and assessment of students’ work in relation to the above perhaps especially in relation to self assessment, portfolio assessment, and assessment of group activity as well as individual work.
An initial list of references for the project on assessment of citizenship education trainees


Bramaed, R., Hardman, F., Leat, D. and McManus, E. (1994) the importance of ‘Bad Lessons’


Fitzgibbon, A. (1994) Self-evaluative exercises in initial teacher education. *Irish*


Teacher Education. 49th, Phoenix, AZ, USA: February 26-March 1.


Hougham, P. (1992) Improving student teachers' strategies for asking a range of both high level and low level questions through video evaluations. Florida, USA: Nova University.


dynamics of the student teaching triad. Teaching and Teacher Education 13: 713-726.


Trube, M. B., Madden, P. M. (2001) National standards, state goals, and the university's vision to align to provide a framework for the pre-service teacher portfolio. ERIC document number ED454169.


Williams, J. L. (1995) Differences between cooperating teachers and student teachers in their assessment of student teacher performance: potential threats to a successful


