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Teachers' learning and knowledge: motivation and self-efficacy

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Initial teacher education programmes: so much to include

What is the minimum duration of an effective initial teacher education (ITE) programme? Three-year degree course plus one for teacher training? Three- or four-year course with embedded qualified teacher status? This debate has been ongoing in the UK for many years, where teacher education is a political hot potato (la Velle and Reynolds, 2020) of increasing complexity (Whiting 2016). Interestingly, in those educational systems that score highly against such measures as PISA, the minimum time to qualify as a teacher is significantly longer. Whatever the minimum time, it is generally acknowledged that it is insufficient to pack in the necessary amount of professional knowledge and practice. This poses the next question: what to put in and what to leave out? This issue of JET contains papers that focus on a range of important elements of ITE programmes.

The first contribution, from our hard-working Deputy Editor, Stephen Newman, and his co-author from Iran, Ashkan Latifi, tackles the uncritical acceptance of Lev Vygotsky's work as a fundamental theoretical framework for teacher education programmes. There is no doubt that this paper will contribute to the ongoing discussion in this journal of the theory-practice nexus.

Moving to another contested area, that of the role of reflective practice in teacher education (Gilroy 1993; Newman 1999), Zinab Alzayed and Rashid Alabdulkareem from Saudi Arabia provide an account of how this is enhanced within a professional learning community of serving teachers in that country. This involved them in a collaborative enquiry during which progression through a cycle of reflection, which they demonstrated helped to build 'cognitive presence', i.e. participants' construction of meaning through dialogue and reflection, to solve a problem or complete a task. A careful and critical consideration of the how, when and where of reflective practice is thus highly pertinent in the design of teacher education programmes, both initial and continuing.

Our next paper, by Jonathan Firth from Scotland, goes right to the hands-on level of classroom teaching by presenting a two-pronged and innovative instructional practice, spacing and interleaving, to show how the timing of episodes of teaching can affect the success of learning. Drawing on the psychology of memory and learning, this author argues that teachers' understanding of this theoretical basis must be free of misconceptions, which potentially undermine the effectiveness of the intervention. This provides another good example of the importance of research-based teacher education.

The perennial topic of the overarching role of school experience in teacher education is the focus of the next paper by Chumei Yan and Chuanjun He from China. In the context of postgraduate teachers of English as a foreign language, they argue that extended school experiences on their own are insufficient for the formation of teacher identity, which is dependent upon a structured experience that includes clear goals, tasks and assessment. This emphasises and provides further evidence in a new context of the importance of university-school partnership in teacher education. This theme is picked up in the next

paper from Andrea Drewes and her colleagues from the USA, who present a study in which co-teaching by student-teacher (teacher candidate) and university supervisor (clinical educator) is explored. They discuss the constraints of teachers' accreditation standards and argue for a dyad/triad model of co-teaching as a rich experience in learning to teach. Modelling pedagogy is presented as a critical and central element of teacher education.

Majid Al-Amri from Saudi Arabia provides the next contribution, which touches on another important component of an innovative teacher education programme, that of self-study. Otherwise framed as student teachers' research, this can be individual or collaborative, and constitutes another major foundation of first class teacher education provision: that of training the future teacher-researcher. This study underpinned the importance of moving student-teachers away from a dependence on tutors' guidance and/or motivation driven by grades, towards a creative spirit of educational enquiry through their work in learning to teach.

Our final two full article contributions to this issue touch on sensitive societal issues that teacher education must address: sexuality and poverty. Joyce Kwan and colleagues from Hong Kong present a study involving Early Childhood student-teachers' confidence in talking about matters of sexuality with young children. Clearly it is very important to get any response to their curiosity about this right at the outset and this article sets out evidence for a helpful approach to this for teacher education. Finally, Dean Robson and his colleagues from Scotland look at student-teachers' notions of poverty. Increasing rates of child poverty worldwide require teacher educators to understand how prospective teachers understand the implications of the educational and life chance effects on children living in poverty. This article suggests that today's student-teaches have a multidimensional view of this, giving them enhanced insight into its impact on children's lives.

The articles in this issue have addressed issues of theory, reflective practice, pedagogy, school practice, teacher-as-researcher and sensitive societal issues. All of these elements are centrally germane to any programme of teacher education. Co-ordinating and prioritising them is the work of teacher education curriculum developers, who inevitably have to make stark decisions as a result of time constriction. It is hoped that provision of research evidence in the pages of journals such as JET will be an important source of information for this problematic decision-making.

The two articles in our short Research-in-Progress section address the current matter affecting all of our lives: the COVID-19 pandemic. Mark Carver and Rachel Shanks (UK) respond to findings in our recent Special Issue devoted to a global snapshot of teacher education at the outset of the pandemic: JET Volume 46 (4), with findings from Scotland suggesting that student teachers there responded with agility and success to their experiences of online teacher education. Kevin Wong and his colleagues from the USA show how pedagogic content knowledge can be enhanced through remote digital instructional practice enforced by COVID-19.

This current, all-encompassing theme is taken up in our Research-in-Practice section by Ahmet Baçal and Ali Eryılmaz from Turkey who compare experiences of student-teachers' engagement with Web 2.0 technology against direct instruction as a result of the pandemic. The final short paper is from Sally Wei-Tan Wan and her colleagues from China who describe a novel digital intervention for teacher education: Photovoice.

In the final pages of this issue, we give our annual acknowledgement and thanks to the referees who helped in the production of the 2020 volume of JET. The list is vast. This is due to the unprecedented rate of submission that JET has seen during 2020 and still continues. The database of referees for JET, entrusted to me by Professor Peter Gilroy when he retired in 2019 as Executive Editor of JET, consists of faithful supporters of our journal, many of whom are long-standing and still giving us their time and expertise, not for any remuneration, but because they understand the crucial importance of this contribution to the world of academe. Our online submission system, ScholarOne, generates suggestions for new referees, based on the keywords of papers. Through this process, we have recruited a number of referees new to JET. Without the work of all these members of the academic community of teacher education in peer reviewing the many submissions to JET, we would not be able to maintain the intellectual rigour for which our journal has a well-deserved, strong reputation. My heartfelt thanks is due to each and every one of them. I would also like to take this opportunity of thanking the members of the Editorial Board, whose work rate for JET has increased significantly over the last year. Week in and week out, they deal with the huge variety of articles that cross their desk as well as managing their full time university posts. Lastly, I thank the management and production teams of our publisher, Taylor and Francis for their understanding, support and patience through what has been a very challenging year in the life of JET.

Finally, at the outset of a new Volume for JET and a new year, may I wish our readers the very best for a happy and healthy 2021.

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