

0021

Evaluating how the LLUK/SVUK assessment regime is shaping ITT curricula and the professional development of trainees

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Background

Teacher education for the learning and skills sector has been subject to unprecedented regulation and reform over the past couple of decades. Following a critical OFSTED report in 2003, two new standards and linked regulations ((FENTO and LLUK) have been introduced over the last decade.

Research Questions

This research is being carried out with the support of the University Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) Post-16 Committee. Its' focus is on evaluating how the most recent regulatory regime - Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) and Standards Verification UK (SVUK) standards and assessment regime is shaping trainees' learning, their assessment and professional development. The research team have evaluated how national standards and regulations are influencing the curriculum offer, teaching, learning, the relationship between theory and practice and the types of practitioners that are emerging.

Methods

The research is based upon initial analysis of selected course documentation and a questionnaire from participating HEIs, of whom 20 out of 54 have responded. From the identification of key themes arising from the above, a series of focus group workshops are being held to refine and extend the analysis. These include UCET, SVUK and the professional body for teachers in the learning and skills sector the Institute for Learning (IfL) .

Frame

Socio-cultural perspectives are being employed to analyse how standards are mediated and interpreted within the diverse contexts and communities of practice of post-compulsory education and training. The paper will develop a critique of use of standards-led reforms. It demonstrates the limitations of policy reforms that treat standards as de-contextualised, vertical knowledge that can simply be 'implemented' in the diverse contexts in which trainees and teacher-educators learn and work.

Research findings

At the time of writing this abstract we are still refining our findings with focus groups, which suggest that the standards and assessment units have not led to greater consistency in the nature of ITT and in particular:

- the CTLLS qualification linked to associate lecturer status has not become established;
- there has been uneven progress in developing specialist options or upon focussing upon trainees' subject-specialist teaching skills;
- that at best educational theory plays a relatively marginal role in ITT courses;

- clear distinctions between what is expected of trainees gaining qualifications at different levels (5, 6 and 7) have not emerged.