

Preparing teachers to teach pupils with special educational needs in more inclusive schools: evaluating a PGCE development.

Gill Golder, Brahm Norwich and Phil Bayliss
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of Exeter

Introduction

In this paper we outline a recent development to meeting the requirements that all teachers have relevant knowledge, skills and are encouraged to develop positive attitudes to the education of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools. The main innovation was that all trainees work intensively with one individual pupil rather than just have general classroom teaching practice. The aims of this development focused especially on individual assessment and teaching in order to enhance conceptions about teaching need, assessment and teaching skills. A key aim was also for trainees to build up a personal relationship with one pupil in order to develop a positive attitude which could be generalised to their teaching. This development was used with all secondary PGCE trainees across all subject areas and was evaluated from various perspectives.

Its significance has to be seen in the context of the relative scarcity of SEN elements in initial training that focus on activities that aim to engender skills and positive attitude. It was recognised a quarter of a century ago in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) that there should be a SEN element in all courses of initial teacher training. The Warnock Committee advised that those validating courses should ensure that special needs elements are a condition for approving the courses. This recommendation was officially adopted twenty years ago (DES, 1984: 3/84), when criteria had to be met by Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students, if they were to be recognized a professionally qualified teachers. Compliance with these criteria were inspected by Her Majesties Inspectorate (HMI). In 1989 the Government (DES 24/89) called for the preparation of all student teachers to result in them being able to teach a full range of pupils for the diversity of ability, behaviour and social background that they would find in a mainstream school.

In 1994 the Government established the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) with responsibilities for all ITE. Since then the TTA has drawn up standards for trainee teacher to meet, if they are to gain qualified teacher status (QTS). Some of these standards are specific to pupils with exceptional needs, others are relevant to all pupils, but are particularly relevant to pupils with special educational needs (SEN). The Department for Employment and Education (DfEE) (1998) claimed in their paper 'Meeting special educational needs a programme of action' that the ITE standards, with reference to SEN, would ensure that all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) would understand their responsibilities under SEN Code of Practice, and would be capable of identifying and when appropriate supporting pupils with SEN through differentiation. Most recently, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has set the government's vision for the education of children with special educational needs and disabilities in their strategy 'Removing Barriers to

Achievement: The Government's Strategy for SEN' (2004); in this the government highlight the importance of all teachers having the skills and confidence to help children with SEN reach their potential, specifically they refer to ITE stating that:

'we will work with the Teacher Training Agency and higher education institutions to ensure that initial teacher training and programmes for continuous professional development provide a good grounding in core skills and knowledge of SEN; and work with higher education institutions to assess the scope for developing specialist qualifications.' (DfES 2004 p.18)

The government appreciates the need for this focus on special educational needs and inclusion within ITE, as it is an essential element in promoting its commitment to move towards more inclusive education (DFEE, 1997).

In the current climate in England, responsibility for ITE is shared in partnerships between universities / Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) and schools. Three approaches to the developing SEN elements in ITE were identified by HMI in their publication 'Special Educational Needs in Initial Teacher Training' (HMI 1990): permeation, focussed elements and options. Permeation involved all dimensions of teacher training including consideration of the needs of all children; thus pedagogical elements of each aspect of the course were informed by an understanding of the wide range of individual differences found in a school and integrated in professional studies, pedagogical and practical skill based components. Focussed elements were included in HEI and school based work, where SEN and inclusion issues were specifically addressed. Finally, optional elements allowed some trainee teachers, usually a minority, to study special educational needs in greater depth or at a more specialized level.

In the secondary Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) programme involved in this development, there has been both permeation and focused elements, as used widely in other similar PGCE programmes nationally. Optional elements were no longer offered as subsidiary subject work came to be abandoned. In fact, it was the removal of the SEN option which prompted this development. Much of SEN preparation in ITE has come to be based on permeation, despite its weaknesses having been recognised for over a decade. For example, Mittler (1992) highlighted the way in which SEN permeation can become invisible and therefore difficult to monitor. Also, the extent and quality of permeation encountered can vary greatly from tutor to tutor and course to course. Mittler recommended that HEIs need to ensure that mechanisms are in place to make staff aware of SEN issues and developments and to help them to consider their relevance to their own courses.

The current ITE standards, which came into effect in 2002, place a greater emphasis on special educational needs as part of ITE. Those awarded qualified teacher status (QTS) must demonstrate that they can show evidence for three standards directly related to SEN.

- *' understand their responsibilities under the SEN code of practice, and know how to seek advice from specialists on less common types of SEN.*
- *differentiate their teaching to meet the needs of pupils, including those with SEN.*
- *identify and support pupils who experience behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.'* (DfES 2004 p.57)

The standards relating to SEN and inclusion themselves show a strong emphasis on responsibilities and stress the importance of procedural knowledge and compliance. Though this is necessary and welcome, the standards do not focus on the underlying and practical aspects of pedagogy that trainee teachers both want and need to know about (Garner, 1996a, 1996b). Inclusive schooling has also provided a need to ensure that teacher education courses encourage trainee teachers to reflect on their attitudes to people with disabilities. Structured opportunities to reflect on and question society's beliefs would allow trainee teachers the opportunity to examine personal beliefs in relation to people who have a disability. In a recent study by Brownlee and Carrington (2000) trainee teachers believed that their teacher education course needed to include more practical experience and practical knowledge about inclusive schooling. Trainee teachers did not feel adequately prepared for their roles as teachers in inclusive classroom settings. Wedell (1995b) and Daniels (1996) had previously expressed concerns about the preparation of new teachers for their role as inclusive teachers. They called for careful practice and application of teaching underpinned by psychology of learning. Along the same line, Robertson (1999) claimed that the standards for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are 'too simple, slight, procedural and compliant in design' to promote the development of inclusive education.

International comparison shows that countries differ in the extent of national control over ITE. Some set out standards like the English system (for example, Scotland and New Zealand). Others have a curriculum for teacher education (for example, Norway) and others have neither (for example the states of the USA), where there may be advisory national standards and where there is wide variation between the states. Despite these variations, most of these countries emphasise their commitment to inclusion. However, Booth, Nes and Stromstad (2003) contend that many students enter teaching with little understanding of inclusive values and what these values mean for teaching and learning in schools. These authors claim that institutions send out a dual message through familiarizing students with words about Inclusion, but without preparing them to tackle barriers to inclusive development when they start working in schools. From this analysis it is clear that much that needs to be done is at a Governmental level in addressing barriers that exist in cultures, policies and practices within national administration, teacher education institutes and schools. As regards barriers at the level of ITE courses, courses about SEN and inclusion in teacher education are offered to student teachers in most countries, but in practice great variation occurs in the time devoted to it, the depth of knowledge covered and the opportunity for trainee teacher to reflect upon the issues. In England, for example, this is closely linked with the competing pressures between the need to design courses which fit the new partnership arrangements between schools and HEIs and the demands made by the national curricula, ITE standards, and the

expertise, opinions and interests of lecturers and school based mentors. In Norway, for example, the variance between internal and external quality assurance systems has also been identified as a barrier, where the lack of consequences for non-compliance with inclusion has been criticised (Haug 2003).

Thomas (1997) has argued that this enterprise of promoting high educational ideals requires an approach which focuses on and takes account of students' perceptions of learning to teach in inclusive education. In a system of ITE based on partnership between HEIs and schools, as in this country, this requires collaboration by teacher educators in HEI and school-based mentors in partnership schools. The development and its evaluation now to be outlined took place in such a partnership scheme.

PGCE development: planning and teaching and individual educational plan

This development was prompted by a decision to cease offering a SEN option course as part of the secondary PGCE at the University of Exeter. This was part of phasing out second subjects nationally in PGCE courses. This option had been running for several years and usually attracted about 50 students, some 16% of the total number of students. The course team and the partnership committee supported the introduction of a new activity for all students to undertake as one of four school-based activities under the heading of professional studies. The aims, rationale and procedures for undertaking this activity on their first teaching practice were introduced to students in a general lecture on special educational needs in the professional studies series in the Autumn term of the 2002-03 course.

The brief for students and for school-based mentors was set out in the student handbook as well as available on a specially designed website that could be accessed from schools and home by students and their tutors. The activity was presented as one that required them to 'plan and teach an individual with special educational needs in your subject area'. Its rationale was explained in terms of providing opportunities to:

- a. 'see how pupils with special educational needs have many needs in common with the majority of pupils not having SEN, while having some of their needs as particular to them as individuals;
- b. appreciate the kind of learning progress which can be possible;
- c. examine the school and class implications of moving towards greater inclusion while also meeting individual educational needs;
- d. gain a wider perspective on the work of Teaching Assistants in supporting pupils with SEN and of liaising and working with the schools' SEN Co-ordinator'.

The aims of this task were presented in these terms:

1. to find out in detail about the educational needs of an pupil with special educational needs in your subject area;
2. to extend your knowledge and understanding of how educational needs arise from personal difficulties and disabilities and from current school and outside school factors;
3. to develop your knowledge and skills in assessing individual educational needs in your subject area that is related to the programmes of study in your curriculum subject area;

4. to develop your skills in teaching a programme appropriate to the pupil's level and wider needs.

Students were also informed about how the activity provided valuable experiences that support the national requirements for initial teacher education related to special educational needs and inclusion; the standards outlined above

They were also provided with general instructions on how to carry out the activity:

Step 1: You need to liaise with your mentor and the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) to identify a pupil who is on one of the stages of the SEN Code of Practice (School action, School action plus or Statement). *Use this web-site to find out more about these levels of identification and provision for pupils with SEN,*

Step 2: You are expected to liaise and work with the pupil's class teacher, the SENCO and any Teaching Assistant (if relevant) to be briefed about the pupil's strengths, difficulties, educational needs, individual educational plan (IEP) etc.,

Step 3: Access the practical framework to guide your assessment, planning, teaching and reviewing of learning progress. (use [web-link here](#)).

This practical framework was an updated version of one designed by Professor Klaus Wedell based on an assessment and intervention strategy that had been developed by him over several years (Wedell, 1995a) and had been adapted as a guide for teachers to use for the first SEN Code of Practice. We adapted the earlier version and updated it in light of changes in the second SEN Code. This framework was available on the website and as a downloadable pdf file for students to print out. Letters were written to all ITT mentors and Principal Subject Tutors in the secondary PGCE partnership schools where students were based for their first placement. A copy of the briefing letter was also included for all SEN Co-ordinators in these schools too.

The assessment and intervention strategy

Frame 1: The assessment and intervention strategy steps:

1. Having a concern,
2. Does this apply to only this pupil or to a large proportion of the class?
3. The teacher, after trying new strategies, recognises that s/he has run out of ideas, or has not the skills to meet this pupil's needs.
4. How to help the pupil: strengths and needs,
5. Recording concerns: pros and cons
6. Gathering information,
7. Considering the causes of SEN
8. Reviewing the goals
9. Environment or pupil?
10. Helping pupil towards goal
11. Targets
12. Finding the starting point
13. Teaching process
14. Learning from the outcomes of teaching/helping

The strategy framework is set out in 11 steps and contains a commentary about theoretical and critical assumptions about the nature of special educational needs, the role of teachers in individualising their assessment,

planning and teaching. The strategy therefore combines both procedural knowledge with critical analysis about the field of SEN. The key assumption is that Code procedures only have value when they make it possible to carry out a process of assisting with progress in learning. This is where the 11 step approach (included in the frame above) is set out with web links to aspects of the current SEN Code and associated tool-kit, and other relevant web links on the DfES web-sites. The strategy involves asking questions about who needs support and what is a special educational need? This is answered in terms of the question: how does a teacher know when to do something 'extra or different'? If the answer is that most pupils are judged to need changes in the teaching, goals, methods or relationships, then the change must be addressed at a curriculum planning level with the subject team. If the answer is only one, or a few pupils, it is more likely that they have a learning difficulty and will need different or extra teaching approaches. The third step is reached when the teacher, after trying new strategies, recognises that s/he has run out of ideas, or has not the skills to meet this pupil's needs. In the next step the teacher begins to consider how to help the pupil by considering the pupil's strengths and needs as well as the features of their context that assist or prevent them from learning. This involves recording concerns, the pros and cons and wider gathering information. A useful checklist is provided of what strengths and needs to focus on as shown in second frame:

Frame 2: Assessment checklist:

- i. Relevant current and previous factors in child's / young person's environment which lessens or contributes to their needs:
 - at school (appropriateness of curriculum, teaching methods, and classroom management)
 - in the home and family (including relationships with immediate and extended family)
 - elsewhere (including links in the community)
- ii. Child / young person's relevant current and previous strengths and needs:
 - sensory and motor function and health
 - emotional state, self image, motivation and interests
 - cognitive and intellectual function
 - communication skills and competencies
 - basic educational skills and their components
 - approaches and style of learning
 - social skills and interaction with others

Based on an analysis of these child and environmental factors, the teacher reaches the seventh step of considering the causes of SEN and in the light of this moving to the next step of reviewing relevant learning goals in terms of the pupil's strengths and weaknesses. At this stage the teacher considers whether the help is to be directed at the environment or the pupil. The concept of 'compensatory interaction' is introduced to understand the facilitating and inhibiting impact of the interaction of child and environmental factors. The significance of this interaction is used to explain why it is unjustified to predict that a particular difficulty or disability will inevitably cause poor achievement in a particular curriculum subject. At this stage the teacher moves to helping the pupil towards the goal and comes to select a relevant target or objective. It is

emphasised that individual targets do not necessarily mean individual one-to-one teaching. Much support can be given within the group work and overall class teaching. The teacher is also reminded that there are different kinds of achievements that include acquiring knowledge or a skill, carrying out a skill quickly or even automatically, generalising the learning to other relevant areas and understanding the principles underlying what has been learned, in order to be able to build on the learning in new areas.

Having established appropriate target/s or objectives, the teacher then finds the pupil's starting point. Wedell reminds that :

Finding a starting point means assessing what the pupil with SENs can and cannot do in relation to a particular target. Teachers have to try to see the demands of the target through the eyes of the pupil, so that they can find a way of teaching that is relevant to the way the particular pupil learns. (Wedell, 1995a: p 31)

Targets are set as a result of assessment: a starting point is found by asking where is this pupil now, what will it take for this pupil to reach the targets set, which of the pupil's strengths and needs relate to this process? The teaching process itself is represented as finding out about the pupil's learning from the teacher's as well as the pupil's perspectives. Starting points for teaching also involve checking out the components at those levels which are nearest the achievement being targeted, before tracking back to lower levels. Teaching itself involves bringing together all the resources of staffing including teaching assistants and monitoring. The final stage in the Strategy is learning from the outcomes of teaching. If progress does not occur, then the indications for further planning become clearer, with five main inferences that the teacher can draw:

- i. the baseline was wrongly assessed,
- ii. the step size was inappropriate,
- iii. the method did not match the pupil's strengths and needs,
- iv. a combination of the above,
- v. the chosen target -or even the initial goal was inappropriate

The web-site in addition to this framework had other relevant resources that would be useful to students, such as details of the new DfES definitions of areas of SEN, details of the current SEN Code of Practice, resources about differentiation, inclusion policy directions, learning support and working with parents.

Assessing and reporting the individual educational plan activity

Students were provided with a brief which set out the expectation that they work in relation to one pupil for between 6 and 8 hours over the period they were on their first placement. How this overall time was structured was for them to agree with their school-based tutors. It could vary; for instance between 12 and 16 half hour sessions or 18 to 24 sessions of 20 minutes. These sessions could take place within class or in a withdrawal setting or some mix of these, depending on what was assessed to be most appropriate. They were expected to liaise over this period with the class teacher and the SENCO about any issues or concerns about how to carry out the task. They were also reminded that, in line with the provided framework for assessment

and teaching strategy, the assessment of individual needs and planning of teaching needed to be individually focussed. But the teaching to meet the objectives/targets could be in an individual and/or a group setting with other children. Students' reports were included in their record of evidence of achievement and were read and signed off as accurate and developmental by their mentor or principal subject tutor, in most cases they were also checked by their university visiting tutor prior to being used as evidence towards the QTS standards.

Students wrote up this activity for their portfolio in about 1,000 words. The pupil's name was not to be used. To present a comprehensive account, they were advised to cover certain areas as set out in the third frame below: the following areas:

Frame 3: Student activity report brief

1. Background information about the pupil:
 - age, gender, school history, educationally relevant areas of strengths and difficulties,
2. Information you collected in planning your work:
 - sources and kinds of information (school records, previous IEPs and subject based records and reviews etc.) and their usefulness,
3. How you planned and undertook the work:
 - Assessment of resources and obstacles in learning environment in interaction with strengths and difficulties of the pupil
 - Setting target/s in your subject area and kind target set and why
 - Strategies used, settings in which you taught and why strategies and settings were selected
 - Monitoring of progress; how undertaken and progress made/not made
 - Evaluation of progress / difficulties encountered in learning and teaching
 - Use of ideas and practices from materials provided and reading undertaken related to the various aspects of activity
4. Conclusions
 - recommendations for future teaching of this pupil
 - your personal and professional learning from the activity (knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes)
5. Reference list

Evaluation of SEN PGCE activity

The first year of running this activity was evaluated mainly in terms of the perspectives of the main participants about the process and outcomes and the students' written reports of their individual work with pupils.

i. PGCE students:

Semi-structured questionnaires were distributed to the 320 Secondary PGCE students at a seminar towards the end of their course; 223 were returned (70% return rate). This included male and female trainees from 12 different specialist subjects. They were asked questions covering:

- doing the activity: what they did, how they arranged it, experience of doing it, how well it went, how they embedded into other professional learning,
- support materials: did they use them, which materials useful/not so useful, access problems, did they follow up leads, which?
- support in school: from SENCO, from ITT mentor, others

- professional learning: what learned about SEN framework, individual; pupil and adapting teaching, managing support
- change: recommendations for future students.

ii. Principal Subject Tutors (PST) and SEN Co-ordinators (SENCOs):

A postal questionnaire was sent out to all PSTs and SENCOs (59 replies with a return rate of 20%) and all SENCOs (40 returns with a 35% return rate). They were asked questions covering the same broad areas as for students, but adapted for their respective roles in supporting the activity.

iii. Students' activity reports

Forty assignments were collected in for evaluation in terms of the provided task brief and assessment criteria. At least 2 were chosen at random from each of 15 subject areas and an extra 10 from subjects with larger cohorts.

Main findings

Students

Background information

Of the 223 questionnaire respondents, the female to male response rate was roughly 3 to 2, with most in the 21-25 age range. Twelve subject areas were represented in this sample of respondents. Most students undertook the activity in a state school, though there were 13 who did so in an independent school. About 22% reported that they had some prior experience of working with pupils with SEN.

Details of individual pupils and activity:

Pupils who were selected for the activity were in 11 –17 year old age range. The main areas of pupils' SEN were literacy difficulties, dyslexia, behaviour difficulties, Aspergers Syndrome and epilepsy. For about three-quarters of these pupils, they were taught in the students' first subject areas. Teaching was done mostly in-class (76%), some in withdrawal setting (24%) and fewer in SEN lessons (7%). The number of individual sessions ranged from 4 to 13+, with the most frequent being 10-12 sessions per pupil. Some sessions were usually as short as 5-10 minutes, while others were up to 1 hour long. One hour sessions was reported as the most frequent duration. Most support for the students on this activity came from SENCOs (80%) with less from school based tutors, university tutors or mentors.

Students' evaluations of activity:

Progress in learning was described as 'very little' for only 1 in 5 pupils. In the other cases, more positive statements about progress were made: for example, increased subject knowledge and understanding or general good progress, and in other cases confidence building was reported. About half the students commented that the task had been of value to them in their professional learning: for example, increasing their knowledge and understanding of SEN issues, and learning about differentiation and policy issues. About half of the respondents found the task to be 'fairly' or 'very clear', while about a quarter found it 'not very clear' or 'unclear'. About 1 in 5 did not get access to the website support materials. About half those responding reported that the task contributed 'fairly' or 'very much' to their learning about SEN. Just less than half of those responding also believed that the task contributed to their abilities to assess SEN and understand how to

manage support for learning. There were some suggestions that the school tutors need more briefing, including the SENCO. There were also some suggestions about improving the web-site and providing more recommended resources.

PSTs and SENCOs

SENCOs were proportionally more involved in supporting students on this activity than PSTs (93% v. 36%), confirming the students' data on this. Relatively few experienced difficulties in supporting trainees (14% PSTs and 10% SENCOs). Neither were there widespread difficulties in identifying pupils for the activity. The kinds of resources used by teachers in these roles were school policy and individual pupil information. The PSTs also referred to talking to SENCOs, while the SENCOs referred to the SEN Code of Practice. Many teachers reported not being aware of the web based resources.

SENCOs and PSTs saw the activity as contributing to students' learning to similar degrees in the following areas:

- i. about the SEN framework (84% and 85%)
- ii. understanding educational needs of those with SEN (82% and 83%)
- iii. assessing needs and adapt teaching (75% and 77%)
- iv. understanding and managing support (60% and 60%).

Both PSTs (68%) and SENCOs (85%) considered the value of the activity in terms of:

- i. focussing on individual needs,
- ii. increasing awareness of SEN,
- iii. developing planning for SEN,
- iv. focussing on specific SEN area.

When asked to identify what worked well in the activity, both groups reported the following:

- i. developing knowledge of individual,
- ii. assessing individual needs,
- iii. working one to one,
- iv. regular contact with SEN staff,
- v. focusing on learning through their own teaching.

Suggestions for improvement included: make guidelines clearer, prior briefing about task: better university-school links, focus on more than one area of SEN.

Assignment reports

Most of the 40 sampled reports included information about the pupil's background, age, gender and areas of educational difficulties, though not all did so as expected. The main sources of information on the pupils were collected from the SENCOs, school records, previous IEPs. Some also draw on subject based records. Most of the reports also reported on the learning targets that were set for their selected pupils in their subject areas, what strategies were used and in what settings as well as why the strategies and settings were used. Details of how progress was monitored and what progress was made were also included in most assignment accounts. Many also reported on the ideas and practices that they drew on from reading and

materials available to them. Most trainees also set out recommendations for future teaching of their pupils.

Discussion and conclusions

Though this evaluation was limited in terms of the response rates and the restricted focus and methods of data collection, the findings show some convergence between students' and tutors' perspectives about the activity. All three groups considered the activity to be a valuable exercise; in particular with reference to improving knowledge, understanding and awareness of issues such as identification of pupils with SEN, differentiation, individual needs and planning for pupils with SEN. Where they identified areas for improving the activity, these were matters of practical implementation, rather than matters of purpose or principle. The students' written reports of their activity varied widely in content and presentation. Certain areas were generally well reported, such as, background information about the pupil, areas of educational weakness, targets set and strategies used to support pupil learning. However, there were some areas that were poorly reported or not reflected on by some students, such as, reasons why targets were set, assessment of resources used and their own learning as a result of completing the task.

There is scope for more direct and more in-depth evaluations of this kind of development which relates not just to the SEN aims of the PGCE, but to the workings of the schools and university partnership system of ITT. With more evaluation resources there could be direct monitoring of how students plan and undertake their work with individual pupils, what support they receive from tutors and SENCOs. Follow-through evaluation designs would also enable some monitoring of how this kind of professional learning experience impacts not only on their knowledge, understanding and teaching skills, but their attitudes and approach to working with those with SEN.

As mentioned above, many of the recommendations to improve the activity were about practical issues. Some students could not access the web-site, usually because the computers they used were not capable of accessing the web system used by the University. More accessible web-sites can be designed without much difficulty. Improved communication in this kind of partnership based activity is necessary. The SENCOs and PSTs need to be fully informed about the nature of the activity and their roles in support of it. There were 296 PSTs and 116 SENCOs involved in this first trial. More communication with students prior to the activity when on campus is necessary, with more time for this in the professional studies lecture series. The web-site could include copies of good quality reports for other students to read and consider. Professional Studies activities also need to be given greater kudos by being reviewed by University tutors or University visiting tutors, either by being marked officially as a summative assignment or linked directly to QTS standards for evidence purposes.

A professional learning activity of this kind has wider significance for initial teacher training and education as well as for continuing professional development (Ainscow, 2000). What is important about this development is

that it was inclusive in involving all students, gave them an explicit theoretical and practical framework in which to work with an individual pupil with SEN in their subject area and involved all SENCOs in ITT. Though the evaluation did not focus on the use of this provided Strategy framework, this is something that merits further examination in a future evaluation study. Nor was this evaluation able to examine the wider attitudinal impacts of the activity that go beyond awareness raising, knowledge and skills. The development also illustrates a model of university involvement in the design and support of school-based professional learning in the SEN field. It is an example of how to proceed in an important area of school teaching which does not fit the way in which ITT courses are structured. Though organised through the professional studies strand of the course, it is strongly linked into teaching and assessment methods. SEN is a field which cuts across the subject basis for organising schools and PGCE courses, especially secondary school ones. Here is an activity which involves subject tutors and SENCOs and which was seen by both groups to promote knowledge about the SEN framework, understanding about educational needs of those with SEN, practical knowledge about assessing needs and adapting teaching as well as managing learning support. It is also a development which used a web-site to communicate with and support students and school staff.

To conclude, the value of this activity might also be the wider applicability of the provided strategy for assessing and teaching to individual needs beyond SEN. This is in the context of the increasing national emphasis on personal and individually tailored approach to teaching and learning for all children. This kind of development has international significance too, as teacher training systems beyond this country also have the need to find ways of preparing teachers to work with the diversity of children in more inclusive schools. As Booth, Nes and Stromstad (2003) argue in an international context, many students enter teaching with little understanding of inclusive values and what these values mean for teaching and learning in schools. This development makes some small contribution to this end.

References

- Ainscow, M. (2000) The next step for special education: supporting the development of inclusive practices *British Journal of Special Education*, 27, 79-80.
- Booth, T. Nes, K and Stromstad (2003) *Developing Inclusive Teacher Education*, London and New York, RoutledgeFalmer.
- Brownlee, J. and Carrington, S (2000) Opportunities for authentic experience and reflection: a teaching programme designed to change attitudes towards disability for pre-service teachers. *Support for Learning*, 15, 99-105.
- Daniels, H (1996) Back to basics: Three 'R's for special needs education. *British Journal of Special Education*, 4, 155-161.
- Department of Education and Science (DES) (1978) *Warnock Committee Report*. London: HMSO.
- Department of Education and Science (DES) (1984) *Initial Teacher Training- Approval of Courses: Circular 3/ 84*. London: HMSO.

- Department of Education and Science (DES) (1989) *Initial Teacher Training: Approval of Courses: Circular 24/89*. London: DES.
- DfEE. (1997) *Excellence for All Children: Meeting special educational needs* Stationery Office, London.
- DfEE (1998) *Meeting Special Educational Needs: a Programme for action* Stationery Office, London.
- DFES (2004) *Removing Barriers to Achievement: The Government's Strategy for SEN*. Nottingham, DFES Publications.
- Garner, P. (1996a) A special Educational? The experiences of newly qualified teachers during initial training. *British Educational Research Journal*, 2, 155-64.
- Garner, P. (1996b) Students' views on special educational needs courses in initial teacher education. *British Journal of Special Education*, 4, 176-179.
- Haug (2003) Qualifying Teachers for the School for All. In *Developing Inclusive Teacher Education*, (eds.) Booth, T. Nes, K and Stromstad M (2003) London and New York, RoutledgeFalmer.
- HMI, (1990) *Special Educational Needs in Initial Teacher Training*, London, DES.
- Mittler, P. (1992) Preparing all initial teacher training students to teach children with special educational needs: a case study from England. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 7, 1-9.
- Robertson, C. (1999) Initial Teacher Education and Inclusive Schooling. *Support for Learning*, 14, 169-173.
- Thomas, L. (1997) Values, Initial Teacher Education and Special Educational Needs. In *At the Crossroads: Special Educational Needs and Teacher Education* (eds.) Dwyford Davies, D. and Garner, P David Fulton, London.
- Wedell, K (1995a) *Putting the Code of Practice into Practice: meeting special educational needs in the school and classroom*, London: Institute of Education.
- Wedall (1995b) Making Inclusive Education Ordinary. *British Journal of Special Education*, 3, 100-104
- .