

Chapter 7: Further Education teacher educators' initial disciplines, journeys and titles: From their perspectives in higher education institutions, further education colleges and private providers

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Abstract

This chapter relates to the 'professionalisation of teacher educators' theme in the Call for Papers. The specific topics examined here are the initial disciplines, pathways of becoming these educationists, and the related titles. The empirical data that is used relates to an investigation of English further education (FE) teacher educators (Loo, 2020), which draws on 33 participants using a mixed-method approach of a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and Talking Heads (a narrative method). The teacher educators-participants were from higher education institutions, FE colleges and private providers. The data is analysed to seek out the similarities and differences on the three themes of the participants' initial disciplines, pathways/journeys to becoming educators and their current role titles from the perspectives of their work settings of higher education institutions, FE colleges and private providers. The reason to approach this chapter based on institutions is to ascertain a nuanced picture that has not been researched before.

The literature review is structured into three themes: initial disciplines, pathways of becoming teacher educators, and related job titles. Some of the salient sources regarding the initial disciplines include Becher (1994) and Smeby (1996) to facilitate the classifications of disciplinary areas. With the pathways theme, publications by Noel (2006) and Mayer, Mitchell, Santoro and White (2011) are used to typologies the journeys of these educationists. In the last theme on titles, the reference to job titles in the 'Training to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector' document by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (2011) is used.

The findings from this empirical data centre on the similarities and differences of the three themes: initial disciplines, journeys and job titles, as viewed from the perspectives of the three different sectors: FE colleges, higher education institutions and private providers. The commonalities may be explained by the collective educational contexts of working in the FE sector, and the differences, by the differing priorities of these educationists working in their diverse organisations. Finally, the findings are reviewed regarding their implications to the related stakeholders and their contributions to the sector.

Introduction

This chapter refers to the 'professionalisation of teacher educators' theme in the Call for Papers. The specific topics examined here are the initial disciplines, pathways of

becoming these educationists, and the related titles. The empirical data used relates to a project in England of 33 teacher educators from three parts of the further education sector (Loo, 2020). These are educators working in higher education institutions, FE colleges and private providers.

The research question from the project that is pertinent to this chapter relates to the routes to becoming teacher educators in the FE sector (Loo, 2020). The researchers included Sai Loo (Principal Investigator (PI), University College London), Gordon Ade-Ojo (University of Greenwich), Heather Booth-Martin (Craven College), John Bostock (Edge Hill University), Jim Crawley (Bath Spa University), Baiba Eberte (Carlton Training), Nicola Sowe (NBS Teacher Training), and Sonia Spencer (North Herefordshire College). A mixed-method approach of a survey, one-to-one semi-structured interviews, Talking Heads and documentary research was employed. The questionnaire provided data regarding the gender, age group, academic and professional qualifications, teaching experiences and role titles of the participants. Part of the interview questions focused on the educators' journeys, and the Talking Heads were audio recordings of these educators on their journey-making. The rationale for using Talking Heads was to offer the participants ownership and freedom to reflect on their roles as educators. Supporting documents, such as curriculum and government reports, were also amassed. A pilot study was done before the actual data capture. The researchers managed methodological activities such as ethics, interviews and audio transcriptions, and analysis. The PI's institution approved the project (Loo, 2020).

For this chapter, the updated data is analysed to seek out the similarities and differences on the three themes of the participants' initial disciplines, pathways/journeys to becoming educators and their current role titles from the perspectives of their work settings of higher education institutions, FE colleges and private providers. The reason to approach this chapter based on institutions is to ascertain a more nuanced picture that has not been researched before.

A short description would be helpful for international readers who may not be au fait with the English FE system. The education sector is defined as "any study taken after the age of 16 that is not part of higher education (that is, not taken as part of an undergraduate or a postgraduate degree). It is delivered by a range of public, private, and voluntary sector providers and, in general, equips a learner for further learning, including Higher Education or employment. It also plays an important role in reaching out to disadvantaged groups to encourage their participation in learning when they otherwise might not" (Department for Business and Skills, 2016, p. 4).

This sector offers additional learning opportunities for learners who may not have achieved the necessary academic qualifications from compulsory education. The range of teaching institutions includes adult and community learning providers, armed and uniformed services, commercial organisations, FE colleges, independent training providers, prisons and offender learning institutions, public-sector organisations, specialist colleges, and voluntary and community organisations (Education and Training Foundation, 2014). In terms of statistics, the FE colleges have 2.2 million students, and there are 257 colleges (as in February 2019). Of these, 174 are in further education, 57 in sixth form colleges, 14 in land-based colleges, 10 in specialists designated, and 2 in art, design, and performing art colleges. The average age of these learners is 29 years. The 2.2 million learners comprised 1.4 million adults, 685,000 16-

to 18-year-olds, and 76,000 16- to 18-year-olds in apprenticeship courses (Association of Colleges, 2019).

Furthermore, 35,438 teachers in the FE colleges, and 71.3 per cent teach in work-related programmes. Of these occupational/vocational courses, the largest five subject areas were in the visual and performing arts; foundation courses; health, social care and public services; business administration, management and professional; and hospitality, sports, leisure, and travel, which accounted for 45 per cent of the occupational programmes (Frontier Economics Limited, 2016, Table 17).

This chapter should be viewed from the above FE sector characteristics. The related teacher educators/trainers would need to cover vast ranges of teaching organisations, programme offers, and learners where those with learning issues might feature significantly.

Finally, the chapter is organised into four sections. Following the introduction, the next section provides a literature review of the three themes. The third section uses the relevant empirical data from the quantitative and qualitative research methods to delineate the three proposed themes of initial disciplines of the teacher educators, pathways and current job titles of the participants. This discussion is structured by the educators working in the higher education institutions, FE colleges and private providers. The final section includes a summary of the contributions and implications of the research.

Literature sources

This section is structured into three themes: initial disciplines, the pathways of becoming these educationists, and the related titles.

Initial disciplines

The initial disciplines refer to those subject areas that the teacher educators started within their academic qualifications. Biglan (1973), Kolb (1981), Becher (1994), Smeby (1996), and Neumann, Parry and Becher (2002) provide classifications of disciplinary areas in higher education. In particular, Biglan (1973), Becher (1994) and Smeby (1996) use a typology of four regions, namely: 'hard-pure', 'soft-pure', 'hard-applied' and 'soft-applied'. These classifications enable us to think about the initial disciplines of the teacher educators in the project and how these might inform their eventual pathways and roles they play as educators. I will draw on Becher's (1994) classification, which was focused on the UK higher education institutions, for valid comparisons to this chapter. He defined the 'hard-pure' subject areas as those in the pure/natural sciences. These areas include physics, mathematics and chemistry, which have common characteristics that are concerned with universals and resulted in discovery/explanations. He argued that these disciplines were competitive, gregarious, politically organised and task-oriented (Becher, 1994, Table II). The 'soft-pure' subject area has characteristics associated with reiterative and holistic activities that require understanding and interpretation. Examples of these subjects are archaeology and anthropology. Regarding the third discipline type in this classification, 'hard-applied' is seen as purposive, pragmatic, and are associated with products or techniques that are

entrepreneurial. An example of this discipline is engineering with professional values and is goal-oriented. The last type is 'soft-applied', and education is such an example where the required knowledge is functional and practical (its knowledge is 'soft-pure'). This group's related occupational/professional practices are supposed to be outward-looking, uncertain in status, and dominated by intellectual fashion and power-oriented (Becher, 1994).

However, this classification has its critics. For example, Klein (1996) argued that there might be overlaps between the four types of subject areas, which she termed 'permeation'. She offered six types of permeation. These types relate to the epistemological structure, relations with near disciplines; the attraction of fashionable ideas; and the pull of problem-solving over disciplinary focus. Also, they include the complexity of research on disciplinary areas; and the redefinitions of the characteristics of the disciplines (Klein, 1996). From the perspective of this project, the initial disciplinary regions of Communication Studies, Drama and Fine Art might not be so distinct. In a later study by Tight (2015), a more occupational focus was chosen where engineering, law and pharmacy were selected for further investigation. This occupational centred approach is more in keeping with this investigation of this chapter.

The salient point of Becher's study is it is a relevant starting point to think about the initial disciplines of the 31 teacher educators in the English FE sector. There may be subject areas that are not clear cut, and Klein's and Tight's development of Becher's typology can offer additional insights.

Pathways of becoming these educationists

Regarding the journeys of FE teacher educators, there are lamentably few publications. Noel (2006) attempted to investigate the pathways of these educators in the English FE sector but not in any great depth. But, Noel (2006, p. 162) indicates that "becoming a teacher educator is unlikely to be an initial choice". In Australian research by Mayer, Mitchell, Santoro and White (2011) with 19 participants, the terms such as 'fell into' and 'chance meeting with' suggest an unintentional element of becoming teacher educators.

The notion of intentionality is studied as a starting basis. From a linguistic perspective, in the hope that this approach provides insights into the educators' journeys. Following a Google search of this term, the websites like Cambridge English Dictionary, Merriam-Webster and Oxford Dictionaries), intent, intention or intentionality are nouns associated with an aim or plan alongside the action. A teacher educator's intended activity may be perceived as a deliberate, planned and conscious action, whereas 'unintended action' is unplanned, not calculated or unconscious. The dichotomy of intended and unintended activities/actions offers a starting basis for understanding the possible pathways of the teacher educators, and there may be a mixture of these two actions. Also, one should not view these actions as immutable and might be connections between the types of pathways/journeys.

Related titles

Regarding the job titles of the teacher educators, there appear to be no FE publications in this area. However, the 'Training to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector'

(Learning and Skills Improvement Service, 2011) document offered some job titles like ‘teacher, trainer, lecturer, tutor, instructor’. At least these essential titles provide a starting basis for studying the job titles of FE teacher educators in England.

From the above literature reviews, the following section offers discussions of the empirical data with the sources.

Findings and discussion

This section is structured into the same three themes as in the previous section. In each of the topics, delineations of perspectives from higher education institutions, further education and private providers are offered.

Initial disciplines

The data from the 33 participants are derived from the Questionnaire, Section B, Question 6 - Academic and Professional Qualifications. The updated data from the survey was analysed into the three sectors of higher education institutions (HEI), further education colleges (FE) and private providers (PP). From these, the academic qualifications of the participants were classified into the four Becher's (1994) typology of subject areas, namely: 'hard pure', 'soft-pure', 'hard-applied' and 'soft-applied'. Both the analysis and classification were carried out to ascertain a more detailed and nuanced picture of the initial empirical evidence for this chapter (from the perspectives of teacher educators in the three sectors).

Insert Table 7.1

Table 7.1 provides an overview of the 23 disciplinary areas from the 33 teacher educators. In total, 33 participants accounted for 77 instances of the 23 disciplinary areas. For example, there are 29 participants with qualifications in education studies (as a disciplinary type of 'soft-applied'). So, some teacher educators had more than one initial qualification (including academic and professional), and not surprisingly, education studies are the most frequently recorded. The education studies included related first degree and postgraduate programmes (e.g. Masters, EdDs and PhDs) but excluded related teacher education/training qualifications. However, referring to teaching education qualifications, all the participants had either such qualifications or, if not, education qualifications at the first-degree or postgraduate levels, as one would expect from this particular group of educationists. These teacher education qualifications included a Postgraduate Certificate in Education, Certificate in Education/Teaching and Awards in Preparing to Teach in the Life Long Learning Sector (PTLLS). Higher education institutions usually accredited the first two

qualifications. Awarding bodies such as The City and Guilds and Royal Society of Arts awarded the PTTLS courses, which were at Levels 3 or 4.

The second most popular discipline was English/ESL/Applied linguistics, with nine instances. The classification in Table 8-1 is based on Chikoore et al.'s (2016) categories. They developed further the four types of subjects propounded by Becher (1994).

Table 7.1, of the 13 participants from the HEIs, accounted for 41 academic and professional qualifications. From the 15 participants teaching in the FE colleges, 28 academic and professional qualifications were found. From the five participants in the PP sector, there were eight academic and professional qualifications. Viewed as a proportion of qualifications to participants, the HEI participants had a higher ratio of 3.1, the FE, 1.9, and the PP, 1.6. Perhaps, one may deduce that the teacher educators from those teaching in the higher education sector require more qualifications, mostly postgraduate degrees, than those teaching in the FE and private sectors. Using doctoral qualifications (i.e. EdDs and PhDs) as a simple measure, those in HEIs numbered 10, FE, 3, and none in the PP sector. This measure seemed logical as one would expect higher education educators to be more academically qualified than those in FE and, perhaps, least so with the private providers. The other possible reason is related to teacher education/training courses offered by the three teaching providers. The teacher education courses offered in the private sector appeared to be from awarding bodies such as City and Guilds and Edexcel at various academic levels. In comparison, the FE colleges use a mixture of courses from awarding bodies and university accredited ones. The teacher education programmes from higher education institutions were accredited within their institutions and were mainly at the postgraduate level.

From the perspectives of the subject classification (Table 7.1), there appeared to be a broader range of disciplines (19) from 13 participants, i.e., a ratio of 1.5. There were 13 disciplines from 15 teacher educators in the FE sector, i.e. a ratio of 0.9, and from the private sector, five subjects from 5 participants or a ratio of 1.0. It appeared that there was a more extensive range of disciplinary experiences by the participants in the HE sector. The difference in the FE and the private sector ratios might not be viewed as significant due to the small sample size. From work-related areas such as accountancy, health studies, leisure and hotel management, nursing, and personnel and management studies, both the teacher educators in the FE and HE sectors had representations. Perhaps, one would expect a higher concentration in the FE sector as this sector offered a higher concentration of vocation/work-related programmes. One would expect to reflect this in their teacher educators' experiences.

One pertinent question related to why there was no more significant representation of educators with occupational/vocational experiences? Might the reasons include the undervaluing of such incidents in teaching and thus teacher training? Loo (2019), in his systematic review of literature on FE teacher identities, concluded that research studies had primarily ignored the relevance of vocational elements in the sector even though over 70 per cent of the sector's offers were work-related (Frontier Economics Limited, 2016). The researchers' lamentable lack of acknowledgement of this significant dimension in the sector's activities needs addressing. This finding has implications in

the experiences of teacher educators, recruitment and impact on the education of teachers in the FE sector.

Perhaps, one needs to draw the readers' attention to the classification of the subject areas as suggested by Becher (1994) and Chikoore et al. (2016). Klein (1996) and Tight (2015) indicated that the four-type typology had its complexities where some disciplines might overlap, which Klein termed 'permeation'. The possible 'permeation' areas might include applied linguistics, which might have a more decisive work element than others, such as anthropology in the same 'soft' category. Perhaps, the relationship between the two 'applied' types to work/occupational areas is missing in the research on the subject classification. A greater understanding of the connections would move the knowledge of occupational education further.

Journeys

Tentative findings regarding the pathways/journeys to becoming teacher educators were attempted by Noel (2006) on the English FE sector and Mayer et al. (2011) in an Australian study. Noel's study sample size was 130 teacher educators and Mayer et al.'s, 19. The pathways findings were tangential in Noel's research, as the survey did not provide sufficient data. Half of the handful of those interviewed mentioned that the journeys were accidental, and the other half wanted to be teacher educators. Mayer et al.'s findings based on teacher educators in universities suggested that their journeys were unplanned.

A typology of pathways of activities: unintended, intended and miscellaneous was used by Loo (2020). Of the three empirical studies, Loo's typology appears to be the most complete, so this typology is used. He used linguistic definitions of intent, intention and intentionality (as discussed earlier) to anchor and categorise this typology.

Insert Table 7.2

Table 7.2 on the teacher educators' journeys and teaching institutions provide a tabular format. Twenty-three participants were interviewed: 8 from the HE institutions, 12 from the FE colleges and three from the private providers. Overall, there were 11 journeys of unintended activity, ten intended and two miscellaneous.

Looking at each sector, of the eight teacher educators in the HE sector, four came through the unintended route, three intended and one miscellaneous. The four unintended pathways offered quotes. These included: "I accidentally became a teacher educator as a result of a previous teaching position drying up" (TE9), "I started teaching graduates [at university] and was asked to do some teacher training" (TE12), "I never planned to be the teacher, let alone a teacher educator." (TE 18), and "My journey to becoming a teacher educator was accidental and not planned. I was teaching at an FE college at the time..." (TE21). The three intended examples included quotes like, "I thought this [teacher education] could be something that I could do in years to come" (TE7), and "As a biology teacher, it was very different from what I had experienced. I got the job [as a teacher educator] because I had the academic clout to teach on the Certificate of Education, which the local university-managed at that time" (TE15).

Regarding the various example, TE27 recalled his journey “Reluctantly, and an accidental teacher educator...and I had a growing belief that I could do it”.

All the HE teacher educators had teaching or teacher education experiences in the FE sector, not unsurprisingly. These experiences of the FE sector would be relevant in training teachers for that sector.

Those participants from the FE sector numbered 12, and like their HE counterparts, half or six became teacher educators via the unintended pathway, five intended and one miscellaneous. Thus, there appear to be no significant differences with those in the HE sector. A caveat to this is the unrepresentativeness of the project sample. For the unintended pathways, typical phrases included: “I fell into it because there was no-one else to do it” (TE1), “My College Vice-Principal rang to ask if I would be interested” (TE6), and “They were struggling to find anyone, and my name popped up. So, I think I got it really before I got asked” (TE25). The five candidates intended to become teacher educators through different inspirational experiences. Some pertinent examples included: TE17 felt passionate about training after her staff development, TE19 felt teacher training was a natural move from her job as an assessor, and TE26 thought he had something to offer. With the miscellaneous pathway, TE23 was already teaching a pre-university level teacher-training course before completing her PGCE!

Unsurprisingly, all these FE teacher educators had years of teaching experience in the sector before becoming teacher educators. The split between the three pathways appeared similar to those teaching in the HE sector.

Of the three participants working in private providers, one became an educator unintentionally and two intentionally. With the former route, TE7 applied for the job by accident and got appointed. With the latter pathway, TE24 came from a family of teachers and becoming a teacher educator was a natural progression from her teaching. For TE31, she became a teacher educator through years of teaching experiences in the FE sector and being a home tutor.

For all the participants, bar two in the private sector cut their teeth as teachers in the FE sector. Eight of them moved to be teacher educators in the HE institutions, 12 to the FE sector, and one moved into the private sector. Both in the private sector were from overseas and teaching on accredited programmes from awarding bodies.

Titles

This section focuses on the job titles given to teacher educators in the HE, FE and PP sectors. There is a lamentable lack of research on this topic. LSIS (2011) offered the nearest indicator in its ‘Training to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector’ document with examples of titles such as teacher, trainer, tutor, and instructor.

Insert Table 7.3

From the data, Teacher Educator Lead/Trainer is the most used title with a frequency of seven (Table 7.3). Tutor appeared twice and Associate/Assistant Tutor also twice. Interestingly, the titles, teacher and instructor, did not appear in this project sample.

Though one may argue that this sample of 33 teacher educators in the three sectors is unrepresentative, however, the data set does offer indications of job titles from a known and significantly large selection of FE teacher educators relative to other available data sets. In total, there were 14 titles from the sample, and the total frequency of the title featured in the three sectors was 37.

From the perspectives of the three sectors, which the educators operate, there are standard job titles such as Lead/Trainer. This title is the only one featured in the three sectors of HE, FE, and PP with frequencies of one, four, and two. Other titles such as Programme Leader are featured twice in each of the HE and FE sectors, and Associate/Assistant Tutor and Coordinator/Pathway Leader (one in each of the HE and FE sectors (Table 7.3).

But, the differences are more attractive. In the HE sector, there is a hierarchy of terms relating to lectureships. Six teacher educators were given the title Senior Lecturer, one as a Lecturer, and another, Principle Lecturer. The title, Lecturer, appeared three times in the FE sector and none with the private providers. Another title distinct to the HE sector for this group of educators is Director (which appears three times). Perhaps, the 'lectureship' titles in the HE sector relates more than just the roles and activities of the teacher educators. They might also refer to other academic activities associated with the industry such as research, publications and external activities such as conference appearances, fellowships, knowledge transfer, editorial roles, external examining, contributions to policy, etc. Whereas, these activities may not be actively sought and rewarded in the other two sectors, where the roles of the teacher educators are to educate trainee teachers for the FE sector.

The titles, Quality/Compliance Manager and Advance Learner Practitioner, are distinct to the FE sector, which is, perhaps, relevant to teacher education. As one might expect, the FE sector is focused more on teaching and learning, unlike a broader range of academic activities in the HE sector. The other title distinct to the FE sector from this sample is Deputy Head. Perhaps, here it provides a picture of the management hierarchy in the industry.

Less so with the private sector as such managerial titles were not apparent. Instead, the foci appeared to be the training of teachers either on short or longer teacher training programmes. So, titles like Lead/Trainer, Tutor, Learning Support Officer and Minister of Religion were featured, though the last title might be an anomaly.

There appeared to be distinctive titles used in each of the three sectors. HE titles focused more on the broader academic activities in addition to teacher education. FE teacher educators were more the training, quality control and managerial aspects. Perhaps, an emphasis on quality control was not surprising as some of the teacher education courses were accredited by external awarding bodies, unlike those internally approved HE offers. The private providers would expect to feature quality compliance titles as their programmes were mainly from awarding bodies. There might be two possible reasons for these titles not being featured in the sample: one might be the small sample size.

Two, private providers were usually smaller organisations than those in the FE and HE institutions.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the 'professionalisation of teacher educators' theme in this monograph. The examined areas included disciplinary expertise, pathways/journey and job titles. The contexts of these findings are the English FE sector teaching in HE, FE and private institutions. Lamentably, empirical-evidenced publications were lacking, and thus the conclusions of this chapter laid the groundwork for others to build on.

From the findings of each of the three teaching sectors, there appeared to be some emerging patterns. Focusing on the first theme - disciplinary expertise - the teacher educators working in the HE institutions seemed to have more qualifications. Of the 13 participants, they covered 19 disciplines (a ratio of 1.5). Of the 15 participants teaching in the FE sector, 13 subjects were found (ratio of 0.9), and of the five teacher educators in the private sector, there were five disciplines (ratio of 1.0). Thus, there was a more extensive range of expertise by educators in the HE sector. The doctoral qualifications also supported the findings: 10 in the HE sector compared to 3 in FE and none in PP. However, there was no discernible difference amongst the teacher educators in the HE and FE institutions regarding work-related or occupational expertise, though one might expect a higher representation in the work-oriented FE institutions. Unsurprisingly, all the teacher educators had teaching qualifications, and the six educators without all had education qualifications at the Masters level or higher.

Regarding journeys/pathways, the participants became teacher educators in the three sectors, either unintentionally or intentionally, with no observable difference in the allocation of the two categories. Of the 23 participants, all but two had teaching experiences in the FE sector.

The titles relating to managerial posts were found in the sectors. However, greater emphasis was given to academic titles in the HE institutions, such as principal Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, and Lecturer, probably because of the sector's focus on broader educational activities involving research, publications, and knowledge transfer. The FE titles emphasised quality control, and in the private providers, learner support.

Taking the three themes together, the more extensive disciplinary and academic qualifications of teacher educators in the HE sector, compared to the other two sectors, meant that these institutions could, more likely, offer a broader teacher education experience to trainees. Further research and knowledge transfer activities might also be possible to embed into trainee teachers' experiences. These advantages might provide trainees with richer educational experiences, *ceteris paribus* with the other two sectors.

The findings offer a starting basis for other researchers to build on concerning initial disciplinary know-how, pathways and job titles. These potentially fertile aspects of a forgotten group of educationists need a reassessment. The limitations of the findings include sample size, more diverse participants regarding ethnicity, geographical locations (transnational and international studies) and types of teaching institutions

within the English FE sector (e.g., adult and community providers, armed and uniformed services, prisons, etc.).

The findings have implications for teacher educators and teaching staff in understanding the possible pathways, qualifications, and positions within teaching institutions. Management in the sectors also needs to realise that this group of educationists have distinct needs and requirements in continuous professional development and time and space for related activities such as research in this area. For policymakers, there might be implications regarding recruitment, training and workload allocations, etc.

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