



**EUROPEAN
INTERNATIONAL
UNIVERSITY**



COVER PAGE AND DECLARATION

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1. Introduction

Deciding to become a teacher can change your life a lot. Some people always knew they wanted to be teachers, while others decide on it suddenly. But what might not be clear in the beginning is how tricky it is to choose the right way to become a teacher with so many different courses and qualifications available. People also have different ideas about how we should train new teachers.

These differences show up in the words people use to talk about teacher development. Some call it 'teacher training,' thinking that's the best way to describe it. Others prefer 'teacher education' because they believe it better represents what they're trying to achieve. Even though this might seem like a small detail, it actually shows big differences in opinions about what teachers should do and what teaching is all about. This course uses the the term 'Initial Teacher Education (ITE)' to talk about these differences, explaining them in simple terms, both in theory and practice.

2. Important Concepts Learned from Assigned Reading

In the exploration of teacher education, the course content delves into crucial aspects that shape the journey of prospective educators. The multifaceted nature of this expedition becomes evident as we dissect key concepts presented by Zeichner (1983) and Taylor (2008), shedding light on paradigms, perspectives, and the role of student teachers.

➤ Pathways into Teaching:

The decision to become a teacher is a transformative moment that varies among individuals. While some have harbored a long-standing desire for this career, others undergo a dramatic shift. This pivotal decision sets the stage for a life-changing journey, underscoring the profound impact teaching can have on one's life.

➤ Navigating the Complex Landscape:

Choosing a route into teaching proves to be a complex endeavor. The myriad of courses and qualifications available, coupled with differing opinions on teacher development, create a challenging decision-making process. The content emphasizes the need for a nuanced understanding of the diverse paths, recognizing the unique perspectives each approach brings.

➤ **Paradigms in Teacher Education:**

Zeichner's (1983) research identifies four paradigms that serve as foundational perspectives in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). From behavioristic and personalistic paradigms to traditional craft and inquiry orientation, these paradigms shape the approach to teacher development. Taylor's (2008) contributions further enrich this landscape, introducing cascading expertise, individual growth, developing student teaching, and the student as both teacher and learner.

➤ **Differences among Paradigms:**

The distinctions among paradigms become apparent when applied to real-world challenges, such as behavior management. The individual awareness required for effective behavior management aligns with the personalistic paradigm, emphasizing the teacher's characteristics, beliefs, and identity. Transferring learning between contexts poses challenges, questioning the efficacy of behavioristic or craft paradigms that propose fixed solutions.

➤ **The Role of Student Teachers:**

The content delves into the varied roles student teachers assume in ITE. The transmission approach, marked by 'top tips' from experienced practitioners, is contrasted with the student teacher-centered approach. The latter encourages critical engagement, exploration, and adaptation, acknowledging the complexities of teaching that may not have standardized solutions.

➤ **Routes into Teaching in the UK:**

The course examines the diverse routes into teaching, distinguishing between Higher Education Institute (HEI)-led and school-based ITE. It identifies key players in ITE courses—course tutors, school-based mentors, school-based coordinators, and peer student teachers. The qualifications obtained, ranging from Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)-only to postgraduate qualifications, reflect the depth of engagement with educational theory and practice.

➤ **School Experience in Teacher Education:**

National requirements dictate the minimum duration of student teachers' presence in schools. The case study of The Open University PGCE approach illustrates a structured progression, emphasizing orientation, consolidation, and autonomy in successive levels. This structured approach aims to integrate theoretical concepts with practical experiences.

➤ **Student Reflections on Learning:**

Student reflections, as explored by Hagger et al. (2008), reveal crucial dimensions. The intentional setting of learning schedules, drawing from diverse sources of information, valuing feedback, navigating contextual constraints, and fostering aspirations as both teachers and learners are pivotal aspects of effective learning.

The course content offers a comprehensive exploration of teacher education. The integration of paradigms, perspectives, and student reflections provides a nuanced understanding of the intricate journey toward becoming an educator. The reading underscores the importance of tailored, reflective, and adaptable approaches in crafting effective Initial Teacher Education programs. As we navigate the complex landscape of teacher development, these insights serve as guiding light for aspiring educators.

3. Utilization of key concepts learned, at and within workplace contexts

Embarking on the journey to become a teacher is not just about acquiring theoretical knowledge; it's about applying key concepts in real-world teaching scenarios. The course has equipped an educator like me with fundamental principles that extend beyond the classroom and find relevance within workplace contexts.

• **Understanding Diverse Teaching Paradigms:**

The course delves into various teaching paradigms, from behavioristic to enquiry-oriented approaches. This understanding is crucial when navigating workplace contexts, where diverse teaching philosophies may coexist. Acknowledging and respecting these differences can foster collaboration and enrich the overall teaching environment.

• **Behavior Management in Practice:**

One of the pivotal concepts revolves around behavior management. The workplace, akin to a dynamic classroom, demands a nuanced approach to handling diverse behaviors. Applying the personalistic paradigm, teachers can draw on their own growth and identity to adapt strategies that resonate with the specific workplace culture.

3. Teacher-Centered vs. Student-Centered Approaches:

The dichotomy between transmission and student-centered approaches is particularly relevant within workplace contexts. As teachers, we must navigate between receiving expert guidance and charting our unique paths. The ability to critically engage with workplace challenges and experiment with solutions aligns with the student-centered approach, fostering adaptability and innovation.

- **Diverse Routes into Teaching:**

The course sheds light on different routes into teaching, whether through university-led programs or school-based experiences. In a workplace setting, understanding these routes is valuable. Colleagues may come from diverse educational backgrounds, and recognizing the varied pathways enriches collaborative efforts, promoting a holistic approach to teaching.

- **School Experience as a Continuous Learning Cycle:**

The structured approach to school experience outlined in the course mirrors the continuous learning cycles within workplace contexts. From orientation to autonomy, professionals in any field undergo stages of development. This cyclical process ensures that experience, reflection, and consolidation remain integral to ongoing professional growth.

- **Student Teachers as Active Learners:**

The course emphasizes that student teachers are not passive recipients but active learners. Translating this concept to the workplace involves taking ownership of professional development. Actively seeking feedback, drawing on diverse sources of information, and maintaining an open-minded attitude are essential attributes for thriving in a dynamic work environment.

- **Qualifications as a Measure of Professionalism:**

The attainment of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) parallels the pursuit of professional qualifications within workplace contexts. Recognizing the diverse qualifications held by colleagues contributes to a culture of continuous learning. It underscores the importance of engaging with educational issues at various levels, promoting a shared commitment to excellence.

- **Practical Application of Aspirations:**

The concept of aspiration, as identified in the course, extends beyond aspiring to be effective teachers—it encompasses aspiring to be continuous learners. This dual identity is equally applicable in workplace contexts, where professionals aspire not only to excel in their roles but also to continually adapt and contribute to the broader goals of education.

Understanding diverse teaching paradigms, embracing continuous learning cycles, and recognizing the active role of teachers as learners are foundational principles that contribute to creating dynamic, adaptable, and effective educational environments. As we step into our roles as teachers, these concepts serve as guiding lights, illuminating the path towards impactful and meaningful contributions within the broader landscape of education.

4. Potential challenges faced in implementing these concepts at the workplace:

The transmission model of learning faces criticism on several fronts. One key critique revolves around the assumption of knowledge transferability in teaching. The approach presupposes that knowledge can be seamlessly conveyed from teacher to student, yet teaching is intricate and dynamic, with contextual variations influencing its efficacy. The insistence on a specific solution as the "right way" to teach becomes counterproductive when student teachers encounter situations where the recommended approach proves ineffective.

Another point of contention is the **complexity and context specificity** of teaching. The highly intricate and context-bound nature of teaching is often overlooked by the transmission approach. Each school possesses unique principles, beliefs, and values that shape its teaching practices. Teachers transitioning between different contexts may find that an approach effective in one setting fails in another. The transmission model neglects the vital aspect of understanding and adapting to the specific context of teaching and learning.

The diverse knowledge, skills, and understanding levels among student teachers pose another challenge. The transmission model tends to overlook the individualization of the learning process for student teachers, assuming a one-size-fits-all approach to instruction. This neglects the unique needs and prior experiences of each student teacher.

These criticisms underscore the limitations of the transmission approach in recognizing the complexity, contextual nature, and individuality inherent in teaching and learning. They underscore the necessity for teacher education programs to adopt more nuanced and personalized approaches, considering the diverse contexts and learner characteristics within the teaching profession.

Shifting to a **student teacher-centered approach** introduces its own set of challenges. This necessitates a departure from the traditional teacher-centered paradigm, which may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable for both student teachers and educators. Successful implementation requires meticulous planning, instructional design, and continuous assessment to ensure effective achievement of learning outcomes. Moreover, creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment that values student teachers' voices, perspectives, and contributions becomes paramount.

Conducting longitudinal studies of student teachers' reflections, while valuable for improving teacher education practices, demands a long-term commitment and dedicated resources. The insights gained from such studies, however, contribute significantly to enhancing the preparation of future educators.

The personalistic paradigm, another instructional approach, poses its own challenges. The intricacies of behavior management require teachers to consistently reflect on their practices and adapt their approaches. What proves effective in one situation may not hold the same efficacy in another, necessitating ongoing professional development and a willingness to learn from both successes and failures.

Several challenges arise when implementing these paradigms, including potential resistance to change within established educational institutions and workplace cultures. Shifting entrenched norms and beliefs about teaching and learning requires a willingness to challenge the status quo. Resource availability and support also present hurdles. Incorporating the four paradigms and the student teacher-centered approach may demand additional resources, including time, funding, and personnel. Providing comprehensive support and mentoring to student teachers navigating these novel approaches can be resource-intensive.

Ensuring **consistency and coherence** across diverse workplace contexts emerges as another challenge. Collaboration among various stakeholders, including universities, schools, and mentoring teachers, is essential for aligning the implementation of these concepts. Moreover, assessing and evaluating the impact of these approaches proves complex, as traditional assessment methods may not capture the full range of competencies and skills developed through these paradigms and the student teacher-centered approach. Developing robust and comprehensive assessment strategies aligned with the goals of these approaches is essential but challenging.

The readiness and openness of the teaching community to embrace these innovative concepts can vary. Some educators may readily adopt new approaches, while others may harbor skepticism or resistance. Establishing a supportive and inclusive professional community that values ongoing professional development, encourages experimentation, and fosters reflection is crucial for the successful implementation of these transformative teaching paradigms.

5. Conclusion

In wrapping up discussions on teaching courses, it's key to recognize that effective teachers aren't born; they're made through proper training and support. Education significantly influences personal growth, emphasizing the importance of teacher education and providing the necessary skills for academic success. Teachers play a crucial role in student progress, requiring the right skills. Teacher education involves different approaches, as identified by Zeichner: Technical-Rational, Personalistic, Critical Reflective, and Contextual-Reconstructive Paradigms. Taylor further explored ITE learning with four approaches: cascading expertise, enabling growth, developing student teaching, and students as teachers and learners. Longitudinal studies of student teachers' reflections reveal insights into their professional growth, intentionality, frame of reference, response to feedback, attitude toward context, and aspirations. Understanding these dimensions is crucial for designing effective teacher education programs that foster reflective practices and support the development of aspiring educators.

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Statement of participation

Niharika Tyagi

has completed the free course including any mandatory tests for:

Learning to teach: making sense of learning to teach

This 5-hour free course explored approaches to teacher education and the implications of students' experiences of learning to teach.

Issue date: 28 December 2023



www.open.edu/openlearn

This statement does not imply the award of credit points nor the conferment of a University Qualification. This statement confirms that this free course and all mandatory tests were passed by the learner.

Please go to the course on OpenLearn for full details:

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/learning-teach-making-sense-learning-teach/content-section-0>

COURSE CODE: LTT_1

Learning to teach: making sense of learning to teach

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/learning-teach-making-sense-learning-teach/content-section-0>

Course summary

This free course, Making sense of learning to teach, is the first of four courses which comprise the course Learning to teach. It draws on what we know about how people learn to become teachers. It explores the different approaches to teacher education and the different routes into teaching. It will help you to understand the philosophical and practical differences between the different approaches. It draws on research about students' experiences of learning to teach and considers the implications of this in designing teacher education programmes.

Learning outcomes

By completing this course, the learner should be able to:

- know the differences in opinion about what Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is trying to achieve
- understand the differences in perception of the student teachers' role in ITE
- recognise some of the ways in which these differences manifest themselves in the UK
- understand effective student teacher learning and how students themselves perceive the process of learning to teach.

Completed study

The learner has completed the following:

Section 1

Views of learning to teach

Section 2

Different routes into teaching in the UK

Section 3

Qualifications

Section 4

School experience

Section 5

What students say about learning to teach?