

Measuring Quality in Initial Teacher Education (MQITE)

Literature Review: Executive Summary

Purpose of the Literature Review

The MQITE project, funded by Scottish Government and supported by the General Teaching Council for Scotland, seeks to develop and implement a context-appropriate approach to measuring quality in initial teacher education (ITE) in Scotland. The focus of this literature review is therefore on the various conceptualisations and measures of “quality” vis-à-vis teaching, teachers, and (ITE) across the globe. This is a conceptual, rather than a systematic, review of the literature on ITE and quality. It explores how others have defined and attempted to measure quality in ITE, issues related to this challenge, and the unexplored, yet important, elements of ITE that affect quality. It incorporates discussion of current debates, contextually-derived tools and frameworks, and gaps in measurement that become significant when attempting to devise a productive and system-aligned framework for measuring quality in Scotland.

Scope and methodology

The review considered studies that focused on either (1) ITE programmes, their component dimensions and effectiveness in preparing teachers as measured in various contexts, and/or (2) teacher effectiveness as related to ITE and related routes into teaching. Since the meaning of terms relating to quality in the education sector shift noticeably in different contexts, close attention was paid to the cultural and political environment and historical trajectories in which studies of teacher education programmes were situated, and how quality indicators developed in relation to their local contexts. For the purpose of timeliness and relevance, only sources published on or after 2005 were considered. The geographical scope of the literature is global; however, the review only examined studies and documents published in English.

Context

The review is set within the contemporary global context which positions teachers as central to improving pupil attainment, and pupil attainment as central to economic competitiveness on the global stage. This policy meta-narrative is understood within an increasingly neo-liberal approach to education, where externally imposed accountability, high-stakes testing and a focus on the measurement of outcomes as opposed to processes, is increasingly common.

In the Scottish context, the embedding of Curriculum for Excellence within a post-Donaldson teacher education framework has resulted in significant change for

teachers. This has been compounded by teacher workforce shortages in particular subjects and in particular geographical areas, resulting in a call for ‘new and innovative’ ITE routes to be developed to address such pressing challenges. Thus, ITE in Scotland is becoming increasingly diverse and subject to increased scrutiny. Against this background, the need for a collaborative, sector-developed means of measuring quality in pursuit of enhancement becomes more vital.

Overview of findings

The literature reviewed represents a synthesis as well as a sampling of what is current in the field of ITE quality. Other studies and models could have been profiled but the selection reviewed here purposefully represents the diversity and design of contemporary ways in which ITE quality is being conceptualized and measured. The review has aimed to highlight the historical and political context shaping debates about the quality and impact of ITE and the teachers it produces, whilst recognising that the responsibilities and challenges placed upon teachers, and by extension teacher educators, are increasing. In light of the need to understand *how* to best prepare effective teachers, ITE faculty have begun to develop collaborative and context-sensitive ways to measure programme quality and effectiveness. The myriad of different instruments and tools for assessment may be appropriated and combined in different ways to develop such frameworks.

This review has profiled six examples of ways stakeholders and researchers inside and outside of ITE are building frameworks to measure quality. First, Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, and colleagues offer a potential way to assess how ITE programmes compare to a particular model of “powerful”, or in their view exemplary, ITE by assessing programmatic vision and coherence as well as the quality of its practicum. Secondly, various states across the U.S. exemplify how value-added measurement (VAM) methodologies are combined with more commonly used instruments to compare and assess the effectiveness of ITE programmes and their graduates across local ITE sectors. Thirdly, Boston College’s ‘value-driven’ programme and corresponding model of assessment provides a more sophisticated and complex way of determining how ITE was developing and impacting the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of its graduates in the field. Fourthly, the Stanford STEP evaluation model – based heavily around professional standards and concentrating on portfolio-type teacher assessments – represents a contrasting approach in which a single programme is conceptualized and its impact measured. Fifthly, the Australian SETE project provided insight into how an ITE quality assessment may benefit from a theoretically-driven approach to research design and address the concerns and interests of individuals in three overlapping “spaces” through which ITE is conceptualized, shaped, and experienced. Finally, an international study of how ITE programmes in 17

countries are developing future maths teachers illustrates how researchers are exploring the impact of national contexts, along with programmatic structures and practices, on the quality of ITE.

Across these contexts, discussion of recruitment strategies and retention rates are important as they both shape ITE quality and its operating contexts, as well as being shaped *by* ITE quality. Research indicates that recruitment and retention trends are likely shaped by policy incentives, wider social status of the teaching profession, and employment prospects and working conditions. Still, the type of candidates ITE programmes attract, as well as how effectively they are prepared through their programme for a teaching career represent two key ways in which ITE affects recruitment and retention in the profession. When assessing ITE quality, recruitment to ITE and retention in the field of teaching emerge as important factors in considering the long-term impact of ITE quality. If ITE programmes educate effective teachers but they, by and large, do not stay in the profession then quality ITE loses some of its importance. On the contrary, if ITE can prepare and help the profession to retain effective teachers, ITE programmes will benefit both in terms of claims for time and resources with which to prepare the next generation of teachers along with increased influence on the future of the profession.

Gaps within the Literature

Notable gaps exist within the research literature around ITE quality measures and frameworks that deserve attention. The literature review identified two such gaps; – factors that were often neglected, or virtually absent, in ITE quality frameworks and studies. These gaps concern *ITE-school-community partnerships*, and the *role of teacher educators* in contributing to ITE quality.

Conclusion

While the quality or effectiveness of ITE programmes are a common concern and focus of policy-makers, researchers, and other stakeholders in most countries, there is yet to emerge a common “best” way to document, analyse, measure and judge the impact of ITE. Notwithstanding, a number of insights emerge from this literature review. First, there are clearly many questions to consider in the development stage of a Scottish ITE quality assessment framework. These questions are helpfully summarized by Feuer et al. (2013, pp. 6-7), who recommend considering:

- (1) What is the primary purpose of the ITE evaluation system?
- (2) Which aspects of ITE matter most?

- (3) What sources of evidence will provide the most accurate and useful information about the aspects of teacher preparation that are of primary interest?
- (4) How will the measures be analysed and combined to make a judgment about program quality?
- (5) What are the intended and potentially unintended consequences of the evaluation system for ITE and education more broadly?
- (6) How will transparency be achieved? What steps will be taken to help users understand how to interpret the results and use them appropriately?
- (7) How will the evaluation system be monitored?

While the studies and measures profiled in this literature offer a variety of innovative ways in which one may conceptualize an ITE quality framework, it is worth considering early on whether any framework would be best primarily guided by shared values (the Boston College Social Justice Model), professional standards (the Stanford STEP Model), or a particularly theoretical approach (the Australian SETE Spatial-based Research Design). Consideration may be given to the ways in which (1) Scottish ITE programmes engage in and manage their school partnerships (and potentially in the future, community-partnerships), (2) ways in which their teacher educators contribute toward the quality of ITE, and (3) ways in which ITE programmes support the professional practice and development of teacher educators.

Fortunately, the MQuITE study is in the unique position of being a meso-level, longitudinal study of ITE quality and impact. This is not common in the literature as most internal studies of ITE quality led by teacher educators/researchers tend to focus on one particular programme or institution. Meanwhile, other studies, usually conducted by external researchers, assess a larger sample of ITE programmes on a macro-level. The MQuITE study presents an opportunity for a meso-level analysis in which the eight universities providing ITE in Scotland collaborate to assess the impact and quality of their programmes individually, comparatively, and collectively. Furthermore, the five-year cohort study allows for the collection of large amount of quality data on a particular cohort that will provide valuable and varied insights into the quality, impact and future direction of Scotland's ITE. The study also provides an important opportunity to explicate, articulate and synthesise current approaches to measurement and quality embedded in ITE practice and in the institutional processes of such unviersities.

Reference

Feuer, M. J. *et al.* (2013) *Evaluation of Teacher Preparation Programs: Purposes, Methods, and Policy Options*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Education. Available at: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED565694> (Accessed: 10 May 2017).