Supporting ECTs in the first year – the place of identity

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Overview

- Share findings from an 18-month ESRC project
- Explore the place of identity in teacher education
- Implications for supporting ECTs

Policy & Pandemic – changeable times in ITE

- Core Content Framework (DfE, 2019)

- Early Career Framework (DfE, 2019)

- Teaching teachers during COVID-19 (Ofsted, 2021)

- Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Market Review (DfE, 2021)

- Since September 2020, the project team have undertaken research to capture the experiences of those who have trained to become secondary teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- The aim of the research is to understand the experiences of these cohorts of teachers to ensure that they have the necessary support so that they remain in the profession.

- The project is being funded by the Economic and Social Research Council as part of UK Research and Innovation's rapid response to COVID-19.

Background

COVID-19 posed substantial challenges to the secondary education and ITE sectors (Ellis, Steadman & Mao, 2020; Kim & Asbury, 2020).

Latest postgraduate ITT applications data for England shows that recruitment is 23% down on last year and 3% lower than 2019 (Worth & Faulkner-Ellis, 2022).

Our research project draws on theoretical frameworks of **teacher quality** that focus on:

- personal performance and the growth of professional identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011)

- the development of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998;2000)

- classroom readiness (Churchward & Willis, 2019)

Research Questions

How has the COVID-19 pandemic created challenges and opportunities for secondary trainee teachers and ECTs to develop teacher quality?

How might the COVID-19 pandemic affect the retention of secondary trainee teachers and ECTs during the period March 2020-2022, especially those teaching subjects which have persistent shortages of teachers?

What changes to practice should be highlighted to trainees, teachers, schools and training providers to mitigate the negative effects of COVID-19 on teacher quality and retention?

Data collection

2 **online surveys** (May 2021):

- trainee teachers who completed their ITE programme during 2019-20 and 2020-21 (53 responses)

- school leaders and mentors (30 responses)

Relating to each of the Teachers' Standards, how confident do you feel about beginning your work as an Early Career Teacher? (1 for not at all confident, 5 for very confident) *
Required

⊞ More info

	1	2	3	4	5
Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Promote good progress and outcome by pupils	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Plan and teach well structured lessons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Make accurate and productive use of assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What **challenges** you have experienced during your PGCE programme during the COVID pandemic?

[   ]

What **opportunities** you have experienced during your PGCE programme during the COVID pandemic?

[   ]

At this stage, how long are you likely to remain in teaching? *Required*

○ Less than 1 year
○ 1-2 years
○ 2-5 years
○ More than 5 years

Key takeaways from survey

Areas where ECTs have particular strengths:

- Adaptability and resiliency when facing challenges in the pandemic, especially for the cohort 2020-21

Areas ECTs would benefit from further support:

- Building supportive social network among ECTs and mentors
- Training that takes account of the school's local context
- Awareness of challenges and opportunities during their placement
- Mental health and well-being

Qualitative online interviews
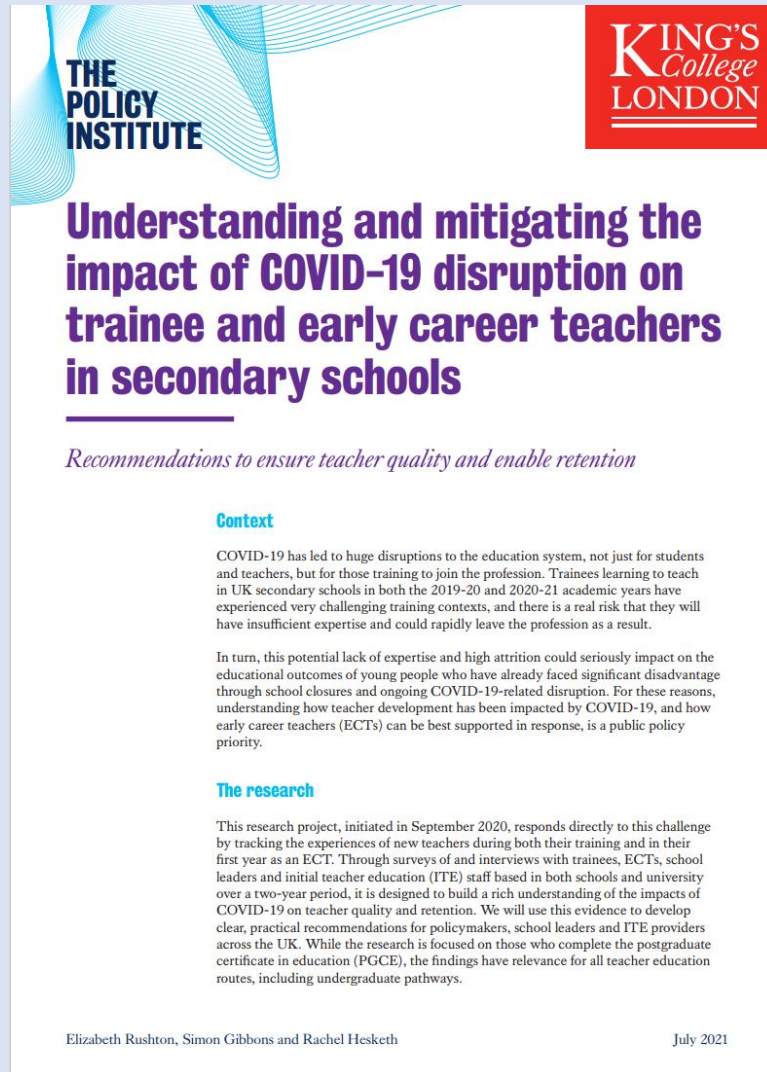
Interviewees	No. interviewed
PGCE 20-21	59 (36 from pilot study)
PGCE 19-20	10
University-based ITE staff	10
School-based mentors	20
School senior leaders	13
TOTAL	**112 interviews**

Interim Policy Brief
(July 2021)

Policy Roundtable

- *Do the emerging findings from our research resonate with your own understanding of the experience of trainee teachers over 2020/21?*

- *Are there 'quick wins' that can be implemented to support early career teachers when they start out in the classroom in September?*

- *What barriers might stop us from making these changes, and how can they be overcome?*

Final Policy Brief and launch planned for September 2022

School Guide
(August 2021)

Supporting Early Career Teachers to thrive in their first year

A guide for secondary schools

THE POLICY INSTITUTE

KING'S College LONDON

The aim of this guide is to provide evidence and guidance to assist schools' efforts in supporting those Early Career Teachers (ECTs) who have trained during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years, whose training has been profoundly disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. These trainees are now working as teachers in secondary schools across the UK, and are therefore in need of practical, targeted advice and support to improve their classroom readiness, strengthen their practice and ultimately improve their chances of staying in the profession.

11 provisional findings and related recommendations – for consultation

Understanding and mitigating the impact of COVID-19 disruption on trainee and early career teachers in secondary schools

Key Finding

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the two cohorts who trained in years 2019 – 2021. Trainees, even within the same cohort, have experienced their training in different ways, largely dependent on their school placements, subject and personal circumstances.

Findings and recommendations

Findings	Recommendations to ensure teacher quality and enable retention
ECTs have reported some positive impacts of training during the pandemic, such as the use of IT to support teaching and learning and a heightened sense of professional community. Going forward, these positive impacts should be embraced and developed.	Schools should continue to embrace the unique skills and experiences of ECTs in the planning and delivery of the curriculum. This can help develop teacher agency, a sense of self-efficacy and will strengthen the professional identity of ECTs.
For ECTs, there is a tension between the need for personalised support in response to their varied training experience and the prescribed content of induction programmes.	Bespoke professional development for ECTs is needed to address the highly variable impact of COVID-19 on teacher training and induction. Opportunities for subject specific CPD are also vital for teacher self-efficacy and, potentially, for teacher retention.
The wellbeing of ECTs is impacted by the pressures of the ECF, exacerbated by varied training experiences.	Nurturing and supporting ECT wellbeing in the workplace needs to be central to their professional development experience.
Schools have experienced time and resource limitations in providing mentoring for trainees and ECT induction simultaneously.	ECT and mentor workload should be closely monitored by schools in order to provide adequate time and space for ECT professional development and reflection. This information should be considered by policy makers.
The growth and retention of ECTs benefits from the provision of formal and informal support, including through collaboration with other professionals and/or ECTs and in different learning and/or social spaces.	Support and collaboration in different learning and/or social spaces should be sought for ECTs. This could potentially foster professional growth and may encourage retention.
Opportunities for reflection, which are not linked to assessment, have a positive impact on ECTS' identity formation, professional experiences and growth.	ECTs should be offered regular, supported reflection, that is not linked to assessment. Where possible, this should include ongoing engagement with training providers for ECTs and their mentors.

The teacher training experience during the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in reduced opportunities for pastoral practice, limited parental engagement and a reduced involvement with extracurricular activities.	ECTs should be given opportunities to engage in a range of pastoral activities both in and beyond the school to further develop pastoral skills. ECTs should be encouraged to participate fully in all aspects of school life and structured support should be provided for interactions with parents and other stakeholders.
Experience and skills gained from previous careers outside of teaching proved beneficial for ECTs in the context of pandemic-related uncertainty and in their ongoing professional development.	Greater recognition should be given to the role of transferable skills and experience acquired before teacher training in developing new teachers' professional practice.
ECTs have found engagement with research empowering but have been frustrated by induction material that is repetitive of their training experience.	ECTs should be encouraged to engage critically with education research and have opportunities to discuss their reading and the impact of theory on practice.
The experience of training during the Covid-19 pandemic has reduced opportunities for ECTs to work with a diverse range of students.	ECTs should be provided with experience of working in ethnically, educationally and socially diverse contexts where they can further develop skills of teaching for inclusion.
The experience of training during the Covid-19 pandemic has served to broaden perspectives and has led to innovative practice from ECTs (e.g. including addressing global issues) in their teaching.	Schools should continue to embrace the unique skills and experiences of ECTs in the planning and delivery of the curriculum. This can help develop teacher agency, a sense of self-efficacy and will strengthen the professional identity of ECTs. Schools should continue to build on the innovative practices adopted by ECTs during the pandemic, further developing self-efficacy and teacher identity.

February 2022

Available at: Findings and recommendations

Consultation

Open consultation for educators to share their views on the provisional project findings and recommendations

- Online survey (Feb-April 2022)

- Online practitioner workshop hosted by the research team

- Engagements via email and social media

- Conference presentations

Overarching Finding

- The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the two cohorts who trained in years 2019 – 2021.

- Trainees, even within the same cohort, have experienced their training in different ways, largely dependent on their school placements, subject and personal circumstances.

3 key findings and recommendations…

Finding 1

ECTs have reported some positive impacts of training during the pandemic, such as the use of IT to support teaching and learning and a heightened sense of professional community. Going forward, these positive impacts should be embraced and developed.

'I think the positive will be their versatility. There's a lot that they can do, which maybe some of their elder colleagues won't be able to do. I think having that sense of 'I survived. I got through what was a very difficult year', I mean that's a real positive'

School-based mentor

Finding 2

For ECTs, there is a tension between the need for personalised support in response to their varied training experience and the prescribed content of induction programmes.

'…the ECT mentor meetings have got co-opted by ECT work which, from what I can see, is a lot of box checking and like bureaucratic admin and so it's not useful. You know it's not helpful and so my hour with this senior teacher, that is incredibly valuable, just disappears into thin air so that's annoying'

ECT who trained 2020-21

Finding 3

The teacher training experience during the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in reduced opportunities for pastoral practice, limited parental engagement and a reduced involvement with extracurricular activities.

'I think the area that they are most concerned about is fitting into a particular school and I guess in part, that is because you know there was a big chunk when they literally were not in schools.'

School Senior Leader

Selected Recommendations

1. Schools should continue to embrace the unique skills and experiences of ECTs in the planning and delivery of the curriculum. This can help develop teacher agency, a sense of self-efficacy and will strengthen the professional identity of ECTs.

2. Bespoke professional development for ECTs is needed to address the highly variable impact of COVID-19 on teacher training and induction.

3. Opportunities for subject specific CPD are vital for teacher self-efficacy and,potentially, for teacher retention and should be actively sought.

4. ECTs should be given opportunities to engage in a range of pastoral activities both in and beyond the school to further develop pastoral skills.

5. ECTs should be encouraged to participate fully in all aspects of school life and structured support should be provided for interactions with parents and other stakeholders.

Teacher education and identity

- Identity is significant and growing area in research related to teacher education, especially initial teacher education

- Definitions of identity. What does the research say?

- Supporting ECTs with their identity work

What is teacher identity?

- Teacher identity is frequently used interchangeably with 'professional identity'

- Teacher identity comprises multiple identities.

- Teaching is both personal and professional and these dimensions constitute an individual's teacher identity

Definitions of identity

- The general consensus in the literature – identity is dynamic, multi-faceted, shifting and constructed and reconstructed by a number of factors

- 'Identity is way we make sense of ourselves to ourselves and the image of ourselves that we present to others' (Day and Kington, 2008, p.9)

- Sears (2011) approach to identity is that which is 'socially constructed in response to lived experiences …. 'hybrid, composite, dynamic and unfixed, with identity positions being negotiated according to the social possibilities and constraints of each context' (p.73)
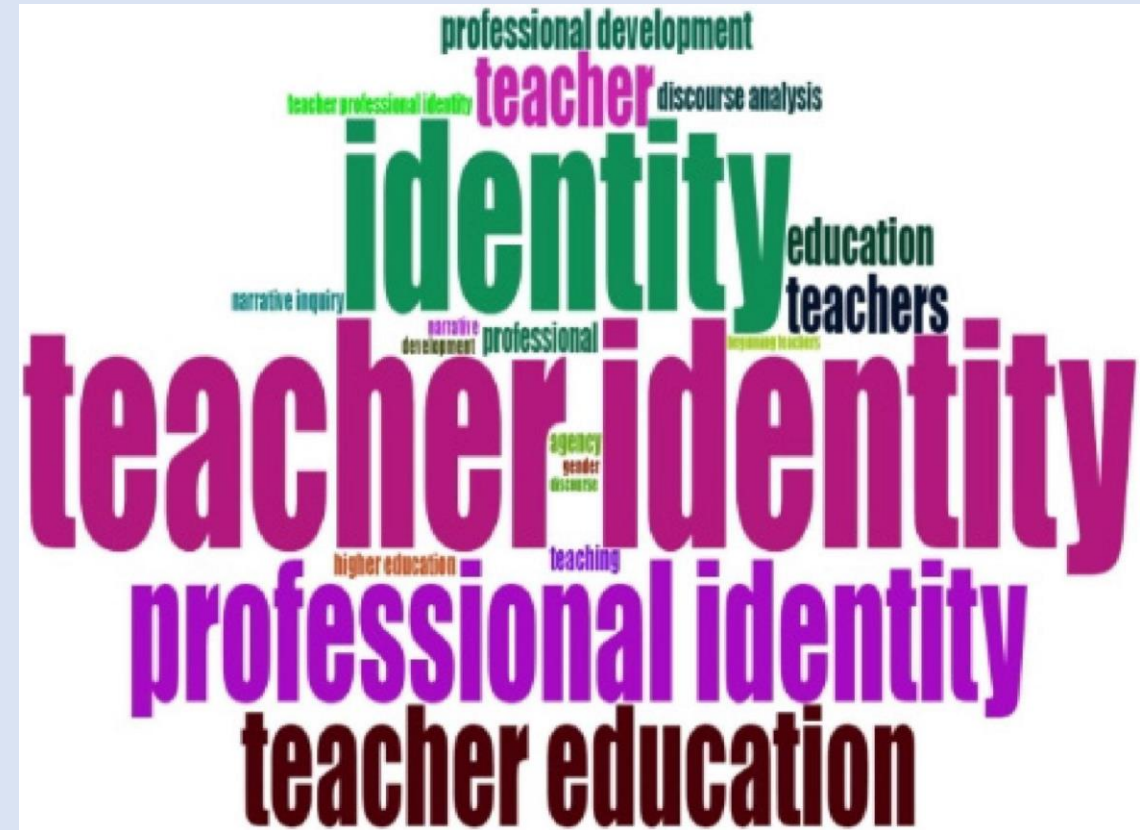
How identity is constructed

- Influenced by many factors including:
- context/social situations – school culture
- relationships/people – students and colleagues
- life experiences - teacher education, previous teaching experiences
- work/job – professional roles
- Shaped by discursive practices/biography and narratives (Giddens, 1991)

Teacher identity in pandemic times

- Collaborative and social identity development is key
- Social identity approach understands professional identity as an inherently **social** and **collaborative** construct
- Shared identity and group membership play an important role in an individual's ability to develop and sustain positive professional identities
- **Covid-19 pandemic** has emphasised the interconnected nature of human experience and hence the necessity of collaboration.
- Teacher trainees learn within socially embedded system

Supporting ECTs

Writing and identity work - writing a reflective essay, reflective journal entries

- What have I enjoyed this week?
- What am I proud of?
- What have I found challenging?
- What support do I need?
- What would I like to achieve next week?

Supporting ECTs

- **Talking and identity work - discussions either with yourself as part of a self-reflective activity or with other teachers or mentors**

- *How would you describe the role of a teacher?*

- *What is the role of a teacher in the classroom? In the community?*

- *Can you describe what sort of teacher you are or would like to become?*

- *Can you describe the purpose of education?*

- *Do you think your experiences of being/becoming a teacher have changed how you see yourself?*

- *Do you think your experience of being/becoming a teacher has changed how your friends/family see you?*

Your thoughts?

Selected references

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Coming soon:

Becoming a Teacher 6th Edition [for identity chapter and so much more]

NB new project policy guide might be done?

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