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What trainees in England learn about teaching pupils with special educational needs/disabilities in their school based work: the contribution of planned activities in one year initial training courses

Abstract

The project reported in this paper addresses the issue of trainee teacher learning with regard to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) during the school placement element of one year postgraduate teacher training programmes in England. Through a focus on the university/school partnership, school organisational and classroom pedagogic processes, the project aimed to improve knowledge and understanding about teacher education relevant to the special educational needs and inclusive education fields. Specifically the project examined and compared the school based learning and outcomes of postgraduate teacher trainees in primary and secondary programmes that used different approaches to preparing teachers for the special needs aspects of their future teaching. Three kinds of school based approaches are examined: one that involved a practical teaching task; a second which involved a pupil-focused task (but not practical teaching); and a third where there was no specific pupil-focused SEND task other than class teaching practice. The paper reports on what and how trainees learned about teaching pupils with SEND and on differences related to the use of SEND tasks. Findings indicate that what trainees learn about teaching pupils with SEND is strongly interlinked with what they learn about teaching in general. The pedagogic knowledge learned from undertaking planned pupil-focused SEND tasks, however, centres on pupils' personal learning needs, something that was less likely to be learned from only whole class teaching experience. Implications for schools, initial teacher education providers, national and international policy are presented as evidence-informed questions with possible options.

Key words: special educational needs; initial teacher education; teacher learning

What trainees in England learn about teaching pupils with special educational needs/disabilities in their school based work: the contribution of planned activities in one year initial training courses

Introduction

This paper is set in the broader context of on-going concerns around the education and training of teachers with regard to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in the UK (Wedell, 1995; Robertson, 1999; House of Commons, 2006; OFSTED, 2008, 2009; Lambe, 2007). These concerns are related to wider international interest in teacher education for inclusive education (Forlin, 2012; EADSNE, 2010; EADSNE, 2011). It is also relevant to the changing context of partnership models and arrangements between teacher training providers, in this case universities, and schools in England, particularly in relation to trainee learning about special educational needs (DfE, 2010). Thirdly, the paper examines the contribution of school based planned tasks about SEND set by some universities in England for school based professional learning about SEND and inclusion.

One of the planned tasks examined in the study reported in this paper was developed over several years on the University of Exeter one year teacher training programme – the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) (Golder, Norwich and Bayliss, 2005; Nash and Norwich, 2008; Lawson and Nash, 2010) and subsequently recommended to all PGCE teacher training providers (DfE, 2012a). This task is designed to involve all PGCE trainees in having direct experience of teaching an individual child or young person with some identified special educational needs in their placement school. This experience is intended to be over a period of time and working under the guidance of the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). In this paper the task as used in practice is examined and compared to other similar planned tasks for trainee teachers.

Policy and research context

Initial education for trainee school teachers in England is divided into primary and secondary school training with curriculum subject specialisms, especially for secondary school trainees. There has not been separate initial teacher education (ITE) for special education since 1992 (OFSTED, 2009), though there is additional

post initial training in some areas of SEND. The input concerning SEND on ITE courses usually takes the form of a discrete course or module (sometimes this is an elective), permeated or embedded content (whether explicit or implicit) or some combination of the two (Winter, 2006). However, the area of special educational needs has long been highlighted as being inadequately addressed through initial teacher education (ITE) in the UK (Mittler, 1992; Garner, 2001; Golder, Norwich and Bayliss, 2005; OFSTED, 2006; OFSTED 2009; House of Commons, 2010). Trainee teachers and recently qualified teachers also continue to express dissatisfaction with the special educational needs input in their ITE courses (Brownlee and Carrington, 2000; Winter, 2006; Nash and Norwich, 2008).

Responding to these concerns about the inadequacy of this provision, the Training and Development Agency (TDA) in England published materials for use in both primary and secondary ITE undergraduate programmes (now archived at DfE, 2012b).Special school or resourced SEND unit placements can be built into these longer ITE programmes (Golder, Jones and Eaton Quinn, 2009). Resources were also published for use in the one year PGCE programmes, consisting of materials for an introductory day (or two half days), subject resources, self study tasks and the school-based task referred to above (now archived at DfE, 2012b). Special education placements are also sometimes available on one year programmes.

Partnership arrangements between universities and schools for the initial training of teachers have been a requirement since 1993 (DfE, 1992; DfE, 1993). Schools are expected to be actively involved and the continuity of training across the university and school contexts is emphasised (DfES, 2002). A central aspect of preparing teachers is through school placements. Trainee teachers spend a significant proportion of their training in schools gaining practical classroom experience with the support of school-based teacher-mentors - 120 days of a 180 day programme[1] (TA, 2012).

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[1] This has applied to secondary trainees since 1992 and will apply to primary trainees from 2013.

Dart (2006) proposes three elements to a special educational needs course in ITE. It should enable trainee teachers to develop professionally in: *attitudes*, affecting how they view disability; *educational practice*, giving them skills to enable them to support pupils with special educational needs in the classroom; and *knowledge* gained through courses and teaching practice. It is generally hoped that university courses will provide knowledge, influence attitudes and give some introduction to practice (Lambe, 2007; Mintz, 2007). Teachers' beliefs and attitudes, however, are also influenced by the norms and cultures of a school (Jordan and Stanovich, 2003) and trainees' views are shaped by their interactions with teachers in schools through their school placements (Pearson, 2009). Attention to special educational needs is therefore important in school placements as well as in universities. School-based preparation, however, is dependent on the specific provision within each school; thus experiences may be very variable (OFSTED, 2008).

Aims and methods

The aims of this paper are as follows:

1. to examine how and what one-year post-graduate trainee teachers learn about teaching pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in their placement schools;

2. to compare three kinds of school based approaches: i. that involved a practical teaching task; ii. that involved a pupil-focused task (but not a practical teaching task); and iii. where there was no specific pupil-focused SEND task other than class teaching practice.

The overall design of the study involved a series of 18 school case studies. A case study approach was employed to develop a 'rich picture' (Hamilton, 2011, p 1) of each case school in relation to the focus on teacher trainees' learning about teaching pupils with SEND. The sample of university programmes and schools was selected to enable comparison of different approaches. Following case study methods, different kinds of data and the views of a range of participants were collected. These contributed to a detailed contextual analysis of the issue to engage with 'the complexity of social activity' (Stark and Torrance, 2005, p33). The various data sources were analysed comparatively at successively more focused levels to draw conclusions relevant to the above aims.

Participants

Six university PGCE programmes were included in the study.. se These programmes were selected according to four criteria: firstly, to represent primary and secondary school training (three of each); secondly, to represent a geographical spread - the universities were located in the South West, North East and East Midlands regions of England; thirdly, the programmes had all attained at least a 'good' OFSTED inspection grade; finally, to represent different use of planned SEND related tasks during the school placement part of the programmes - four programmes used school-based SEND pupil-focused tasks while two only used classroom teaching practice with no additional SEND pupil-focused tasks.

i. Practical SEND teaching task (primary and secondary programmes)

This involved all trainees undertaking a personalised teaching task: working with a pupil with identified SEND over 6-8 hours, carried out in-class or through withdrawal and in the trainees' subject area (for secondary trainees). A short report, which was not formally assessed, was a required outcome. (University A and B)

ii. Alternative planned pupil-focused SEND task (non-teaching)

a. A primary PGCE programme on which trainees completed a set of tasks on inclusion, at whole school (perspective on inclusion), classroom (organisation and discipline) and pupil levels. The pupil-level task involved observation of two lessons, focusing on one pupil in each lesson within an area of diversity or SEND. Trainees reported their experiences and reflections on a professional blog. The task fed into a later programme assignment. (University C)

b. A secondary PGCE programme which used a pupil pursuit task, where trainees shadowed a pupil, usually a pupil with SEND, for one day. Trainees discussed their observations of the pupil in context of his or her Individual Education Plan, school policies and practices with staff in the school learning support department. The task led to a formally assessed report by University staff or could inform a longer assignment on inclusion. (University D)

iii. No specific planned pupil-focused SEND task

a. A primary PGCE programme which included a task exploring the role of the SENCO and how the school catered for children with two different types of SEND, but no specific planned pupil-focused task. (University E)

b. A secondary PGCE programme which had no overall specific school-based SEND task, although some subjects had SEND-related tasks (e.g. English trainees were asked to spend time with an SEN class and to meet with the SENCO). (University F)

For each university the programme managers identified three placement schools which they recognised as providing satisfactory or better quality general partnership and training provision (this was not a judgement about SEND provision in those schools). Three schools were selected as being the minimum number to show a range of variation across the school-based placements. Where possible, these schools also provided placements for two or more trainees.

The overall sample in the project therefore comprised six university programmes (three primary, three secondary), 18 schools and 32 trainees (one or two trainees per school), as in Table 1.

	Practical SEND teaching task	Alternative planned SEND pupil focused task	No specific planned SEND pupil task	Total
Primary PGCE	University A 3 schools (A1, A2, A3) 6 trainees	University C 3 schools (C1, C2, C3) 5 trainees	University E 3 schools (E1, E2, E3) 6 trainees	**3 university programmes 9 schools 17 trainees**
Secondary PGCE	University B 3 schools (B1, B2, B3) 6 trainees	University D 3 schools (D1, D2, D3) 5 trainees	University F 3 schools (F1, F2, F3) 4 trainees	**3 university programmes 9 schools 15 trainees**
Total	**2 university programmes 6 schools 12 trainees**	**2 university programmes 6 schools 10 trainees**	**2 university programmes 6 schools 10 trainees**	**6 university programmes 18 schools 32 trainees**

Table 1: Breakdown of programmes, schools and trainees involved in study

Ethics

The project met the ethical guidelines set out by the British Educational Research Association and was given ethical approval by the University of Exeter. Universities,

schools, trainees and all participants were provided with information about the project and gave their informed consent.

Data Collection

For each of the 18 participating schools, a wide range of data was gathered and generated to develop a holistic and intensive analysis for each school. Most of these data were collected during a two-three day visit to each school, at some point between April 2010 and April 2011. Data comprised:

- *Documentary data* - for example, university/school partnership documents and policies, school placement handbooks, school SEND and inclusion policy documents and lesson plans.

- *Observations* of trainees' class teaching - two lessons per trainee where possible. A total of 56 classroom lesson observations were made of 32 trainees, ranging from 30 minutes to one hour in length.

- *Semi-structured interviews* with trainees (52 interviews in total, ranging from 45 minutes to 3 hours in length), school tutors/mentors (32 interviews), senior teachers with responsibility for ITE (16 interviews), SENCO (18 interviews)and University visiting tutor (11 interviews). Trainee interviews included a stimulated recall of their class teaching and their responses to hypothetical scenarios/vignettes about pupils presenting different kinds of challenges to their teaching (Alexander & Becker, 1978; Calderhead, 1981).

- *Surveys* - trainees were also asked to complete an online survey regarding attitudes towards inclusion and teaching children with SEND, their placement experience and the influences on their learning about SEND. This survey generated quantitative data, consisting of statements with Likert scale responses and semantic differential responses. These data were not analysed in this paper.

Data analysis

Three successive levels of data analysis were carried out using prior and emergent themes (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

First level analysis

For each school all data were integrated, reduced and analysed thematically using a conceptual model which was regularly refined in response to the initial analysis of data. The conceptual model included the following aspects (as illustrated in Figure 1): school context; school SEND /inclusion practices; school ITE provision;

partnership with PGCE university; planned activity for SEND learning; classroom teaching (re SEND/inclusion); trainees' learning about SEND/inclusion; trainees' pedagogic knowledge (re SEND/inclusion). These first level analysis summaries consisted of between 45-50 page reports for each school.
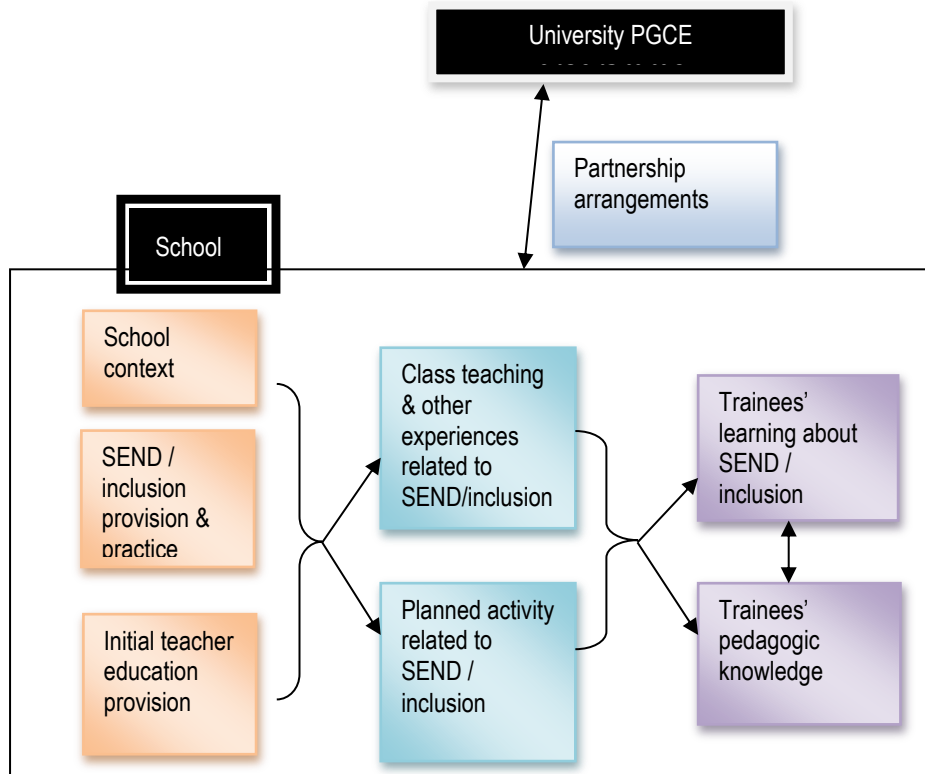

Figure 1: Conceptual model for data collection and analysis

Second level analysis

Using these eight broad themes these school summaries were further analysed and reduced using the Nvivo data analysis programme in which emergent sub-themes within each broad theme were also identified. These second level analysis summaries for each school were between seven and ten pages long.

Third level analysis

The two study aims were about what trainees learned about teaching pupils with SEND and what was learned from undertaking additional planned tasks focused on SEND. With these in mind selected parts of the second level summaries were further analysed in terms of the following areas:

- What trainees learned:
  - Learning about SEND and inclusion (strategies, approaches)
  - Pedagogic knowledge
- How trainees learned:

- o From placement school
- o From planned task
- o From the University campus course
- o From personal experience

This third level analysis was also undertaken using the Nvivo programme and this also identified emergent sub-themes within the broader organisation of themes.

An external university researcher with specialist knowledge of the SEND and inclusion field validated the quality of data collection and analysis in the project over several days. This involved school visits, observing interviews and class observations, scrutinising the data analysis and the final project report to the funding organisation.

Findings

The findings are first presented in terms of **what** trainees across the 18 schools learned about teaching pupils with SEND and secondly the factors relevant to **how** they learned are discussed. The 'what' and 'how' of learning will then be related to differences associated with using a planned pupil-focused SEND task or not.

What trainees learned

'What trainees learned' is divided into i. learning about teaching pupils with SEND and ii. more general pedagogic knowledge.

i. Trainees' learning about teaching pupils with SEND

Analyses resulted in a number of key dimensions of teaching and teaching strategies as reported by trainees (Table 2), most of which were recounted by both primary and secondary trainees. The examples across a number of dimensions illustrate the complex balance between addressing individual need yet not singling out pupils. For example: in teacher-pupil interaction, whether to use a random questioning technique or direct different types of questions to different pupils; in pupil grouping, how pupils with SEND are allocated to pairs and groups; in task design, whether templates are provided for all or some pupils; in working with other professionals, how teaching assistant support is managed. For secondary trainees, there seemed to be a greater sensitivity around privacy and potential stigma for pupils with SEND, for example, talking to a pupil about behaviour concerns privately. Examples of

strategies learned for teaching pupils with SEND were sometimes very specific, for example, use of a 'zooming tool' for one pupil with visual impairment. Some more generalised 'SEND adaptations' can also be seen which, trainees noted, tend to 'normalise' an adaptation, reduce stigma and potentially provide learning advantages for others, for example, the use of a 'dyslexia-friendly' colour and font in all presentations, the employment of a sound system. This will be returned to later in the paper. Most strategies, however, may be regarded as general teaching strategies which are not necessarily regarded as specific to teaching pupils with SEND.

Dimensions of teaching	Strategies	Examples P = Primary S = secondary; Examples from **both** primary and secondary trainees unless otherwise stated.
Task design	Reduction of task demands	Reducing number of questions, reducing amount of reading/writing
	Breaking tasks down into smaller episodes	Separating the writing of the beginning, middle and end of a story
	Provision of templates/concrete supports	Key words, key sentences, sentence templates, use of pictures, colours to distinguish sections, written instruction reminders, story board
	Alternative recording formats	Drawing instead of writing, using highlighters to note take
Teacher-pupil interaction	Questioning	Different types of questions – directed, open-closed, giving clues, providing choice of responses Approach - different questions for different pupils, random Giving time for pupils to respond
	Clarity of expectations – making sure pupils understand task	Repeating, rephrasing instructions, adjusting vocabulary, adding signs, asking pupils to repeat instructions back to teacher
	Checking understanding of concepts	Recapping, providing individual explanations, thumbs up/down
	Balance of talk	Reducing teacher talk
Behaviour management	Class organisation	Seating plans – next to teacher, where pupils with SEND sit, moving pupils Routine and boundaries, fast lesson pace
	Positive approaches	Praise Rewards - stickers, smiley faces, stars, behaviour charts for individuals and class (P)
	Teacher behaviour	Staying calm, not shouting, being consistent, non-confrontational Use of humour (S) Taking pupil aside for private talk, not singling a pupil out (S)
	Ways to gain attention and settle class	321 counting down Clapping technique, countdown on computer, hands on head, hands in air (P)
	Use of warnings and consequences	Singling pupil by name, choice and consequences, sending pupil to separate area of room/out of room Using timer to wait for quiet, deducting time from break time or 'golden' time (P)

		Time out cards, warning stickers (S)
	Pupil choice and responsibility	Pupil choice of activity (P) Give pupil responsibilities (P)
Motivational approaches	Start of lesson engagement activity	Read a book in interesting/dramatic way (P), participatory starters, games/puzzles
	Pupil interest and choice	Use personal interest – for reading material (P), for English lesson to learn about connectives (S) Pupil choice between different activities (P)
	Variation in activity	Change activities regularly, short engaging activities,
	Lesson pace	Maintain quick and lively momentum
	Pupil self task management (P)	Mini targets, ticking off tasks as completed
	Competition (S)	
Pupil grouping	Pairing	Talk partners, mixed ability pairs, pairing by confidence levels, SEND pairs (sometimes) (S),
	Grouping	Within class: by ability levels 'to ensure appropriate level of work' (P), mixed ability (e.g. one pupil with SEND per group) (S) Of classes: all pupils with SEND in same class as 'easier to differentiate' (S)
	Social mixing and support	Buddying, peer support
Learning modes	Visual	Visual timetable, visual resources, use of visual images
	Physical	Physical activities, putting information in different places so movement around the class, use of hands
	Games formats	Word puzzles, hangman, noughts and crosses, bingo, dragon's den (especially in S)
	Variety of media/modes	Interactive white board, laptops, video Sign language for pupil with hearing impairment (P), zooming tool for pupil with visual impairment (S), sound system, 'dyslexia-friendly' font and colour on IWB (P)
	Role play	
Assessment and feedback	Ways of checking understanding	Questioning in various forms, game formats eg who wants to be a millionaire? (S), involving teaching assistant in checking (S), approaching specific pupils 1:1.
	Starter activities	Various starter activities to assess knowledge/recall – visual prompts, talking to partner(S)
	Feedback	Using sticky labels to signal spelling errors rather than indelible pen ink (S)
Working with other professionals	Working with teaching assistants	Communicating with TA about lesson content/expectations/TA role, coordinating with TA during lesson (S), targeting TA support (P) Importance of pupils with SEND having at least one session a week with teacher (P)

Table 2: What trainees learned: dimensions, strategies and examples

ii. Trainees' learning - pedagogic knowledge relevant to teaching pupils with SEND

Pedagogic knowledge is used as a term to refer to knowledge about the principles and processes of teaching and assessment (here, as relevant to teaching pupils with SEND) (Jordan and Stanovich, 2003) as distinguished from specific teaching

approaches and strategies. The following themes emerged in relation to this kind of knowledge:

1. *general pedagogic assumptions and reasons for using specific approaches*, for example: the importance of knowing each child; taking a pupil perspective; using indirect approaches to achieve goals: assuming what is useful for a pupil with SEND can also be useful for other children too; the importance of understanding concepts rather than solely task completion.

2. *lesson planning principles*, for example: in relation to the criteria on which planning and differentiation for groups was based, frequently ability-based; where pupils with SEND were situated in this planning; and if the trainee used school or university planning templates.

3. *kinds of analyses used in planning and reviewing teaching*, for example: transferring knowledge from prior experience or observations; reflection, evaluation and analysis by the trainee of their own lessons; problem solving; causal analysis, seeking a reason and, as a result, asking what they can then do; trial and error.

4. *where to find out and learn more about teaching pupils with SEND*, for example, by: checking records; talking to the pupil, parents, teachers, the SENCO and external agencies; observing the pupil in detail and in different situations.

For most of these kinds of pedagogic knowledge, analyses showed that there were no marked differences between primary and secondary schools. Nor were there differences according to whether a planned task was undertaken, or which planned task was undertaken. However, there were some differences between the SEND practical teaching and non-teaching tasks that will be examined in more detail below.

How trainees learned

Trainees were asked about how and where they learned about the different teaching approaches and pedagogic knowledge above. The third level analyses revealed different themes relating to aspects of their PGCE programme (university and school based) as well as experiences from outside or prior to this: placement school context; nature of planned SEND task; university context; and prior experience. Variation by PGCE programme, school, class and/or trainee was evident across all of these elements (figure 2).
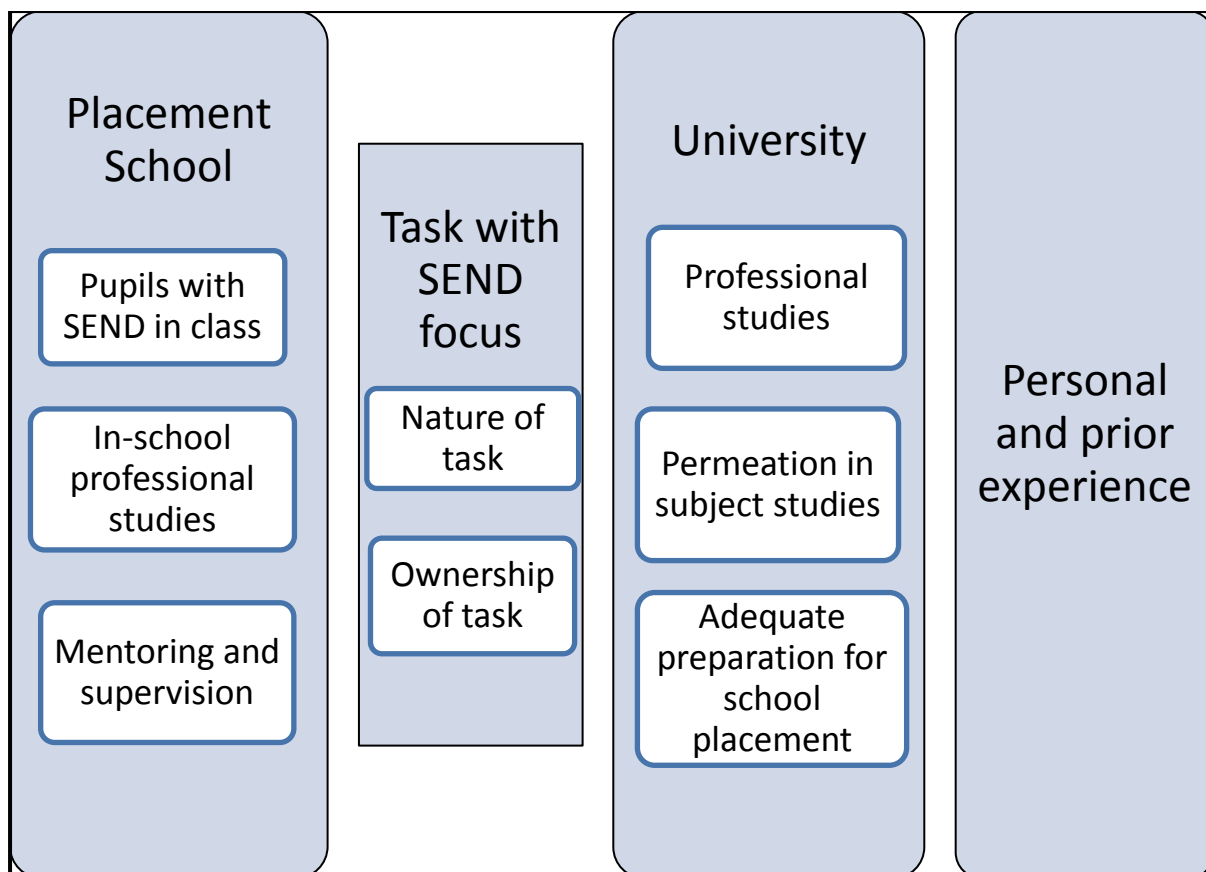
Figure 2: How trainees learn: in placement school, university course and SEND tasks

i. Placement school context

It was assumed that trainees in the placement schools of the PGCE programmes would all have *some* experience of teaching pupils with SEND as part of their class teaching experience (Nash and Norwich, 2008), although this experience was expected to vary across schools. The extent of this experience and whether it was supervised as regards teaching those with SEND was also expected to be vary across trainee and school based on previous research and reports (Nash and Norwich, 2008; OFSTED, 2008). The project data analyses showed that there were indeed clear inconsistencies between schools and even between trainees within the same school. This variability took a number of forms:

- *The number of children with SEND in the trainees' class/es, and in the school as a whole,.* This depended on the type of school (primary/secondary) and on the way classes were allocated. Across the three primary programmes, the number of pupils with SEND in trainees' classes (of approximately 30 children) varied from one or two to 10. In some secondary schools, trainees worked with classes

designated for pupils with SEND. Schools often stated that they tried to give trainees experience of teaching pupils with a range of SENDs, but that they did not give trainees classes with 'really really challenging individuals' (ITE coordinator, school F1) out of consideration for the trainees and the pupils. However, this sometimes meant the trainees did not always experience teaching pupils with significant SEND. For example, trainee 2, school E1, commented that there had been no opportunity on her previous placement to deal with 'difficult behaviour' as children with behaviour difficulties were taken out of the sessions the trainee had taught. The project highlighted the issue of class allocation for one university tutor:

> *I think that came out when we were organising students for you to visit; it became clear that some of them aren't working with any SEN pupils. I was really surprised and it raised an issue which I think I need to follow up. With the range of experiences that we like our students to have when they're on teaching practice, we ought to formalise that slightly or that expectation a bit more* (university tutor, school D1).

- *The amount and quality of supervision/mentoring of trainees' teaching* – in terms of who carried out the supervisions, whether this teacher taught the class that the trainee was teaching and the frequency of the supervision of the trainee.

- *The type of professional studies input from the school*, if any. This varied as to whether it was required by the university, whether the syllabus/topics were set by the university, the form it took (seminars, individual discussions) and who led the sessions (SENCO, ITE coordinator). As one mentor commented, such professional learning for trainees might vary across schools with some providing much higher quality training:

> *I think there is an issue that if it relies on the sessions that are given by the schools, is there some form of quality control on the sessions given by the schools?* (mentor, school B1)

ii.   *Planned SEND task*

- *Nature and supervision/support of pupil focused tasks*

The pupil-focused tasks set by Universities A-D to be carried out during the school placement were outlined above. It can be noted that there are a number of variations, for example, in terms of access to the pupil perspective (particularly strong in University D's task), the amount of direct contact with the pupil (notable in

the practical SEND teaching task), within-school supervision and support of the task and whether the task was assessed.

- *School ownership of planned task*

In all of the 4 PGCE programmes with pupil-focused SEND tasks, the task was set by the university for all trainees. The issue of task 'ownership' seems to be important in terms of the importance, value and status given to the task. For some participants the task seems to be regarded as 'owned' by the university, as 'university work' and not part of their 'school work'. This was evident when some staff talked about their role in supporting trainees and when trainees discussed the task.

iii. University context

Coverage of SEND and inclusion and adequacy of university preparation for school placement There was varied coverage of issues around SEND in the 6 university PGCE programmes. All provided a general introduction to SEND and inclusion in some form (e.g. whole cohort lectures). Other elements included, variously: classroom management, differentiation, SEND elective modules, outside speakers (for example, SENCOs, pupils with SEND) and an SEND seminar following up placements. Some courses focused on diversity and inclusion in general and one SENCO commented that this may mean that SEND gets lost in broader issues.

There seemed to be a general feeling from university tutors and school staff alike that only so much can be covered in a 'crowded' one year PGCE programme. Gaps in provision were particularly noted over how the topic of SEND was permeated within some subject studies but not in others (even within the same university programme). Some trainees commented that they would like more on the teaching implications for specific types of SENDs.

Some trainees did not feel prepared by the university course for teaching pupils with SEND on their school placements, and staff in some schools endorsed this view. Others felt that they were as prepared as they could be in a short period of time and there was an expectation that practicalities can be learned on the job.

iv. Personal factors

One SENCO (school B1) talked about how differences between trainees in their degree of preparedness for the school placement depended on their interest, personality and previous experience. Trainees did vary in terms of their prior experience of SEND (for example, through prior work experience, sometimes as teaching assistants, friends or siblings with SEND), although most had some sort of prior experience. Trainees also varied in their apparent interest and motivation to learn about SEND, for example, carrying out their own additional studies.

Relationship between what trainees learned about teaching pupils with SEND and experience of a planned SEND pupil-focused task

As reported above most trainees learned about the variety of dimensions of teaching approaches from a combination of sources. Analysis of trainee learning highlights some differences between the three types of task condition (SEND practical teaching task, pupil-focused SEND non-teaching task and no task). [For this analysis the Pupil pursuit and the Inclusion tasks will be analysed together as the non-teaching tasks] Across both kinds of SEND pupil focused tasks (teaching and non-teaching) there was evidence of learning about individuals with SEND as well as about teaching approaches relevant to them. However, the specific aspects of this learning differed according to the nature of the tasks. For the SEND practical teaching task, evidence in all six schools was about the importance of finding out about individual needs, for example, spending time and working closely with individual pupils and moving beyond the idea that all pupils identified as having SEND are the same. For the non-teaching tasks, the learning was more about understanding the pupils' perspectives and finding out about pupil responses to different kinds of teaching. This compared with the analysis of learning in the no task settings which found little evidence for learning about individual needs or perspectives. These differences, then, reflect both the existence and the design of an SEND task.

The influence of the task design was also evident in that some of those the trainees doing carrying out the non-teaching task referring referred more to 'reflection on what was observed' as a way of learning, while some who did the teaching task referred more to finding out about individual needs through reading and research in order to plan their teaching. Though learning about SEND and inclusion practices and roles (SENCO and teaching assistants) in school were attributed to both teaching and

non-teaching tasks, this was much more prominent in the non-teaching task schools. In addition to the mostly positive benefits attributed to both kinds of tasks, some queries and risks were raised. For the teaching tasks some secondary trainees identified the time demands of taking an individual focus when they become class teachers. For the non-teaching tasks, the benefits of the task were seen by some to depend on the input of teachers and SENCOs in analysing observations, while some thought that the task came too early in the course to benefit from it. One tutor was also concerned that the task could be focused on pupils who did not have SEND.

Discussion and conclusions
The personal in general-specialist teaching
The *what* of trainees' learning appears to be complex and multi-dimensional, encompassing general pedagogical knowledge and teaching strategies that involved detailed aspects of task design, learning modes, behaviour management, pupil grouping, teacher-pupil learning interactions and motivational approaches. What trainees' learned relevant to teaching pupils with SEND also appears to be generally similar across the six PGCE programmes studied. Findings indicate no distinctive specialist pedagogy is learned for teaching the pupils with SEND in the classes they taught. What they learned about the complex and multi-dimensional aspects of teaching can be interpreted as adaptations (extensions and intensifications) of generic approaches and strategies (Davis and Florian, 2004; Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2010). This finding is consistent with the concept of a continuum of pedagogic approaches (Lewis and Norwich, 2005).

However, in addition, there was evidence across many of the schools of trainees also learning about the complex balance between addressing individual needs, yet not singling pupils out in a humiliating way. These examples reveal a developing awareness of strategies in their teaching of pupils with SEND that are sensitive to recognising differences as enabling but as potentially stigmatising. This can be interpreted to exemplify some of the class teaching dilemmas illustrated in the ethnographic study by Berlak and Berlak (1981) and reflects wider dilemmas of difference experienced in the education of pupils with SEND (Minow, 1990; Norwich, 2008).

So, one of the main conclusions is that what trainees learn about teaching pupils with SEND is strongly interlinked with what they learn about teaching in general (McIntyre, 2009). Trainees tended to use lesson planning templates provided by their university programme or they followed the school's usual template. These frequently included adaptations in terms of general differentiation practice – for example, by ability groups, or for 'all, most and some' pupils. Pupils with SEND were not usually specifically or separately included within such lesson plans; they were often planned for as part of planning for 'some', for example, in lower 'ability' or attaining groups.

The value of the planned tasks was that it enabled trainees to become aware of individual pupils' perspectives and learning needs that goes beyond differentiation in terms of sub-groups. This is the other main conclusion of the study. The pedagogic knowledge learned from undertaking the various planned pupil-focused SEND tasks was about personal learning needs, something that was less likely to be learned from only whole class teaching experience. In spending specific time focusing on a pupil, the trainee may be better introduced to the interactive nature of the teacher-learner relationship and to the importance of planning appropriate learning processes. This enables them to understand greater pedagogic complexity beyond what can often be regarded as a 'mechanistic and piecemeal' curriculum coverage approach (Wilson, 2004).

Planned tasks within the variability of school and university contexts
The *how* of trainees' learning in different contexts, involves prior and current experiences within the school placement experience and the university campus programme. As noted earlier, trainee teachers spend two-thirds of their training year in schools. This is particularly important as it is argued that 'whatever is achieved in the university, the teaching practices and attitudes that student-teachers usually learn to adopt are those currently dominant in the schools' (McIntyre, 2009, p602). In addition, trainees in this study, as in previous studies (Nash and Norwich, 2008) regard the school placement as the most important aspect of their PGCE for learning about special educational needs. With regard to special educational needs, OFSTED (2008) has previously commented that this school-based preparation is dependent on the specific provision within the school, thus experiences may be very variable.

This current study has confirmed this unevenness and goes further in identifying some of the elements comprising this provision variability.

The values and ethos of the school, organisational practice and attitudes of individual staff members are important aspects of the context that influence trainee learning about teaching pupils with SEND. We found some examples of trainees who adopted school grouping and planning practices that were not relevant to individual pupils' needs; reliance on teaching assistants to plan for some pupils with SEND and teachers who held beliefs which reinforced these practices. As one school tutor expressed:

> *You're ok if you're in a school with somebody like …* [the principal school tutor]*. Whereas before it didn't matter what school you were in because the Uni was giving it to you so you all had the same, but now where your placement is depends on what quality you get. When I did my PGCE most of it came from the Uni so we were all having the same quality. But now of course it's all coming from the schools, so if you're here you get a very good PGCE training year* (school subject tutor, school D1).

This study also shows that university PGCE programmes are also variable in terms of input around teaching pupils with SEND; even within programmes there is variability in different subject areas.

Furlong et al's (2006) research indicates that ITE partnerships tend to be rather superficial. The lead provider (the university) becomes the 'agent' for delivery of the programme, the content and structure are defined by the government and schools become sub-contractors, agreeing to deliver their part with lists of tasks and responsibilities, as set out in the partnership agreement. The complexities of pupil learning and of professional education are generally not confronted and teacher performance rather than pupil learning is frequently the focus (Edwards, 2002, in Wilson, 2004). McIntyre (2009, p606) also notes that school-based work incorporates 'largely incidental learning', arguing that '*planned* diverse learning experiences, which need to be regarded as *more than* 'university work' are needed to promote 'practical theorising'.

Ownership of the planned SEND tasks in this study ('university work' or 'school work') was an issue in the visibility and importance given to the tasks by some school staff and trainees. These ownership issues relate to university-school partnership relationships and show a need for further 'joint work' (Lawson and Nash, 2010). One issue around such 'joint work', however, is the different nature of the discourse in schools and universities and the challenge this presents in developing a constructive and balanced partnership. In response to this issue, it has been suggested that partnership work can be regarded as having the potential for opening up 'boundary spaces' (Edwards and Mutton, 2007) where universities and schools can both participate. The school – university relationship in England is also changing with the introduction of Teaching Schools that will have increased responsibilities for ITE within their associated school alliances (DfE, 2011b). However, whatever the specific design of the structural context of ITE, this study indicates that a planned pupil-focused SEND task, if implemented in favourable conditions, can make a contribution to the ITE of teachers in learning to teach pupils with SEND. As McIntyre (2009) noted, such planning prevents professional learning from being incidental and *ad hoc.* It also sets a specific focus for joint work between schools and universities in preparing future teachers.

Implications: questions for policy and practice

A strong point of this study has been its breadth and depth of focus at school, class teaching and individual trainee levels of analysis. The diverse data collection methods enabled analysis of the consistency of sources and the external evaluation of the research methods also contributed to the validation of the findings. However, the study was nevertheless small in scale given the system of ITE in England and trainees were visited at different stages of their one year programme. So, generalisation needs to be approached cautiously.

With an appropriate degree of tentativeness, the study still raises important evidence informed questions even if it does not give definitive general implications. These questions are listed below with some suggested options (in brackets after the questions).

For ITE providers:

How will they formulate the practical principles and procedures about inclusion and teaching pupils with identified SEND in their programmes?
How will they design and support planned school-based activities relevant to learning to teach pupils with SEND?

For schools:
How can they take an active part in allocating trainees to classes in ways that take account of their future learning about SEND? (by meeting trainees in advance of class allocation),
How will they ensure that trainees teach/support a range of pupils with SEND? (through experience of a continuum of provision),
How will they ensure appropriate supervision of class teaching with respect to pupils with SEND? (by supervision by a teacher who teaches the same class as trainee and has 'good practice' in teaching pupils with SEND, by working with teacher/s experienced with SEND, for example, SENCO, specialist SEND teachers, and by supervision that covers not just a review of trainees' teaching but also reviews lesson planning),
What opportunities are there for reflection on teaching pupils with SEND? (by mutual observation and reflection on teaching - through trainees observing experienced class and SEND specialised teachers and vice versa, then enabling reflective discussion).

As regards planned school-based SEND related tasks:
How can tasks be designed which enable trainees to learn about pupils' perspectives and needs in terms of observation, reflection and planning of teaching? (by pupil pursuit/ observation type tasks and teaching tasks),
How can tasks be designed that are seen as relevant and integral to the school and university programme, as 'joint work'?
How to ensure that the SEND aspects of learning are part of wider learning about inclusion but explicitly identified and not marginalised by other aspects of inclusion?

For ITE policy in England and internationally:
How to ensure that the visibility/importance of SEND aspects of a commitment to inclusion or equity in ITE remains high?

How will the training provider be involved in the planning and overseeing of placement opportunities for trainees?

How will the planned SEND tasks relate to a wider planned ITE curriculum for placement learning?

How will the distinctive university contribution to ITE be embodied in ITE provision? (theory and knowledge about SEND and its relationship to school practice, through planned school based experiences and their review).

Conclusions within the European context of ITE

Unlike many other European countries (EADSNE, 2011) England, as stated earlier, does not currently have separate ITE for mainstream and special education teachers and therefore all trainees are expected to be prepared to teach pupils with special educational needs and to be prepared for teaching in inclusive settings. This merging of provision (now more than 20 years old in the UK) is considered a current priority in many European contexts (EADSNE, 2011).

Whilst some European countries (for example, France – EADSNE, 2011) are strengthening the university context and academic emphasis in ITE, other countries are increasing employment-based and school-based routes (for example, Teach First and School Direct in England, DfE, 2012c). In England the variety of routes into teaching increasingly concentrates on the role of schools rather than universities (DfE, 2010; DfE, 2011b). However, given the variability of provision in schools for trainees' learning about teaching pupils with SEND, as evident in this study's findings and reported elsewhere (OFSTED, 2008), the study highlights possible limitations inherent in relying on schools for this aspect of ITE.

This study has also highlighted the importance of 'joint work' across the university/school boundary, a concern which also seems to be Europe-wide. The European Agency study on *Teacher Education for Inclusion* (EADSNE, 2011) emphasises the need for a conceptual framework to link theoretical and practical learning and warns that 'if this is not in place, the school practice may become more influential than learning in the HEI [Higher Education Institution] and – given the difficulty in most countries of finding sufficient quality placements – may not support the development of inclusive practice'.

In conclusion, this paper, which reports part of data analysed from the overall study, has also opened up further questions and methodological approaches for investigating the contexts, processes and outcomes of ITE from a SEND perspective. More direct methods, for example, ethnographic and longitudinal, could be used to examine professional learning in this area. The move towards increasingly school-based ITE in England also calls for in-depth examination of how this will affect trainee teachers' professional learning to teach pupils with SEND.

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