THE TRAINEE TEACHER’S HANDBOOK
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THE TRAINEE TEACHER’S HANDBOOK

A COMPANION FOR INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

CAROL THOMPSON AND PETER WOLSTENCROFT
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Peter Wolstencroft is a Senior Lecturer in Leadership at Coventry University. A firm believer in the transformative power of education, his educational philosophy is that a good teacher should always encourage students to examine the ways in which they see the world and seek out new ways of doing things. An active researcher, his previous work has centred around the day-to-day experiences of those working in education.
Introduction: ‘The map is not the territory’

Teaching is a creative, relational role which involves spending whole days talking about your favourite subject! Perhaps naively, when starting teacher training most of us tend to focus on the more attractive aspects of the work but we also need to remember that this is a professional role and as such there are expectations, responsibilities and, very probably, parts of the job you don’t enjoy. The same can be said for the experience of teacher training. As a trainee you will be introduced to a world of new knowledge and a range of practical techniques. There will be topics you find fascinating and others you don’t. All of this is part of the process of becoming a teacher and all aspects of the training are equally important. It is our belief that having a clear understanding of the role and the skills needed to undertake it will help you to see the relevance in the things you are learning.

During your training, you will be developing technical skills, trying out new things, getting to grips with how theory underpins practice, reading, discussing, analysing and grappling with new ideas. In principle you will be following the same specification as others in your group, at least in terms of the course content and assessment requirements. Yet for each of you the journey will be very different. We have used Alfred Korzybski’s well known phrase the map is not the territory to illustrate this point. The original usage of this term was to outline the relationship between an object and the representation of that object, but in common usage it refers to the concept that the way we see the world isn’t necessarily ‘reality’. Likewise, the way you view your training journey will not represent everyone’s reality but will be particular to you – and it is up to you to ensure that you get the most out of the experience.

The process of becoming a teacher is quite unique and, as such, there is no single path or direct map to follow. Perhaps the most important thing is that the journey will involve being open to new experiences and being able to reflect honestly on your own skills and abilities. The intention of this book is to help you to do just that and to allow you to personalise your own learning we have included a space to set specific goals for yourself.

We have mapped the content of this book to the Teachers’ Standards as well as the Professional Standards for FE and Skills teachers (you will find these in the appendix at the end of the book) but it was never the intention to produce a ‘tick-list’ book. Instead, our aim is to provide a guide to support you through the important parts of your training, therefore the book is divided into three parts, each exploring a specific aspect of the teacher training journey.
Part 1 is entitled ‘Learning to Teach’ and considers the ways in which you can take control of your training by thinking about your core values in relation to teaching as well as the ways in which you can work with the people who will support you on the programme.

Part 2 is called ‘Your Teaching Practice’ and has a focus on how you can apply your own learning in the classroom. In this section we will look at some of the key theories alongside the main aspects of the role and will think about teaching strategies, assessment techniques and the ways in which you can create a positive, well-managed classroom.

Part 3 has a focus on the very important, but often neglected, part of your professional role – ‘Continuing Your Learning’. This section considers the wider aspects of the role and the ways that you can get the most out of it.

In each of the chapters we have included relevant theory and examples of how this can be applied to practice. You will also find an ‘in a nutshell’ feature at the end of every chapter to remind you of key information. Handy printable versions of these features are available to download and print from https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/the-trainee-teachers-handbook/book257379. Our experience of using these has been very positive and our students have found them invaluable in the transition between learning about theory to applying it in the classroom.

Starting your teacher training is a very exciting challenge. It won’t always be an easy ride and there will be times when you may question what you have taken on, but if you approach it with openness and a sense of adventure it will be one of the most rewarding experiences you have.

We hope your teacher training journey is challenging, fulfilling and, most of all, unique to you. We offer this book as a guide for the journey and, in a sense, it can be seen as a map – but we expect you to discover the territory!

Reference

Part 1

Learning to teach

In this section, you will be discovering the skills you need to make a success of your training. This will help you to plan your journey and use your time effectively.

The following chapters will explore:

• ways in which you can work effectively with others;
• how to use feedback and self-reflection to enhance your development;
• strategies for overcoming barriers and developing your resilience.
Why do you want to teach?

In this chapter we will explore:

- philosophies of teaching;
- values, beliefs and attitudes;
- skills for teaching.

Introduction

Our motivations and values have a great influence on how we develop as teachers and establishing these at the outset will help you to plan your professional progress effectively. Although you have already taken the decision to pursue a teaching career, it is important to explore the reasons behind this and in this chapter we will consider the motivations, philosophies and values that underpin these choices.

Why teach?

Before you embark on your journey think about the events which brought you to this point. Perhaps it was your love of learning? A desire to share your knowledge with others? Maybe you were inspired by one of your own teachers? Having a clear view of the underlying reasons which fuelled your motivation will help to establish your base philosophy in relation to the role, as well as highlighting your core values, both of which are important to remember when you come across challenges in your career.
Reflection

Imagine you are at your first job interview and are asked the question ‘Why did you want to become a teacher?’ What would you say? Without spending too much time deliberating (much as would be the case in an interview) jot down your initial thoughts and then come back to these when you have finished reading the chapter.

Your initial answers will tell you something about your motivation which, in turn, will influence the sort of teacher you become.

Recent research (Chiony et al., 2017) explored the main things which draw people to the teaching profession and concluded that these were largely based on either intrinsic or altruistic motivations. For many teachers and trainees, the desire to do something they found satisfying which was also socially meaningful was a big draw and reasons such as ‘making a difference to others’ were cited as key motivators.

For participants in the research, the top five reasons for choosing teaching as a career were as shown in Figure 1.1.

![Figure 1.1 Top five reasons for choosing teaching as a career](image)

The research also developed a typology of ‘teacher types’ and identified four broad categories of teacher which were described as in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Typology of teacher types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practitioners</th>
<th>Teachers motivated by a desire to teach and work with students.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderates</td>
<td>Teachers influenced by a broad range of factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealists</td>
<td>Teachers who want to make a difference to society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationalists</td>
<td>Teachers who weigh up a combination of pragmatic, personal and social justice-related factors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why do you want to teach?

If you are interested in finding out more about this, or want to take the test (which has the usual limitations associated with remote, online questionnaires), then go to teacherquiz.lkmco.org.

All of this is very interesting and may well resonate with your own reasons for choosing a career in teaching but although these initial motivations are important it is even more important to consider what it is that makes people stay in teaching. This is particularly true at times when the job seems very difficult and we are challenged to remember the reasons why we chose it in the first place.

**Some philosophies of education**

There are a number of philosophies relating to education which provide us with a starting point in thinking about our views of the purpose of teaching and education overall. These are outlined below to prompt initial thinking about your own philosophies which in turn may lead to a greater understanding of your *values* in relation to education.

*Figure 1.2 Perennialism*
Perennialism

Perennialism presents a highly determined view of education and sees it as a vehicle for presenting fixed ‘truths’. In this sense, educational institutions would exist simply to teach the commonly accepted ‘truths’ and may do so through a series of structured lessons. It is easy to imagine the advantages of having such certainties in life, particularly in terms of structuring teaching and subsequently learning against pre-determined expectations; likewise it is not difficult to imagine the limitations of this approach. The name itself suggests a degree of conformity and stagnation – like the perennial plant, the conditions in which it will grow remain fixed, as does the plant itself, never having an opportunity to blossom in a way which differs from its predecessors.

Idealism

Idealism is based on the view that reality is individually constructed and that ideas are the only ‘true reality’ as well as the only thing worth knowing. Plato is considered the ‘father’ of idealism and he described a utopian society in which the purpose of education was to bring latent ideas to consciousness and discover and develop each individual’s abilities. From a teacher’s perspective, this would mean a focus on handling ideas through discussion and Socratic dialogue (a method of teaching based on questioning to clarify knowledge). By using these methods, a teacher is eliciting information rather than providing it and becomes a guide as opposed to a sage. While at first glance this might seem very appealing, the reality of a large group of students all having individually constructed realities can be overwhelming.

Realism

Realism is a philosophy based on the belief in the world ‘as it is’. In this sense, ‘reality’ would be based on observations and the scrutiny of observable data. A curriculum based on the principles of this philosophy would emphasise the physical world (in particular disciplines such as science and mathematics) in order to study structure and form and develop rational thinking. The teacher’s role in this case would be to organise and present content systematically and use methods which encouraged the mastery of facts and basic skills. As with perennialism this has the advantage of being an organised, systematic approach to teaching, although it may potentially stifle creativity by limiting the scope of teaching and learning to that which is observable and considered factual.

Pragmatism

For pragmatists things are only considered ‘real’ if they are experienced or observed. From this perspective, there is no absolute because things are always changing so the aim is not to search for ‘truth’ so much as truth in what works. John Dewey applied this philosophy in his progressive approaches based on the premise that learners must adapt to each other and to their environment, therefore learning would take into account the social experience, the context, place and time. A pragmatist approach to teaching would have a focus on methods which involved hands-on problem-solving, experimentation and working in collaboration.
Why do you want to teach?

Existentialism

Existentialism is based on the belief that we all have a personal interpretation of the world and this is defined at an individual level. In this sense individuals are defined by the choices they make and not driven by others’ views. For Sartre, the existential moment comes when a young person realises for the first time that choice is theirs and they are responsible for themselves so that their question becomes ‘Who am I and what should I do?’ In relation to education, an existentialist classroom would be one in which choice is paramount and where the teacher emphasises that answers come from within individuals rather than an outside authority. Therefore the educational experience would focus on creating opportunities for self-direction and would start with the individual learner, not the curriculum. At first sight, this seems like a good approach to take in many classrooms and helps develop skills needed by students when they complete their courses; however, in an educational culture driven by the achievement of targets it can be difficult to implement.

Activity

Go back to the beginning of the chapter and look at your answer to the interview question. Now that you have some information about key philosophical approaches to teaching how would you frame your answer? Could you relate to a particular philosophy, or articulate professional values which are important to you?
Skills for teaching

As well as exploring your motivations for teaching it is also worth reflecting on the skills, attributes and personal traits best suited to the task. After all, even the most altruistic motivations will not make up for a mismatch between these characteristics and the requirements of the role.

As outlined by the Department for Education:

> Teachers make the education of their pupils their first concern, and are accountable for achieving the highest possible standards in work and conduct. Teachers act with honesty and integrity, have strong subject knowledge, keep their knowledge and skills as teachers up-to-date and are self-critical, forge positive professional relationships and work with parents in the best interests of their pupils.

(Department for Education, 2016, p. 10)

What does this quote tell you about the values and attitudes expected of teachers? The quote was taken from the standards for teachers within primary and secondary settings but is equally relevant in post-compulsory education. What is clear is that teachers are expected to carry out their roles with the utmost professionalism and that requires commitment to personal and professional development from the outset.

Values, beliefs and attitudes

Being aware of our values seems like something which is commonplace and even common sense. But what are values? How do they influence our beliefs, behaviour and attitudes?

Values

Values could be described as the ‘guidelines’ for how we choose to live our lives. For some people values are based on ingrained beliefs about how life ‘should be’; for others they may be strongly influenced by family, peer groups, culture or religion. Values often concern those things that are at the ‘core’ of life such as personal relationships, social roles and interaction with others. Our core values are the principles which dictate our behaviour and influence our thoughts, so if we want to make any changes to the things we do, or how we do them, understanding our values is a good place to start.

The development of our personal values often starts at an early age and is influenced by parents, family and parental figures. However, these may change as we interact within the wider society and begin to develop our own personal beliefs which are derived from our experiences.

Values and beliefs

Values and beliefs are interconnected: our values could be described as the ‘truths’ we consider important – for example, integrity, courage, fairness, honesty – and our beliefs are the judgements we make about ourselves and the world around us, often based on the things we consider to be true. In turn, both values and beliefs will influence our attitudes and behaviours.
For example, if you believe that teaching is a ‘gift’, it might be easy to assume that it cannot be learned, therefore any difficulties you come across in your teaching practice might be dismissed as something you cannot do (if you don’t have ‘the gift’). Conversely, you could also assume that such difficulties are the result of the behaviours of others and therefore your approach need not change. If such beliefs go unexamined we risk limiting ourselves to tried and tested attitudes and behaviours which may not be working for us.

Values, beliefs and behaviours all have an influence on our approach to others and how we conduct ourselves personally and professionally, something which is illustrated by the following quote:

*Your values become your thoughts,*

*Your thoughts become your words,*

*Your words become your actions,*

*Your actions become your habits,*

*Your habits become your values,*

*Your values become your destiny.*

(Mahatma Gandhi)
In order to meet the requirements of your teacher training course it is important to take responsibility for your own professional development. A good starting point for this is to think about the things you are already confident about and those things which need more development. Table 1.2 provides an outline of the skills required to become a teacher. These are based on the Teachers’ Standards which underpin teacher training programmes but are not intended to be a direct checklist against them. Being as honest as you can, and remembering that you are at the very start of your training journey, complete the self-assessment by rating yourself from ‘very competent’ to ‘need development’. This activity should help you to establish useful development goals and there is a template at the end of Chapter 7 that you can use to log these.

**Table 1.2 A self-assessment of your professional practice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very competent</th>
<th>Need development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning lessons/teaching</td>
<td>I am very confident about this</td>
<td>I am not confident but need to develop this skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am confident but need more practice</td>
<td>I have no idea how to do this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own subject knowledge</td>
<td>I am very confident in my subject knowledge</td>
<td>I am not confident and need to develop my subject knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am confident but keen to develop this knowledge</td>
<td>I have little confidence in my subject knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting learner progress</td>
<td>I have a good understanding of how to do this</td>
<td>I have limited understanding of how to do this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have some understanding of how to do this</td>
<td>I have no idea how to do this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting high expectations</td>
<td>I am very confident I can do this</td>
<td>I am not confident I can do this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am confident I can do this</td>
<td>I have no idea how to do this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing classroom behaviour</td>
<td>I am very confident about this</td>
<td>I am not confident but need to develop this skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am confident but need more practice</td>
<td>I have no idea how to do this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of wider professional responsibilities</td>
<td>I have a good knowledge of the wider professional role</td>
<td>I have limited knowledge of the wider professional role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have some knowledge of the wider professional role</td>
<td>I do not know what the wider professional role involves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing learning</td>
<td>I have a good understanding of how to do this</td>
<td>I have limited understanding of how to do this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have some understanding of how to do this</td>
<td>I have no idea how to do this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting teaching to respond to learners’ needs</td>
<td>I am very confident I can do this</td>
<td>I am not confident I can do this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am confident I can do this</td>
<td>I have no idea how to do this</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to meet the requirements of your teacher training course it is important to take responsibility for your own professional development. A good starting point for this is to think about the things you are already confident about and those things which need more development. Table 1.2 provides an outline of the skills required to become a teacher. These are based on the Teachers’ Standards which underpin teacher training programmes but are not intended to be a direct checklist against them. Being as honest as you can, and remembering that you are at the very start of your training journey, complete the self-assessment by rating yourself from ‘very competent’ to ‘need development’. This activity should help you to establish useful development goals and there is a template at the end of Chapter 7 that you can use to log these.
Why do you want to teach?

At this stage, it is important simply to think about the key aspects of the role rather than the actual teaching standards. In time you will become more familiar with the specific standards and can then begin to evidence your skills and knowledge against them.

Some things to consider . . .

**Things to think about**

This part of the chapter is a prompt for your own reflection and may be a useful starting point for any reflective activities you need to undertake for your course. Is it important to have a philosophy about how you want to approach teaching? If so, how will this influence the type of teacher you become?

When you started reading this chapter you may have had very clear views about why you wanted to become a teacher and accepted these as your own ‘truth’ about the role. Now, you should have a clearer idea about how your initial motivations, values and beliefs might influence your approach to teaching and it is even possible that you might be questioning your initial views.

*Figure 1.5 Balloon man*
### Philosophies of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perennialism</th>
<th>Idealism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sees education as a vehicle for presenting fixed ‘truths’. Education is seen as a way of teaching and reinforcing this information.</td>
<td>Sees ideas as being the most important aspect of education, the teacher’s role being to develop individual capabilities and ideas. Idealists see the world as it should be.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realism</th>
<th>Pragmatism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sees the world as ‘it is’ and recognises the importance of observation. Sees education as a structured and systematic process used to develop rational thinking.</td>
<td>Acknowledges the importance of observation and experience as well as the changing nature of knowledge and advocates experimentation and problem-solving.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existentialism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has a focus on personal interpretation and choice and advocates an approach which focuses on self-direction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Putting it into practice

It is likely that your approach to teaching and learning is influenced by a number of things including your values, your experiences and the way you like learning. It is not suggested that you adopt a particular philosophy but that you recognise the impact your beliefs might have on the approaches you adopt. The following table provides some ideas of teaching strategies matched to each of the philosophies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perennialism</th>
<th>Structured lessons&lt;br&gt;Activities to reinforce learning&lt;br&gt;Learning checks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idealism</td>
<td>Differentiated activities&lt;br&gt;Target setting&lt;br&gt;Unstructured tasks&lt;br&gt;Socratic questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>Mastery learning&lt;br&gt;Scaffolding learning&lt;br&gt;Case studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
<td>Experimentation&lt;br&gt;Problem-solving&lt;br&gt;Group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existentialism</td>
<td>Worksheets&lt;br&gt;Choice of activities&lt;br&gt;Use of flipped learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What else could you do?

### Suggestions for further reading


Why do you want to teach?

References

