

# **How teachers learn to teach pupils with special educational needs/disabilities on PGCE programmes - findings from a recent funded research project**

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# Context

- Initial teacher education
  - Different providers eg school centred, **universities**
  - Different levels of qualification and length of courses
    - eg BA QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) – 3 year
    - **PGCE** (Post Graduate Certificate in Education) – 1 year
  - School placements – 120 out of 180 days on PGCEs
- Special educational needs

# Project aims

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

	<b>Practical SEND teaching task</b>	<b>Alternative SEND pupil focused task (non-teaching)</b>	<b>No specific planned SEND pupil task</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Primary one year ITE programme</b>	University A 3 schools 6 trainees	University C 3 schools 5 trainees	University E 3 schools 6 trainees	<b>3 Uni progs 9 schools 17 trainees</b>
<b>Secondary one year ITE programme</b>	University B 3 schools 6 trainees	University D 3 schools 5 trainees	University F 3 schools 4 trainees	<b>3 Uni progs 9 schools 15 trainees</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 Uni progs 6 schools 12 trainees</b>	<b>2 Uni progs 6 schools 10 trainees</b>	<b>2 Uni progs 6 schools 10 trainees</b>	<b>6 Uni progs 18 schools 32 trainees</b>

- 6 University one year ITE programmes (3 primary, 3 secondary)
- 3 schools per programme: strong partnership with University
- 2 trainees per school (where possible)

# **School based tasks**

## **SEND teaching task (primary and secondary, University A and B)**

- work with a pupil with identified SEN over 6-8 hours, in-class or withdrawal

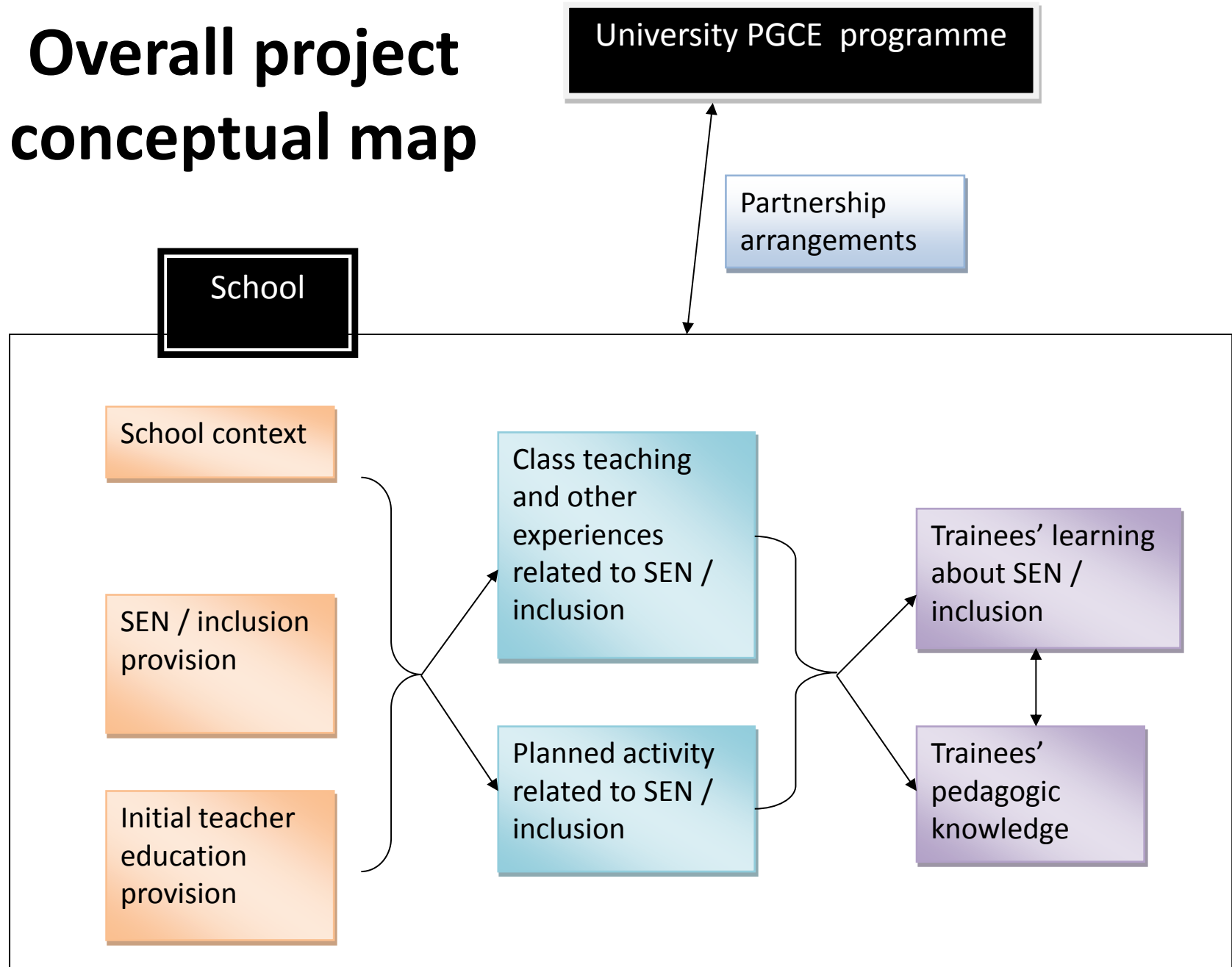
## **SEND pupil focused task (primary only, University C)**

- 4 Inclusion tasks (SEND plus) through observation and research, reported on through professional blog

## **SEND pupil focused task (secondary only, University D)**

- pupil pursuit, following a pupil for a day across 5 different lessons

# Overall project conceptual map



# Data collection

- 2-3 day period per school
- **Documentary data** e.g. school placement handbooks, SEN policy, lesson plans
- **Observations** classroom teaching x 2 lessons x 2 trainees (56)
- **Semi-structured interviews** with:
  - Trainees (52, 45 mins to 3 hours)
  - School tutors/mentors (32)
  - Senior teachers with responsibility for ITE (16)
  - SEN Coordinator (18)
  - University visiting tutor (11)
- Trainee interviews included **stimulated recall** and **hypothetical scenarios/vignettes**
- **Surveys** – trainees also completed an online survey regarding attitudes towards inclusion and teaching children with SEN

# Data analysis

- 1. School first level summaries (45-50 pages):** collation and grounded analysis of all data to provide a summary per school.
- 2. School second level summaries (7-10 pages):** utilising Nvivo in coding the school first level summaries, according to a flexible coding framework based on the conceptual map.
- 3. Third level analysis:** further analysed in terms of what trainees learned and how they learned – primary /secondary and by task type.

# What trainees learned about teaching pupils with SEND 1

## *What learned across programmes:*

- [Task design](#)
- Teacher-pupil interaction
- Behaviour management
- Motivational approaches
- Pupil grouping
- Learning modes
- Assessment and feedback
- Work with other professionals

Dimension of teaching	Strategies	Examples
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

# **What trainees learned about teaching pupils with SEND 2**

- Specific strategies eg zooming tool
- More generalised SEND adaptations eg 'dyslexia-friendly' font
- General teaching strategies

# What trainees learned - pedagogic knowledge

## *What learned across programmes:*

- General pedagogic assumptions and reasons for using specific approaches
- Lesson planning principles
- Kinds of analyses used in planning and reviewing teaching
- Where to find out and learn more about teaching pupils with SEND

# How trainees learned

## Placement School

Pupils with SEND in class

In-school professional studies

Mentoring and supervision

## Task with SEND focus

Nature of task

Ownership of task

## University

Professional studies

Permeation in subject studies

Adequate preparation for school placement

## Personal

Prior experience

# SEND/pedagogic knowledge: task specific

- Any type of SEND task
  - learning about individuals with SEND as well as about teaching approaches relevant to them
- SEND practical teaching task
  - finding out about individual needs, spending time and working closely with individuals
  - moving beyond considering all pupils with SEND as the same
- Non-teaching tasks (inclusion tasks/pupil pursuit)
  - understanding pupils' perspectives
  - pupil responses to different kinds of teaching
- No task
  - little evidence for learning about individual needs/perspectives

# **SEND/pedagogic knowledge: task specific continued**

- To plan teaching:
  - non-teaching SEND task referred more to ‘reflection on what was observed’
  - practical SEND teaching task referred more to finding out about individual needs through reading and research
- Differences reflect the nature of the SEND task design.

## Conclusions and discussion points 1:

# The personal in general-specialist teaching

- What trainees learn about teaching pupils with SEND is strongly interlinked with what they learn about teaching in general.
- Complex balance between addressing individual needs, yet not singling pupils out.
- Pedagogic knowledge learned from undertaking planned pupil-focused SEND tasks centres on pupils' **personal** learning needs, less likely to be learned from only whole class teaching experience.

## Conclusions and discussion points 2:

# Variability of school and university contexts

- Confirmed importance of school placement but experiences very variable.
- Importance of values and ethos, organisational practice and attitudes of individual staff members.

*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).*

- University PGCE programmes also variable, even within programmes.

## Conclusions and discussion points 3:

# Potential of planned task

- Rather than 'incidental learning' (McIntyre, 2009)
- Ownership? Joint work? Boundary spaces?

# 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?

# Questions 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?
- How will they ensure that trainees teach/support a range of pupils with SEND?
- How will they ensure appropriate supervision of class teaching with respect to pupils with SEND?
- What opportunities are there for reflection on teaching pupils with SEND?

# Questions about school-based SEND 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?
- 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?

# Questions for ITE policy

- 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?

# Future?

- Some European countries (eg France) are strengthening the university context and academic emphasis in ITE (EASDNE, 2011).
- In England the variety of routes into teaching increasingly concentrates on the role of schools rather than universities – Teach First, School Direct.
- This study highlights possible limitations inherent in relying on schools for the SEND aspect of ITE.

# References

- EADSNE 2011. *Teacher education for inclusion across Europe – Challenges and opportunities*. Odense, Denmark: EADSNE.
- McIntyre, D. 2009. The difficulties of inclusive pedagogy for initial teacher education and some thoughts on the way forward. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25, 602-608.
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<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/research/projects/details/index.php?id=88>