

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRIMARY REVIEWS FOR PRIMARY ITE/EARLY YEARS PROGRAMMES**

### ***Introduction***

1. On 19<sup>th</sup> November UCET's Primary and Early Years Committee had a special half-day discussion/workshop on the implications for primary/early years ITE of the Rose and Cambridge reviews. It was led by Judith McCulloch, Felicity Hilditch, and Lynda Moore. A summary of the discussion was reported to the subsequent scheduled meeting of the PEY Committee by Janet Murphy. This paper, which incorporates comments from Helen Taylor and Lynda Moore, Chair and Vice-chair respectively of UCET's Primary and Early Years Committee, seeks to offer a synthesis of that report, in the light of some of the key recommendations of these major reviews. Its structure follows the four questions that shaped the exchanges at the special meeting.

### ***What will characterise teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?***

2. Tomorrow's primary/early years teachers will require to be empowering, flexible and resilient; problem-solvers and effective communicators; self-confident, resourceful, critical and reflective; committed to enhanced professional performance; agents of community cohesion and development; energisers of parents and carers; powerful motivators, committed to children and young people, their wellbeing and development; disposed to eschew mere compliance; people-centred; able not only to tolerate but to embrace uncertainty, to welcome and exploit change, to practice, and be articulate about, a well grounded pedagogy, one that is informed by research on how pupils learn and the conditions for effective learning and teaching; to be advocates on behalf of children and young people, committed to the social agenda of the primary/early years phase, to inter-professional collaboration and multi-agency working; disposed to practise and promote a pedagogy that is informed by research; and to operate from a secure value base which has the moral purpose of education at its core. All of these attributes will be required in the early years teacher and the primary teacher alike.

3. That diversity of skills and dispositions will require to be underpinned by a secure knowledge base. For the primary/early years teacher that implies sufficient immersion in the differentiated domains/areas/forms of human understanding to become familiar with their distinctive modes of analysis, investigation and reflection to be able to exploit them to promote pupils' learning, and to be able to transfer these modes of exploiting knowledge across a range of learning and teaching contexts. Moreover, they should have sufficient confidence in the richness of their knowledge base to seek and exploit more detailed and specialist contributions from colleagues. While the generalist primary teacher may fairly claim to be a specialist in pedagogy, a specialist in human development through learning, that claim will need to be reinforced and complemented by an appropriate level of understanding in the different knowledge domains, for it is through these domains that the teachers' pedagogical resourcefulness will be expressed, and pupils' understanding and skills will be developed. That conception of the primary/early years teacher implies that their programmes of professional preparation and development must engage intending teachers in the exploration of the moral and other purposes which education serves in a community of learners and which give point to every engagement they have with learners.

4. While the early years specialist must also be expected to operate from a secure knowledge base, the balance of expertise will lie in the domain of knowledge that relates to pedagogy in the early years and the capacity to sustain the environmental stimulation that is vital to human growth and development.

### ***What knowledge, skills and dispositions will future students require and how will these impact on selection/recruitment?***

5. That portrayal of the characteristics of tomorrow's teachers should indicate the range of qualities that applicants might be expected to demonstrate at the point of selection, while recognising that the whole

purpose of a programme of professional preparation is to nurture, enhance and promote the desired qualities to as high a level as possible. The selection process itself might well engage applicants in tasks and activities which call for resourcefulness, analytical ability, the capacity to engage with others, communicative effectiveness of all kinds, and the resilience that will see the applicant through the pressures of the programme and of coming to terms with the challenges of teaching. Given the importance of the teacher's knowledge base it is to be expected that applicants to teacher education programmes will be able to demonstrate prior successful engagement in at least some of the domains of the primary/early years curriculum.

***How can we take account of political, educational and professional uncertainties?***

6. Uncertainty is likely to be a continuing feature of professional life for teachers and teacher educators. They will encounter a changing political climate, especially in light of the increasing politicisation of education and teacher education; they can expect to have to address fiscal stringencies, fluctuations in the level of institutional support for teacher education, the concerns arising from the age profile of staff, and the relentlessness of the regulatory regime. In responding to, or in anticipation of, these uncertainties teacher educators will require to espouse a secure philosophy of teacher education, one that their students will need to come to terms with if they are to resist the political pressures that are concerned to promote a compliant teaching force; they will need to build strong alliances within their own institutions and with others in the wider community; they will need to strengthen partnerships with schools and with other sectors of education, including voluntary organisations, in a spirit of genuine reciprocity; they will need to engage in more collaborative activity with colleagues in a range of institutions, particularly in the development of a pedagogy that draws on relevant evidence and research; they will need to continue to re-assert the values that underpin authentic teacher education; they should go on insisting that they are engaged in teacher *education*, not ITT; they will need to engage strongly in the continuing professional development of teachers, playing a full part in the raising of the professional standing of teaching, through the MTL and in other ways, not least for those who are currently deemed ineligible for the MTL; and in all these endeavours they will need to display that degree of professional confidence in their work, and a marked professional integrity, that the importance of their expertise and the resoluteness of their commitment fully justify.

***What is the next action for your institution?***

7. More than anything we need time for reflection; to examine our practices in the light of the reviews; to re-conceptualise what we do; to give priority to our own professional development; to collaborate on ways in which the present professional standards might be revised, moving beyond simple competency outcomes and espousing a more strongly professionalised conception of teaching; to exploit opportunities to move beyond compliance and to model for students a more adventurous pedagogy, including the use of electronic technology, peer mentoring and assessment strategies that more faithfully reflect the conditions of professional life; to secure greater collaboration across course teams, including more sustained interaction with secondary colleagues; to enlarge partnership agreements in a way that encourages a more personalised approach tailored to the needs of particular schools and settings, and more flexible staff deployment and exchange; to seek more time for research and enquiry, however little, to enliven their teaching as well as to deepen our understanding of teaching and learning; to demonstrate that teacher educators are themselves learners; to be even more assiduous in seeking to create a culture that involves altogether richer and more professionally satisfying and worthwhile evaluation criteria than are encompassed by the current inspection process; to resolve to create for teacher education a fairer balance between political prescription, which has been predominant for too long, and the kind of professional judgement that recognises the complexity of the enterprise; and, most immediately, to devise a collective strategy that will secure that outcome.

Gordon Kirk,  
Academic Secretary.

13 January, 2010.