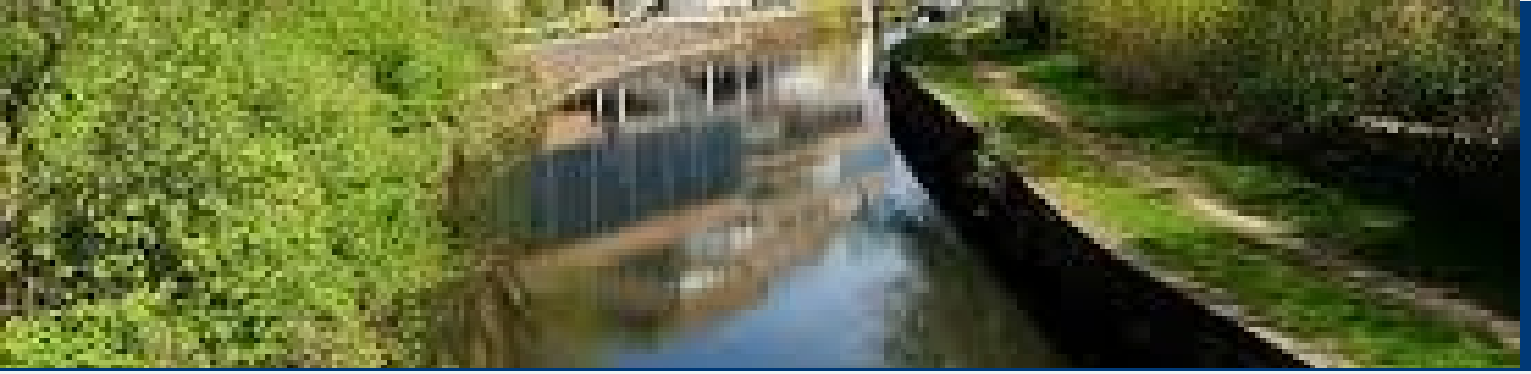
Anja Swennen, a Dutch teacher educator



‘Good teachers need good teacher educators’



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Further education's teacher educators: who are they, what is their work and what are their professional development priorities.

Kate Lavender, Kevin Orr, David Powell, & Rachel Terry,

UCET Post-16 Forum – 16 May 2025

Who are we talking about here?

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- Those teaching on one or more initial teacher education (ITE) courses **in further education** (including general/specialist FE colleges, sixth-form colleges, private training providers) in England.
- Teaching courses such as L3 Award in Education and Training, L4 CET, L5 Diploma in Teaching, L5 Learning and Skills Teacher Apprenticeship, CertEd, PGCE.

Our study

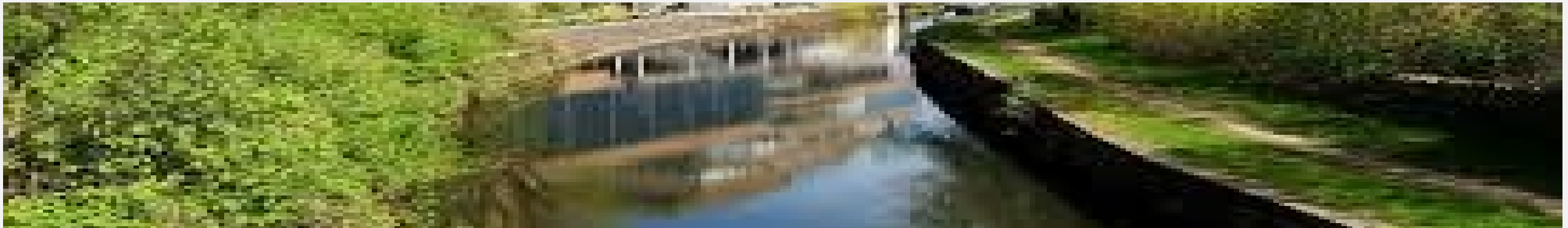
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- Funded by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation.
- Literature review – FE-based teacher educators.
- 36-question survey posing open and closed questions distributed via key stakeholders in autumn 2024.
- 118 responses.
- 76% of responses from FE colleges.

What will I talk about?

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- Knowledge ‘map’ based on literature review and a possible ‘blank space’ on it.
- Summary of findings from survey.
- How these findings relate to what we know from the literature.
- What next?



Knowledge ‘map’ of FE teacher educators based on the literature review

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Demographic profile (Noel, 2006; Crawley, 2013; Eliahoo, 2017; Springbett, 2018; Loo, 2020).

How they become teacher educators (Noel, 2006; Eliahoo, 2017; Loo, 2020)

Research on teacher educators: ‘scholarly silence’ (Dennis et al., 2016, p.9) contributing to their relative invisibility (Thurston, 2010).

Professional identities (Simmons & Thompson, 2007; Kadi-Hanifi and Keenan, 2015; Crawley, 2016; Eliahoo, 2017; Springbett, 2018; Loo, 2020).

Policy landscape (Crawley, 2013; Springbett, 2018; Loo, 2020; Hanley and Thompson, 2021)

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Teacher educators’ classroom practices

Findings: How many teacher educators are there and who are they?

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- We estimate there are 488 FE-based TEs in England (based on mean of 3.11 in each college and 157 colleges in England (AoC, 2025).
- Almost 90% described themselves as white, just over 81% described themselves as female and just over 80% were aged 40 or over.
- Confirms previous findings – Noel (2006) and Crawley (2013).

Findings: what are their professional backgrounds and how did they become teacher educators?

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- Diverse range of careers before becoming TE – largest numbers from Business and Sport; small number from STEM; none from Construction; nearly 30% had always been a teacher.
- 62% had taught for 10 or more years before becoming a teacher educator, 23% taught for six or less years.
- Well qualified – 34% have Masters in own subject; 19 have or are completing a doctorate.
- 55% intentionally applied for the role, either internally or externally.
- 42% were invited to become a TE – Acker's (1997, p.72) 'knock on the door'.
- Suggests that informal recruitment practices remain strong (Noel, 2006; Eliahoo, 2017).
- Tendency to perpetuate existing demographics.

Findings: what is their work?

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Two broad roles:

Teacher educator as teacher

- 53% teach solely on ITE courses.
- Over 25% have a 'hybrid' role (Perry & Boodt, 2019)– teach specialist subject alongside ITE courses.

Teacher educator as leader

- of individual courses.
- of several ITE courses.
- of quality assurance/professional development within their organisation. This role may lead to 'tensions and conflict' (Lunenberg, Dengerink & Korthagen, 2014, p.7).

Findings: what are the conditions of their work?

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- 12% are sole TE in their organisation; most work in teams of 2 or more.
- There is an even split between those attached to a university partnership and those who were not.
- Contracted teaching hours vary from less than 5 per week to more than 26.
- Teaching on ITE courses is how the majority of participants spend most of their time; leading staff development also prominent.
- Undertaking professional development is low as proportion of their time.

Findings: what influences their practice?

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Teacher education colleagues



How I was taught on my teacher ed course



Professional development course



Awarding body documentation

Findings: what CPD do they engage in?

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- 46 qualifications completed in the last 3 years.
- Most CPD not explicitly linked to teacher education.
- 26% identified being part of a network as one of their CPD activities.
- No mention of an induction process – though we didn't ask about this explicitly.

Findings: what CPD do they want?

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1. Support with the ITE curriculum (31 out of 146 requests).
2. Input on research-informed teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) in ITE (28 requests).
3. Networking (24 requests).

Together these priorities represented almost 57% of all requests.

One respondent suggested ‘it would be great to see a nationally recognised additional course/qualification [for teacher educators]’.

Findings: what are their main concerns?

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Two broad areas:

- Structural issues affecting FE, not just ITE, such as lack of funding, changes in policy, problems with recruitment and retention of teachers, work-life balance.
- Specific changes to the ITE curriculum (in particular the introduction of the new DiT), and relating theory and practice on ITE courses.

How do our findings relate to the literature?

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- Very limited recent literature on FE-based TEs (6 publications identified since 2019). Not much is known about their classroom practice.
- Suggests a continuing 'scholarly silence' (Dennis et al., 2016, p. 9) around their work.
- Identities of TEs shaped by competing professional and institutional discourses (Kadi-Hanifi, 2015; Springbett, 2018; Loo, 2020).
- Rapidly changing political context (Powell, 2023), with a lack of established pedagogical knowledge for FE ITE (Hanley & Thompson, 2021).
- Reflected in desire for opportunities to network and learn about current applications of theory.

What next?

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1. Gatsby will be publishing the research
2. Proposal to undertake research on HE-based teacher educators involved in FE ITE.

Questions?

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- What have you heard?
- What do you make of it?
- What might we do about it?

How can universities work with their partner colleges to recruit, support and develop good FE teacher educators for the benefit of all stakeholders?

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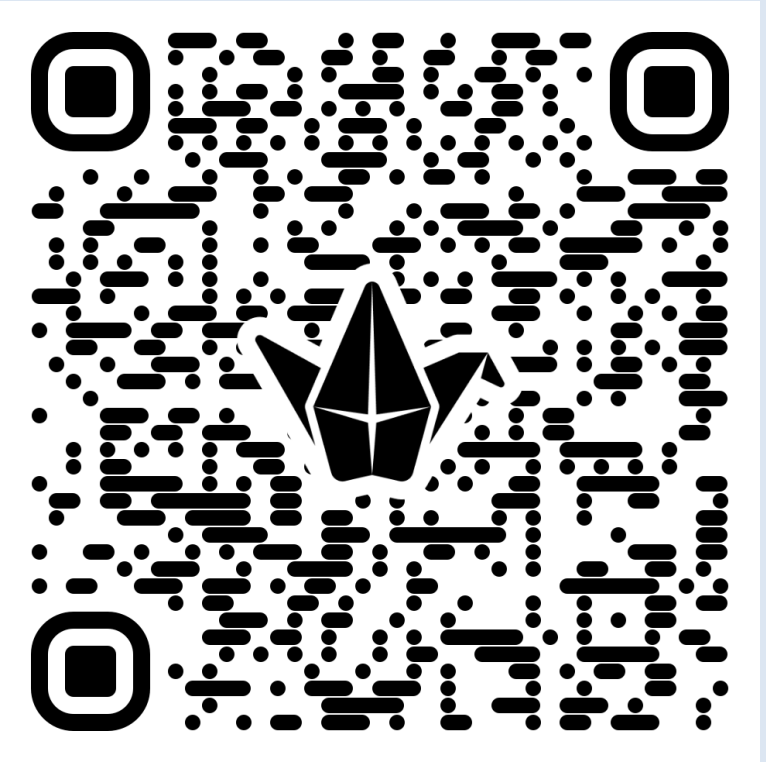
1. What essential knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) are characteristics of good FE teacher educators?
2. When there is a vacancy for a teacher educator at a partner college, to what extent do you work with them to recruit the most suitable candidate for the post?
3. How do you currently support new teacher educators to acquire the essential KSBs so they become good teacher educators?
4. Going forward, what might you do differently when recruiting, supporting and developing good FE teacher educators within your partnership?
5. How might HEIs and colleges work together to build sustainability in FE ITE through an emphasis on succession planning and futureproofing?

Instructions and Padlet link

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- Answer your allocated question on the Padlet, labelling your response.
- Be prepared for someone from your group to provide a 1-minute summary of your points.
- If you have time, move onto the next question and begin to answer that, again labelling your response.
- 15 minutes allowed for the task.

http://hud.ac/t94



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