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Pre-service teachers' engagement in a cross-curricular television news project: Impact on professional identity

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the impact of pre-service teachers' engagement in the annual BBC News School Report project on their emerging professional identity and on the evidence they provide as part of the process of becoming qualified. The research reported on is drawn from three years of enquiry. Respondents included pre-service teachers themselves, their tutors as representatives of teacher education providers and their mentors as representatives of schools in which they were placed.

The methodological approach was interpretative and phenomenological with qualitative and quantitative data being analysed for emergent themes. Two years of evaluations were followed by a third year in which a set of case studies were developed. The research showed that professional identity is enhanced through being in a leading role in respect of curriculum and working with other staff.

Through engagement in such projects, this paper moots that pre-service teachers develop richer evidence of emerging professionalism as defined by standards of initial teacher training. Moreover, self perception of role was modified to one in which they saw themselves, and were seen, as equals to qualified staff rather than subservient or dependent on them. A new more equal power relationship developed as they take on responsibility for the project. Pre-service teachers' move to become full members of the professional community for which they are training is accelerated.

Keywords: teachers, teaching, teacher training, professional identity, curriculum, project

Introduction and context

The research reported on is drawn from research carried out over three years of pre-service (i.e. trainee) teacher engagement with the BBC News School Report project ("the project"), 2009-2011. The research was carried out for the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), the government agency responsible for teacher training in England and was undertaken by the authors on behalf of the IT in Teacher Education national subject association with individual reports published each year (ITTE, 2009, 2010, 2011). This paper provides a synoptic reflection on those papers looking especially at issues of emergent professional identity.

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The BBC News School Report (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolreport/>) is an annual project which aims to engage 11–14 year olds with news by helping them to set their own editorial agenda for a real audience (BBC, 2011a). In 2008 nearly 300 schools participated (ITTE, 2009). By 2011 this had risen to over 800 (BBC, 2011b). The 2010/11 academic year was the fourth in which the TDA worked with the BBC on News School Report and provided funding to ITT providers to support their engagement with it. This resulted in a complex set of stakeholders – pre-service teachers, schools, providers, students in schools, BBC, TDA.

The paper starts by examining the concept of professional identity in relation to initial teacher training or education (ITT/ITE), considers the framework under which this takes place in England and then introduces the BBC News School Report as the locus for the activity being researched. Findings from each of the three years are discussed with an emphasis on reporting of impacts on the formation of professional identity and pre-service teachers perceptions of it.

Professional identity of teachers

There has been a change over time in the understanding of the notion of professionalism as applied to teaching (Bottery, 1996; Sachs, 2000). The meaning of professionalism is seen to have shifted from a virtuous and autonomous encapsulation of expertise and authority through a mystification and a professional ‘elite’ to the, now, more managerial (e.g. Bottery, 1996). For teachers in training this last is manifested in the predominance of statements of competence (DfE, 1992; 1993; DfEE, 1998; DfEE/TTA, 2002; TDA, 2007; DfE, 2011) that prescribe in some detail what it is to be a qualified teacher and the types of evidence that are required to demonstrate this. While these ‘Standards’ are presented as competences they have been variously framed in terms of ‘professional’ behaviours. Those in force during the research for this paper were structured in three sections – professional attributes, knowledge & understanding and skills (TDA, 2007). The latest iteration emphasizes the managerial aspects of the code by replacing these headings with ‘professional conduct’ (DfE, 2011).

The statements of competence and the responsibility for their assessment gives power to the mentors in schools and raises notions of performativity in the training of teachers akin to that seen in preparation of pupils for standards assessment tests (Jeffrey, 2011). It also resonates with Foucault’s (1979) notion of the school as controlling institution. This is at odds Lave and Wenger’s apprentice model in which new teachers would gradually become part of the community in which they are practising (1991; Wenger, 1998). Equally it would appear to run counter to notions of professionalism as a democratic concept or one which encourages active trust and participation (ibid.; Sachs, 2000).

However, the status and subject of teacher professionalism and debates about whether teaching can even be considered a profession, is contested and ‘circulate around public discourse with great regularity’ (Sachs, 2000 p77). Hoyle and John’s (1995) extensive review of the fluctuations in thinking about the professional status of teachers since 1915,

led to this definition: 'hav[ing] distinguishing characteristics on which there is a high degree of consensus, including knowledge base, autonomy and responsibility' (p16).

This debate about professionalism cannot be fully explored here, however. Stronach et al's. (2002) review perceptively examines how teacher 'professionalism' is currently conceptualised, noting that 'professionals' are systematically categorised in terms of different types of knowledge (Eraut, 1994), stages of development (Huberman, 1993), and typologies of role, such as 'extended' versus 'restricted' (Hoyle, 1980; Woods, 1997). Similarly Stronach et al., (2002, p4) argue that professionals are 'regularly consigned to, threatened with, or rescued from, 'proletarianisation' (Hargreaves, 1992), 'bureaucratisation' (Murphy, 1990), 'intensification' (Galton et al., 1999) and 'deprofessionalisation' (Parkin, 1995).

Hence, 'current theories of professionalism are guilty of highly reductive characterization' (Stronach et al., 2002, p18).

Writers on teacher development and professionalism have tended to focus on the following range of issues: teacher reflectivity, introspection, self-analysis and inquiry (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Miller & Silvernail, 1994; Schon, 1987; Stenhouse, 1985). Teacher development has emerged as an identifiable area of study (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Day et al., 2000) as part of teacher professionalism. Evans (2002, p131) defines the development of teachers as 'the process whereby teachers' professionalism and/or professionalism maybe considered to be enhanced'. Whilst agreeing that teacher development is a process, it is in need of further research to gain an understanding of this process in relation to pre-service teachers.

However, with respect to the development of teachers' knowledge, there is a tendency within the literature to conceptualise teachers as individuals and not as part of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This leads to more of an individuated epistemology, as opposed to a socially constructed knowledge of professionalism as embedded in a community of shared practices. The challenge is to acknowledge the social dimension of learning, with respect to distributed cognition (Hutchins, 1995) and communal constructivism (Leask & Younie, 2001). This is recognised in professional identity being formed in the relationship between individual agency and social context (Hökkä et al., 2012). For beginning teachers this locus is also between their internal, and self-, image of 'the professional' and the externalities of manifestations of professionalism through codified standards, which trainees have to demonstrate before becoming 'qualified', and the espoused views and behaviours of mentors and tutors (ibid.).

The term 'professionalism' has been used for some time now, to denote the kind of professionalism that is regulated by inspection, regulations and audit. In contrast, the word, 'professionality', has been coined to denote a sense of: identity, enterprise and self-regulation that is the cornerstone of a salient professional identity (Trowler, 2002). There is still much to be discovered about the process of teacher's development and professionalism, since, 'the teacher development process - the understanding of precisely

what we need to do if we want to develop teachers - remains unclear' (Evans, 2002, p133). Further the perceptions of professional identity in the first few years of teaching are founded on those gained in prior to qualification (Burn et al., 2010). This period of formation is crucial in building notions of professionalism, with notions of reflective practice (Schön, 1987; Eraut, 1994; Totterdell and Lambert, 1998) and the importance of partnership (Totterdell and Lambert, 1998) central to this development.

The field of teacher professional development has been largely understood in terms of an individuated epistemology but this fails to adequately deal with the social dimension of learning. There is insufficient attention given to the way teachers learn to construct new knowledge through participation in a 'community of practice' as a joint venture, for example, through collaborative projects such as the one under consideration here. Such participation and collaboration is crucial to teachers' understanding of the professional community in which they work (Hargreaves, 1992).

It is in the light of this literature that the research took place. The involvement of pre-service teachers in the project was seen, by the TDA as a way of accelerating their induction into the professional community so that they may be seen both as newly-qualified and newly professional. It was this objective that was being enquired into.

Initial teacher education in England

Initial teacher education (ITE) or, to use the government terminology, the training of the teachers is undertaken in one of two modes – institutionally-based or employment-based. That is to say primarily based in a university or in schools. In both modes of training, pre-service teachers must work in at least two schools (TDA, 2008), pass whatever course they have enrolled in, and provide evidence that they have met the standards for qualified teacher status (QTS) (TDA, 2007). The Standards changed to a more mechanistic focus on teaching competence from 2012, requiring pre-service teachers to demonstrate, with verifiable evidence, achievement of standards in professional values, attributes and knowledge (TDA, 2011). The language here provides an external definition of professionalism, one which pre-service teachers must conform to in order to qualify.

Methodology

Research into the impact of ITE involvement in the project has been reported on for three years by ITTE (2009, 2010, 2011). In 2009 and 2010 an evaluative methodology (Robson, 2002) was adopted reporting on impact against themes identified by the TDA. In 2011 a case study approach (ibid.; Yin, 1994; Denscombe, 2003) was taken to gain a more rounded view of this impact on particular sample sites, taking into account the views of a wider range of stakeholders than had been possible in earlier years.

In the first two years discussions with the funding body (TDA) and within the evaluation team led to the drawing up of a set of key themes which would be used to inform the evaluation. Taking the literature of professional identity formation (see above) as the

starting point, these themes were: the extent to which engagement impacted on pre-service teachers' evidence of meeting the professional standards (including their reflection on practice) and how it impacted on the partnership relationship between providers, schools and pre-service teachers. The final theme was the impact of engagement on the design of programmes of initial teacher education.

The data collection for the 2009 and 2010 evaluations was primarily carried out through the organisation of regional 'evaluation days' whereby providers were invited to attend meetings which took the form of focus groups, six in total over the two years. Respondents included pre-service teachers themselves, their tutors as representatives of teacher education providers and their mentors as representatives of schools in which they were placed. Where it was not possible to attend in person, respondents were asked to submit a written report based around the key themes. Further, in 2010, data collection also included use of an online questionnaire and telephone interviews.

The questions in these phases were based on the themes identified above, those of the dimensions of professionalism as enumerated by the standards (TDA, 2007). Thus pre-service teachers were asked to provide examples of the evidence they had been able to collect for their training portfolio as a result of the project and which standards this evidence helped them to meet. They were also asked to describe the tasks they undertook as a result of their engagement with the project. The ITE providers were asked similar questions and also the impact on programme design and the relationship between schools and the university. Finally, school mentors were asked questions about the evidence for standards and the type of activities the pre-service teachers undertook.

These focus group sessions were designed to allow groups of respondents to discuss their views on each of the key themes in more depth. This would provide for triangulation against the survey data. Groups were formed so that they were homogeneous by type – all pre-service teachers, or all providers. The online survey in 2010 was made available for individuals at each event to complete had they not done so.

Following the interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach Smith (See Smith et al., 2009 and Smith and Osborn, 2011), the responses were coded thematically to identify hermeneutically irreducible phenomena. These were initially based on the three themes of the "evidence for standards", "evidence of impact on programme design" and "impact on partnerships and relationships" with meaning deduced from the multiple standpoints of the respondents (Giorgi, 1985, Finlay, 2008). Other phenomena, going beyond or within the three themes, emerged from the coding. For example several responses suggested that pre-service teachers were taking more of a lead in planning the sessions for the project than they would for the more formal curriculum. This was coded as "leading". The analysis of this coding led to the distillation of the findings reported below.

Having analyzed the data from the evaluations in 2009 and 2010 a change to a case study was adopted in 2011. This was designed to allow for an enhanced understanding of the findings (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). This enhancement included:

- A different perspective on the data from 2009 and 2010 – a third evaluation would have risked a very similar set of findings
- A greater depth of exploration and understanding of the pre-service teacher experience, through an enquiry into it in situ.
- Greater objectivity due to the research being undertaken in schools, rather than at a TDA-hosted event. This meant that all stakeholders for a particular case could be respondents for the research, rather than just those who were able to come ‘offsite’ for a day. This allowed for triangulation between the views of many stakeholders from the same school, give a thicker description of the case and reducing the bias inherent in the sample compared to interviewing only those who were able to attend the offsite event. This in turn allows for judgements about generalisability to be drawn (Larsson, 2009 cited in Cohen et al., 2013).

Whereas the research in 2009 and 2010 took place out of school this may have heightened issues to do with perceived status of the researchers and agency on the one hand and pre-service teachers on the other hand (see Blumer, 1969; Hammersley, 1994, on symbolic interactionism and subsequent bias). Meeting in the schools and in the classrooms may help to ameliorate such effects and provide a more naturalistic setting, in addition to the benefit outlined in the final bullet point above, that of getting a more rounded view of the ‘case’ i.e. the school “real people in real situations” (Cohen et al. 2013, 289). Thus there was a shift to the impact of the project on a number of schools with the research aiming to emphasize what could be found and learnt from each of these cases (Stake, 1994). The limitations of the approach included the lack of generalisability across sites but this was, to an extent addressed in the 2009, 2010 evaluations, which were broader in scope but lacked the depth multiple perspectives obtainable by visiting the schools under enquiry.

Findings

Each of the three year’s research was reported on by ITTE (2009, 2010, 2011) against the evaluative criteria for the first two years and in a case study style for 2011. These are presented below with those aspects that relate to professionalism and pre-service teachers’ perceptions of it being drawn out in the discussion and conclusions.

In 2009, the evaluation supported by independent research of Passey and Gillen (2009), found that

- Schools were supported in their involvement in the project by City Learning Centres and also by BBC mentors.
- The news produced by the students in schools was wide ranging.
- Students are unlikely to have been able to encounter this sort of experience through other channels.
- Educational gains were reported by teachers involved with the project.
- The project was highly inclusive and empowering for students.

- The project has enhanced the professional attributes and skills of pre-service teacher teachers engaged in the project, providing many opportunities to evidence meeting the QTS Standards (TDA, 2007).
- The evidencing of Standards through the project required some changes to existing recording and monitoring systems
- The project's outcomes against QTS Standards is more clearly defined than for CPD activity for qualified teachers.
- Pre-service teachers have shown high levels of confidence, and a willingness to take risks, in leading activities within the project including liaison across schools and with a wide range of teachers.
- The multi-disciplinary nature of the project provided opportunities for providers to look at innovations and change to their programme design and assessment.
- The project provided opportunities for pre-service teachers to work in non-standard environments, increasing their understanding of learning beyond the classroom and in work-related contexts.
- Where pre-service teachers are on employment-based routes or in a single placement for the duration of the project there has been greater opportunity for successful completion due to the fixed timelines in the project.
- The project had positive impact on students' learning in the fields of journalism, media, literacy and use of technology. Their confidence and maturity was enhanced.

(adapted from ITTE, 2009, pp3-4)

In 2010, with a more focused study on particular standards and the impact in the classroom, the research found that:

- Taking part in the project offers new models of partnership in terms of consortia and rhythms of placement.
- The project resulted in enhancement of pre-service teachers' subject knowledge and technical skills, providing evidence for standard Q14 (see TDA, 2007)..
- The project exposed pre-service teachers to working in cross-curricular and extra-curricular contexts, providing evidence for standards Q17 and Q23.
- Student engagement in the project led to greater independence of learning (and concomitant personalisation) than in other forms of coursework due to their ownership of tasks. This provided evidence for standard Q31.
- The profile of pre-service teachers was enhanced, as was that of the school. The former led to increased perception of employability.
- Pre-service teachers were given more freedoms, encouraged to take risks and to engage with authentic tasks. This provided evidence for standards Q8, Q10 and Q30.
- The project led to richer reflections on practice than other teaching the pre-service teachers had undertaken.
- The project accelerated the pre-service teachers' confidence and professional development as evidenced for standard Q7 and led to a different relationships between pre-service teachers and other school staff.

This paper focuses on the last three of these findings. These may be summarised as aspects of professional identity and we argue that professional identity of pre-service teachers is enhanced through putting them in a leading role in respect of curriculum and working with other staff. A new power relationship is evident as they take on responsibility for the project.

In 2010, all respondent pre-service teachers (n=18) agreed, or strongly agreed, with the statement that involvement in the project had had a “positive effect on [their] professional development” and on evidence collected for Standard Q7 “Reflect on and improve their practice, and take responsibility for identifying and meeting their developing professional needs and identify priorities for their early professional development in the context of induction” (TDA, 2007:6).

When looking at Standard Q8 (“Have a creative and constructively critical approach towards innovation, being prepared to adapt their practice where benefits and improvements are identified.”, TDA, 2007:6), 78% reported that the project directly provided evidence of innovative practice, which may be considered an outcome of positive professional development.

Providers reported that engagement in the project led to pre-service teachers developing aspects of professional identity both in respect to their own self-perceptions and to those of others. They said that the project “...encouraged trainees to develop as a reflective practitioner.”

It also allowed them to show “leadership [capabilities within] a whole school approach”, encouraging them to “lead enrichment [activity] that is valued by students” and to see other pre-service teachers in a different way.

Pre-service teachers themselves reported that the project allowed them to develop their sense of professionalism through “interdepartmental collaborative work and understanding” with that result, as one put it, that “it allowed me to raise my profile throughout the school and work with staff from other departments, which has helped my development.” They echoed the providers’ view of emerging reflective practitioner as they become part of a community of learners rather than isolated teachers in training.

“It allowed to me to further develop as a reflective practitioner from being able to see other trainee teachers teach”

“The project gave me confidence during my initial project to liaise with the ICT and other departments.”

Pupils also saw pre-service teachers in a different way, responding to them more as they would to experienced teachers.

“I had to be very organized and be seen as an established member of staff who was completely in control.”

“I found the experience very valuable for developing relationships with pupils as

they saw me in a context other than the science lab”

“[It] raised my status within the school, in the eyes of the pupils, English department and Headteacher”

In summary “the project allowed the pre-service teacher within the school to have a good reputation as we were being proactive in running something which the staff could identify as being very beneficial for the pupils...” (pre-service teacher).

In 2011 a case study approach was adopted. Each of three sites were visited and a range of stakeholders interviewed, developing a single case at each site i.e. three cases in total. Prior to the visit, pre-service teachers had been sent a questionnaire with the same questions that were used in the semi-structured interviews to identify possible differences between perceptions during and after involvement in the project. No such differences were found however.

Three themes emerged from the case study – the impact of participation on pre-service teachers’ subject knowledge, on their interactions with pupils, each other and other staff, and on their developing professional practice. Findings from each case study will now be presented in respect of professionalism as seen in the first and last of these themes. Other findings are outside the scope of this paper but are reported on in the ITTE paper to the TDA (ITTE, 2011).

School A

The model of initial teacher training at school A was an employment-based graduate teacher programme. Pre-service teachers were placed at the school for the majority of their training year. The project co-ordinator was a newly qualified teacher (NQT) who had been a GTP pre-service teacher the year before and participated in the project as a pre-service teacher. The NQT was an English teacher and she used her English class as the participants in the project this year. The pupils participating were one Year 9 English class who had three days off timetable for the project:

- Day 1 was a ‘workshop’ day. Three workshops were delivered by the pre-service teachers, focusing on the skills required for the live day.
- Day 2 was a ‘practice’ day, where the pupils rehearsed in preparation for the ‘live’ day event.
- Day 3 was the ‘live’ day event, with news reported live on the day and uploaded onto the website.

Every pre-service teacher in School A reported an improvement in their relationship with pupils as a result of being involved in the project. This had already taken effect prior to the live day due to their involvement in the workshops. They attributed this to extracurricular nature of the project, the situation requiring a more open approach to the pupils and the pupils’ positive response to the challenge of the demanding situation. They all reported an increased respect for the pre-service teachers from the pupils.

Pre-service teachers reported that they felt more confident in to independently plan teaching as a result of being involved in this project. They felt more free to take risks in their approach and have fun. Thus pre-service teachers reported that they became more relaxed and confident in their teaching as a result of their involvement with the project.

The drama pre-service teacher reported that she felt much more confident in taking pupils out of school when she observed the improvement in their behaviour on a trip out to the local BBC radio station. She felt much more able to trust the pupils, having been very under confident about how she would manage the pupils before they went.

The school mentors reported that the pre-service teachers “...gained confidence through peer observation, feedback and risk taking. Trainees see each other teaching and value what they see. This improves [pre-service teachers] confidence when hearing the feedback. [As a result of team teaching in the workshops] ‘them’ and ‘us’ barriers [between pre-service teachers and mentors] were broken down.”

School B

The model of initial teacher training at school B was pre-service teachers taking a PGCE qualification placed at the school by an higher education provider. This was their main placement and they had been in another school when the project was initially launched. The pre-service teachers were English specialists with concomitant foci on English, drama and media as part of their training and their teaching practice. The project co-ordinator was the media studies lead teacher in the school, who also had a background in broadcast media.

The mentor had arranged for the pre-service teachers to take part in the project assisting the lead teacher in working with a small number of selected pupils. The project was focused on in-depth work with a few year 9 pupils to produce high quality output. This was done as an extra-curricular activity.

Pre-service teachers in School B reported that it was useful to work with pupils they didn't teach. This was reinforced by the mentor and lead teacher. The mentor also added that where there were pupils on the project who were also in classes taught by pre-service teachers it was useful for them to see each other in a different context. In particular, the mentor observed that pupils who were difficult in class responded better to the pre-service teachers as they had seen them in a different context. The case of a boy who shone in the project but was not easy to teach in the classroom was cited. “He would see the pre-service teachers in a different light”, the mentor said. Pre-service teachers, however, reported that they had not learnt anything about working with difficult pupils as they “had them in their classes”. Pre-service teachers had been in other schools before the project started and had been involved in other extra-curricular activities. They confirmed that this type of activity brings the benefit of working with a wider range of pupils.

The pre-service teachers in School B only had regular contact with one teacher (the lead). They also got to know a governor through the project but it did not involve any additional interactions with the school leadership. They saw that the experience would be seen positively on job applications/CVs and they would be willing to take a lead in it. They saw its importance in providing experience of learning in a project that was extra curricular, national, fun and had a product at the end.

“Any school leadership team should look on a teachers’ involvement in the project as a very positive thing” (pre questionnaire).

The mentor concurred with this view, adding that through such extra-curricular experience, pupils see them in a different light. It was also seen as preparation for the pre-service teachers’ involvement in other extra-curricular events – trips, open evening. This was seen as helping them to meet the standards for QTS. The mentor said that it “Help[ed] us to view them as part of the department” and that, as NQTs they will be able to “take the lead in running” the project.

Working on the project was seen as “provid[ing] evidence that they have worked in wider school activities [and of] linking into wider world and other subjects”. This was seen as crucial for the standards. It was also felt by the mentor that working on the project makes pre-service teachers feel valued and valuable to the department and school and that pre-service teachers often have more flexibility (if not more time) to take part in such projects than teachers.

School C

The model of initial teacher training at school A was school-based graduate teacher programme. Pre-service teachers were placed at the school for the majority of their training year. The pre-service teachers were English specialists with concomitant foci on English, drama and media as part of their training year. The project co-ordinator had previously been a pre-service teacher at the school who had taken part in the project. This was a third year in which this ‘cascade’ model had operated with pre-service teachers from previous years being appointed and then co-ordinating the project with new pre-service teachers. The pre-service teachers had responsibility for leading the project.

The project was run as an extra-curricular activity with pre-service teachers and pupils working on it in school and in the adjacent City Learning Centre. One of the pre-service teachers had previous experience of working in the broadcast media. Pre-service teachers chose the class to work on the project and they had a whole day to prepare, extra curriculum time and then the live news day. Pupils involved in the project ranged from year 7 to year 9.

Pre-service teachers in School C reported that the project gave them an opportunity to think about matching media resources to pupil needs in a way that was not dictated to by the formal curriculum. The mentor reported that there were different interactions with the pupils on the project than in normal classes. These were to do with working with small

groups (which one pre-service teacher had previous experience of as she had previously been employed as a learning support pre-service in the school).

Links were made with the City Learning Centre and local media organisations. This was seen as both a benefit for the authentic learning in the project – the links were with real journalists and a video company – and also for the school itself as a stakeholder in the local community.

A pre-service teacher reported that the project gave the opportunity to “*raise my profile*” with these partners and, by extension, with colleagues in the department who saw her taking a lead and using her own initiative to make links outside of school. She had been given an opportunity for making these links and the responsibility for doing it. These opportunities were not ones that would have occurred without the project. Being involved in the project “puts [pre-service teachers] on the map” and was something that was noticed by the headteacher who reported their work to the whole school.

The mentor concurred that the project provided opportunities for pre-service teachers to “take control” rather than being handed tasks to do. It also allowed the pre-service teacher who had professional media experience to translate this to the school context. In talking about the project and the way in which pre-service teachers were perceived by the school leadership, the mentor said that “the headteacher was more aware of who they were and their progress [than of other graduate trainees] because of it”. Pre-service teachers worked with “people they wouldn’t normally have [had] contact with” including advanced skills teachers and the leader of applied learning. A mathematics teacher used the material produced in a tutor period as it was so impressive.

The school has an activities fortnight at the end of the school year. Pre-service teachers would be able to bring the experiences of the project to helping plan and lead activities in the department and across the curriculum.

Discussion and conclusion

In this section of the paper we focus on one key emergent theme – that of the impact of participation in the project on pre-service teachers’ perceptions of their emergent professionalism and formation of professional identity and the implications of this for professional development of pre-service teachers.

The contextualisation of the project in the training year varies from case to case. In school B, for example, it was introduced as part of the teaching programme of the HEI and was a common feature for all pre-service teachers. In school C, use of the project had become embedded in the provision of initial teacher education. Previous years’ pre-service teachers lead and ‘cascaded’ their experience to current pre-service teachers. In school A the project was undertaken by pre-service teachers from different disciplines, whereas in the other schools they were exclusively English specialists. This diversity of approach was also seen in the evaluations of previous years (ITTE, 2009, 1010).

Participation in the project develops pre-service teachers' confidence and moves them from being a pre-service teacher, with connotations of being a sub-ordinate, to being an autonomous teacher. Where pre-service teachers were given the opportunity to lead the project they, and/or mentors, reported that they developed:

- increased confidence to try out different teaching techniques;
- greater sense of collegiality;
- more receptiveness to feedback; and
- a higher profile with peers and school leadership.

Even in cases where they did not take the lead, they reported that they were more highly valued by colleagues and gained greater respect from pupils. In all cases they saw the project as contributing directly to enhanced CVs and employability prospects. It was felt that school leaders would look favourably on such participation. It was seen as a valuable aspect of their training and provided professional development opportunities that may not otherwise have been possible. Thus pre-service teachers were able to take the lead in planning, to work with colleagues from beyond their own faculty and to deal with outside agencies as representatives of the school. Essential outcomes of the engagement in the project was the active engagement of pupils in learning and a redefined view of pre-service teachers as equal colleagues rather than trainees. This contrasts with findings of Ahonen et al (2014) who found that pupils were largely passive and that teachers had fixed views of their role.

The project also enhanced pre-service teachers' identities as teachers beyond the school. Whether it was working with the BBC or with local organisations and personalities, pre-service teachers were seen in the same way as other teachers in the school. This is perhaps more noticeable where they were given the lead and, as with other evaluations (see especially ITTE, 2009) where they were on graduate teacher programmes and so were in the same school for a significant period of time. This deeper engagement allows pre-service teachers time and space to become part of the professional community for which they are training. Engagement in the project accelerates this and allows them to be seen as both newly-qualified and newly professional.

Throughout the three years of research into the value of ITE providers' involvement in the BBC News School Report project to both the formal curriculum of assessment for QTS and the development of professional identity has emerged as a significant finding. This has been achieved for a very small input of supporting funds from the TDA. Such support is no longer available perhaps reflecting a more focused budget on core ITE activity. It is the authors' contention that given the benefits found in the research such a move is regrettable.

Engagement in such a project can only provide be part of the training experience of pre-service teachers – it does not deal with the formal curriculum for example. If teachers in training are given roles of responsibility in such projects, however, then their self-perception of role is modified to one in which they see themselves, and are seen, as equal to qualified staff rather than subservient or dependent on them. Furthermore, engagement

in such projects leads to them collecting richer, more holistic evidence for meeting the Standards as they take greater ownership for this process, situating it in their leading role in the project. Echoing Hilton et al. (2013), their identity becomes defined less by the articulation of Standards and by their relationship to others and more by their own notions of professionalism.

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