

## **What future for curriculum history? The pedagogy of history in the primary phase and an analysis of ITT students' experience and preparation for the classroom.**

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### **Abstract**

*The data utilised in this document was collected from Initial Teacher Training (ITT) students completing postgraduate and undergraduate courses and relates to the experience (personally as a pupil and in school as a student) of those participating in curriculum history sessions learning about how to teach in the primary sector.*

*As ever, the nature of the Primary Curriculum requires students to interpret the delivery of their teaching programme through a multiplicity of subject areas and to adapt their teaching styles accordingly. This investigation focuses on the individual involvement of students teaching, observing as well as being taught the subject in Primary. Impending curriculum modifications are once again on the Government's agenda so perhaps this is particularly pertinent currently.*

*In considering the position of students undergoing school and university preparation to teach and the provision offered to them to experience observing and teaching the subject in isolation and as one of a multi-subject curricular methodology once they are qualified, I reflect on some conclusions characterised by their responses. It is important to acknowledge that student interpretations regarding approaches to history as a subject might be subjective, but I document these in order to review likely influences on the standard of their teaching, so a range of analysis to reflect this is included.*

*The outcomes here represent first responses to my research. A further data collection will be undertaken with the cohort of ITT students in 2012-2013, to see how, and if, Government planned changes in ITT and curriculum influence the preparation of students to teach history.*

**Key Words:** Primary Curriculum, Teacher Training, Teaching and Learning, History, Pedagogy.

## Background

Consideration was made in forming this research, of the essence of ITT provision and students' perceived importance of history as a subject in England's primary curriculum. The inspiration came from an impression from discourses with staff teaching other subjects that the provision of the foundation subject curriculum was being reduced generally and as a consequence history provision was similarly weakened. I am indebted to Arthur J Kelly, Liverpool Hope University (Senior Lecturer – Geography) for his thoughts on the pedagogy of his field of expertise which helped manifest my methodology.

Throughout this discussion I employ 'Initial Teacher Training' as a title, although I would include the caveat, that like Kelly (2009:1) this should not be interpreted as *training* (with the possible perceived implication of pre-ordained approaches and conclusions) so much as preparation to teach, implying much more flexible application of pedagogy, evaluation of success criteria and reflection on future approaches – not the same thing at all!

Kelly's concern is echoed by Burnett (2006:318) who reflects on the complexity of pedagogy and considers 'The Teacher Training Agency seemed to view teachers' professional knowledge from a paradigmatic perspective (see Bruner, 1986:27). Indeed the re-framing of initial teacher education as initial teacher training suggested that teacher knowledge was technical and finite rather than context-specific and open to critique.'

It is interesting to note here that Mahony and Hextall (2000:11) raised concerns about the lack of theoretical underpinning for the Standards and again critique the simplification of a complex, ongoing professional development: 'prescriptive in relation to the kinds of strategies the student teachers should be taught... lacking in reference to the importance of professional judgements, professional values or effective relationships'.

## History in the Primary Curriculum – reflection on the position of ITT students.

The teaching of history has been subject to discussion and debate throughout the twentieth century, but first receives official mention in England in 1905 with the suggestion that 'elementary schools saw history as difficult to teach, but for reasons of morality children must know worthwhile rights and duties, examples of good men must be held up to children'. (Blyth, 1989:5).

In 1923, the Board of Education gave an 'Alphabet' of thirty two dates and events in English history which all children should know, but by 1929, Clarke was criticising the simple rote learning of facts in history teaching. He 'warned of dates becoming mere telephone numbers' and that 'change, not time, is the historic idea'. (Blyth, 1989:6). Thus began the embryonic discussion on history teaching which continues to the present – the 'Skills versus Knowledge' debate. This debate was raised to its climax during the discussions of the National Curriculum Working Group for history. Prior to

the introduction of the National Curriculum (1988), the members of the working group received six times more submissions than the parallel working party set up by government to advise on school English. Regarding this debate, the Government Working Group apparently presented contradictory arguments, in that they endorsed the pre-eminence of understanding and contested ponderous debate concerning 'knowledge' content as imprecise. Incongruously however, they were adamant that the inclusion of a colossal magnitude of 'essential and exemplary' historical information was critical, in order to meet attainment targets' (Samuel, 1990).

The rival claims of the 'Skills versus Knowledge' method of teaching..... 'were vigorously debated in the public press' (Samuel, 1990:3) when history first became a foundation subject following the introduction of National Curriculum, with controversy about content appropriate for the school history curriculum in a rapidly changing multicultural society: Husband (1996:7), vindicates the bilateral debate concerning historical understanding (the accomplishment of robust historical skills and content) and the nature of assessment regarding these elements, but acknowledges the fundamental disagreements which initiated these serving to '...isolate school history from developments elsewhere in the discipline'. (Husband, 1996:6). Nevertheless, National Curriculum initiatives in history would seem to have placed an expectation on teachers to utilise pedagogy which allow children to develop historical skills within an increasing knowledge base.

These debates would suggest ITT students and newly qualified teachers need time to reflect carefully on their epistemology of history (see Rogers, 2007:2). Yet Lunenburg and Willemse (2006), consider, 'Many young teachers have negative experiences of the classroom. Arguably, the impact of traditional teacher-education programmes on graduates has also been relatively meagre' (cited in Rogers, 2007:2). Hence their survival can be viewed as one of strategic adaptation and compliance to the narrow instrumentalist approaches to learning centred round meeting National Curriculum and Initial Teacher Training standards.

This view is supported by McGettrick, (2005) (cited in Rogers 2007:2) who argued in his critique of the changes to the Framework For Professional Teaching Standards, quality teaching and learning have to extend beyond compliance and prescription. 'Where standards are reduced to a low common denominator of compliance with formulaic outcomes, they become ossified as a set of bureaucratic statements that have tenuous links with the real purposes of learning'.

So it is within a constantly challenged domain that ITT undergraduate and postgraduate students find themselves preparing for teaching history in the classroom. Currently, this subject is considered of limited importance in the curriculum. There has been an ongoing diminution of students' epistemology, practice, and preparation for teaching history which is likely to have unfortunate consequences for newly qualified teachers in their first posts.

According to Ofsted (2007), history enjoys relatively modest curriculum status in primary schools, because of the mandatory focus on literacy and numeracy. However, schools were judged as beginning to reassess history in a broader role, '...for example in supporting literacy' (Ofsted, 2007:7). Such is history, summarised

(and marginalised) by Ofsted. It becomes nothing more than a supporting actor in terms of development in practice. Yet we should not forget that this domain should, according to the National Curriculum, be part of a 'broad and balanced' curriculum (National Curriculum, 1988:4). This lack of attention has seemingly had significant effects in terms of pupil attainment... juxtaposed with this story of underachievement we must also consider the standpoint of ITT students who have been educated during this period. Interestingly, although history was initially perceived to be problematic at primary level, at the secondary phase of education and most recently in primary there is a different story to tell.

'Pupils' achievement is satisfactory at Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils know about selected periods and themes, but are often weak at linking information together to form an overall narrative or story' and in important history skills' (Ofsted, 2007:7). The progress after 20 plus years of government curriculum intervention was not encouraging. It must be remembered that the vast majority of current ITT students, both post and undergraduate, have been educated within this National Curriculum remit.

Those students have, perhaps, received more stimulus for their history development in secondary education: 'Pupils' achievement in secondary schools and colleges is good and, in terms of examination performance, standards compare well with other subjects.' (Ofsted, 2007). Yet it is important to note that '...only just over thirty percent of pupils study the subject at Key Stage 4 and fewer still post-16.' (Ofsted, 2007:7).

Yet Ofsted (2011:4), just four years later, seemed to paint a brighter picture, considering children's 'achievement was good or outstanding in sixty-three of the eighty-three primary schools and fifty-nine of the eighty-three secondary schools...the teaching of history was good or better in most of the primary schools visited.' Ofsted also considered that 'In the schools visited, history was generally a popular and successful subject, which many pupils enjoyed'.

However, the Ofsted figures would suggest 24% of primary schools to be only 'satisfactory' in their history curriculum, which would not help stimulate student-teachers through being able to experience high quality observation and modelling. Some weaknesses, such as chronology, were highlighted which still appeared to echo the findings of 2007. 'In primary schools, pupils knew about particular episodes, characters and periods but found it difficult to understand them in relation to a long-term narrative or overview. This was partly because of the primary school curriculum structure, and also because teachers did not have adequate subject knowledge beyond the specific elements of history they taught.'

The structure that appeared to cause weakness would seem to be where the school utilised a cross-curricular, or themed approach: 'In just under half of the 35 primary schools visited where the teaching of foundation subjects, including history, had become based on cross-curricular topics or themes, planning for progression in developing historical knowledge and thinking was limited' (Ofsted, 2011:5-6).

This was certainly evidenced as a concern within the Ofsted (2012: 6) training source materials; 'When some pupils in Years 5 and 6 were asked by an inspector

about what they had recently studied in history, there was silence. The inspector prompted them by mentioning that he thought they had studied the Ancient Greeks. A Year 6 pupil replied, 'That's not history – that's topic'. Ofsted (2012:8) notes 'we also found that pupils' progress in history tended to be slower in the schools visited that did not teach history as a discrete subject than in those that did.

Prior to introduction of the National Literacy (1998) and Numeracy (1999) Strategies, in terms of subject status and identity, history was becoming well established in the primary curriculum, due to the expectations laid by National Curriculum. History focused topics were replacing more integrated approaches, particularly at Key Stage 2, and considerably strengthened history's status. Whether history was being taught with quality, though, remains to be considered. However, the *Excellence in Schools* white paper noted the key aim of education being to ensure children are both literate and numerate, and from that base to use literacy and numeracy as opening, '...the door to success across all the other school subjects and beyond' (DfEE, 1997:5).

To achieve higher standards in these core subjects, the statutory requirements to teach the foundation subjects, including history, were suspended from September 1998 and inspection reports would not comment on teaching in these subjects either. In addition new Frameworks for teaching were announced which incorporated detailed strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy in primary schools (DfEE, 1998, 1999). The Literacy and Numeracy Strategies appear to have dominated primary curriculum planning, teaching, continuing professional development, and time since.

The status of other subjects was considerably eroded, even though the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) promoted a vigorous justification of a broad curriculum in *Maintaining Breadth and Balance* (QCA, 1998a), where there is a sustained emphasis on schools making their own decisions relating to curriculum provision and organisation' (cited in Harnett, 2000:8). The QCA history schemes of work followed, providing examples for planning historical enquiries. Although these were designed to assist teachers in their planning, in reality, many schools embraced the schemes exclusively, and in many foundation subjects; 'the schemes of work in effect became another version of the National Curriculum.' (Harnett, 2000:8).

This situation seems to have limited flexibility in planning the primary curriculum, particularly in Key Stage 1, where it is currently proving difficult to find examples of 'Famous People' and 'Important Events' being experienced, other than *Florence Nightingale* and the *Great Fire of London*, both examples having been utilised in the QCA scheme of work for history, through both student planning and school visits. This view is supported by the Historical Association (2011:13) who found 'the data indicate that the topics taught can tend towards over-reliance on the QCA schemes of work at Key Stage 1', this still being the case, despite the fact that the schemes of work have now been removed from view for many months.

History's status as a subject then, appears to have become more inconsequential. The reasons for this would, again, appear to be complex, yet many relate to broader developments in the primary curriculum. The Literacy and Numeracy strategies,

prescriptive in terms of timing, content and to an extent pedagogical approach, have eroded not only history, but many other foundation subjects within the primary curriculum, through reduction in curriculum time available. Other initial considerations would appear to include the confidence and understanding of the teachers in primary schools, and a 'mindset' that history is not as important as some other domains. Where school staff collectively recognise the importance of the subject and its concomitant skills and concepts, and have the confidence to integrate good skill-development activities within a clear progression, then history in primary schools is successful. In many schools this is not the case, and with Ofsted narrowing their inspection base in practice, there appears less pressure on teachers to build on the opportunities offered for children's learning by history.

The situation in history would appear to be mirrored in geography, by the research of Kelly (2009:1), where he cites Catling et al (2003) and Bell (2005) in considering geography's non-specialist teachers and continued 'patchy' provision. The position for curriculum development in history, and other foundation subjects, has not been made any clearer by the subsequently 'withered' Rose Report (Rose, 2008). Following the Cambridge Primary (Alexander, 2008) and 'Independent' Rose (2008) Reviews, the labour government rushed through a 'new' national curriculum, into schools in February 2010. This was subsequently 'washed out' during 'wash up' sessions by Parliament, and removed by the current government upon its election. Many schools appear to have been left in a state of flux, or more likely with regards to history and other foundation subjects, a state of atrophy.

The 'New' National Curriculum seemed to provide a death knell for history (at least in the media):

'Traditional lessons in history, geography and science should be removed from the primary curriculum ....' (Curtis, 2008:1)

Yet when examined in more detail the proposals, and new curriculum, did not give this message:

'A design for the curriculum is proposed, which promotes challenging subject teaching alongside equally challenging cross curricular studies....high quality subject teaching must not disappear from primary schools, nor should the benefits to children of well planned cross curricular studies.' (Rose, 2008:5)

This was echoed in the final document. Subject teaching and cross curricular learning should take place and anyone working with contemporary primary schools' curriculum would not find this unfamiliar. Yet again, though, school leaders and class teachers were faced with uncertainty as to how to fully implement the proposals, and while ITT providers began to build the new planning concepts into their activities with ITT students, as fast as changes were being introduced, the election led to it all disappearing into the ether...or has it? First impressions are that there may well be echoes of the 'withered Rose' in both schools and ITT training: This will be worth further consideration over the next short time period.

This view is supported by the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2010), in considering that school staff, having begun implementing Rose's (2008), recommendations, would resent their effort being wasted. However, Alexander,

(2010) further reflected on the potential opportunities for debate, hitherto restricted by practical application of the 'narrow remit and limited evidence of the Rose Review', to consider opportunities retreating from the barrage of government initiatives and embrace a fresh consideration of schools' philosophy and ethos in the present century.

The delay in implementation of the new National Curriculum until 2014, may be evidence that Alexander's views about encouraging deeper reflection are being considered. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Gilbert (2011:2) considered the position of history in the light of Ofsted's (2011) report: 'The report presents a positive picture of the standards and teaching in history in schools', and went on to state that, 'Pupils need to experience history as a coherent subject which develops their knowledge, thinking and understanding, especially their chronological understanding, and I hope the current review of the National Curriculum will recognise the importance of this.'

### **History in ITT**

The pedagogical experience of ITT students in school is far from robust, 'In Primary schools, especially at Key Stage 2, the curriculum is demanding, yet few teachers are specialists and so find it difficult to develop the subject over three/four years with suitable progression. Limits to what is possible on initial teacher training (ITT) courses for post-graduates, and in induction years for newly qualified teachers, together with the lack of easily accessible continuing professional development exacerbate the problem.' (QCA, 2007:4).

This statement followed the earlier report on history (Ofsted,2004), which considered weaknesses in specialist knowledge and 'the likelihood is that the situation will worsen in future years as a result of changes to primary teacher education'.

McNamara et al (2008) provide an overview of recent changes to the structure, content and regulation of ITT and the inferred compliance culture at its heart, which echoes the views of Rogers (2007) and McGettrick (2006) mentioned earlier. Provision for history in ITT needs to be viewed in a change context. In summary, it appears the thrust for situated pedagogic knowledge relevant to today's classrooms has to be balanced against a direction for course content to be focused on core subjects, particularly English and Maths, to the detriment of foundation (non-core) subjects such as history.

Perhaps the key change for ITT providers came with the publication of a National Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training (DfEE 1997, DfEE 1998). Requirements for courses were detailed, with pedagogy and subject knowledge for history specified. The emphasis on specific pedagogy and subject knowledge for teaching history were abandoned with the publication of '*Qualifying to Teach*' (DfES, 2002), with a revision of the professional standards. Importantly for history in ITT these standards required that students need only study history OR geography (DfES, 2002) - students no longer had to receive 'training' in the breadth of the primary curriculum.

The 2007 version of the Professional Standards for Teachers (DfES, 2007) reduced the number of standards and gave a clear focus on embedding Every Child Matters

policy (DfES, 2004) through ITT, but there was no explicit mention of history, although as with *Qualifying to Teach* there are a number of relevant standards with Q14 and Q15 at the heart (see DfES, 2007).

It is difficult to judge the impact of these policy changes at a national level as research appears limited although there is some evidence that the changes in ITT are having a negative impact on Foundation subjects such as history. (For example, Martin (2000) and Catling (2003) cited in Kelly, 2009:6) did explore PGCE students' perceptions of geography). Fortunately, some institutions maintained a belief in the importance of ITT students viewing the primary curriculum through a full range of 'subject lenses' at this time, and both undergraduate and postgraduate ITT students were given the opportunity to view the pedagogy of all foundation subjects, but this was not true for all ITT providers, and increasing pressure would seem to have led to further reduction in time and resources available for reflection and epistemological development in history, along with many other foundation subjects.

Certainly, an illustration can be given through one ITT provider which used to provide twenty hours of small group pedagogical workshops for each foundation subject, including history, within its undergraduate degree, and fourteen hours of small group workshops for PGCE students. The current provision has now dropped by 50% to ten hours of workshops for two foundation subjects per year between seven foundation subjects, chosen within the final three years of its undergraduate degree. This means that input for one foundation subject (history potentially) will not be available to students at all, and PGCE provision has been slashed to four hours plus a whole cohort lecture.

This, and the point regarding literacy and numeracy dominating the primary curriculum, is echoed by Cooper (2005:4), who laments the passing of Primary ITT students' traditional experience because of the real possibility that they will not encounter, 'any history at school or on [the] course'. She further mourns the restricted opportunities for ITT students to teach history in early years of children's education (which are represented incidentally as unexciting and uninspiring) because of the predominance of literacy and numeracy lessons marginalising history.

This shrinkage seems widespread, judging from the Historical Association's (2011) survey. They found that their survey identified 'major shortcomings in initial teacher training and continuing professional development (CPD) of serving teachers'. Their data showed that 'the overwhelming majority of trainee primary teachers have minimal training in how to teach history.....consisting often of less than two days in a three or four year ITT course, and even less in some one year postgraduate courses.' Similarly, the Historical Association (2011) paints a stark picture of continuing professional development: 'in terms of responses 67% did not know of or have a history advisor in their area, 49% said they had received little or no training for subject leadership, and 90% identified an absence of subject-specific history CPD'.

Ofsted (2011) raises parallel concerns regarding diminished subject-specific expertise or professional development guiding teachers' understanding of the standards expected in subject teaching or to improve their understanding of

development in historical thought and among their key recommendations are to reconsider the needs of initial teacher education and 'provision of subject-specific professional development opportunities nationally to support primary school teachers more effectively in their work on history.' (Ofsted, 2011:7)

Burnett (2006:319) considers that the changes in Primary ITT since the 1990's have affected the mediation of the curriculum by ITT providers, and consequently the way teachers' professional knowledge is provided. Considering financial pressures and targets for recruitment have been in conflict, reaching a peak over the last five years, this has often led to much higher student-staff ratios and courses that are now increasingly taught through large lectures and sessions with fewer opportunities for individual and small group tutorial support (Gibbs et al, 1996). Certainly there is less evidence of practical pedagogical 'hands on' sessions taking place, where modelling allows students to reflect on the advantages of utilising artefacts and other sources, for example. These factors, combined with a view that the prescriptive content-heavy curriculum can be 'delivered' to large groups rather than 'negotiated' in small groups, may give students less opportunity to share experiences and learn from one another or in discussion with 'expert others' (Furlong et al, 2000:38).

It would appear that newly qualified teachers are less likely to be able to build on their pedagogical skills and understanding of history through the first years of their teaching. Whilst funding has been made available to support teachers' professional development, the range of skills and type of knowledge to be developed have been tightly controlled by government bodies, and given the demands of releasing teachers for national training events (usually linked to the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies), there has been little opportunity for schools or teachers to drive their own development (Bottery and Wright, 1997, cited in Burnett, 2006:320). The Historical Association's (2011:17) survey also gave a clear picture of CPD that gives 'serious cause for concern in several dimensions'. When one considers the shrinkage in Local Authority provision of expert support through Advisory Teachers for example, the picture is not positive for student and newly qualified teachers' professional development in history.

Ofsted (2012) attempted to 'paper over' professional development weaknesses through publishing an online training resource for schools, which comments 'particularly effective practice was characterised by teachers who not only had good subject knowledge but also good subject pedagogy, that is, a good understanding of how pupils learn in the subject' but within the same material admitted 'the general picture on subject training is bleak' (Ofsted, 2012: 25).

Another key change that has occurred in ITT which may be relevant here is the increased focus on school based learning on courses, through partnerships with schools, which is legislated for and formalised in 'guidance' for HEI providers. Implicit here is an assumption that school based learning will be beneficial for students' development of appropriate professional pedagogical knowledge - in the case of history this may be called into question as being limited, given the Ofsted evidence presented previously. Furlong et al (2006:42) contest, 'partnership' is more about contemporary practice in school than exploring the complexity and contestability of professional knowledge and a range of evidence suggests that practice is inconsistent, then the role of school placements in supporting development of appropriate professional pedagogical knowledge is perhaps open to question.

The research that has been undertaken relating to students' experiences of observing and teaching history in practice while on school placements appears limited, and certainly forms one key focus for this research.

Finally, Walker (2010) gives an interesting personal viewpoint on ITT, citing a perceptible shift from teacher education being seen as an, at least in part, "academic" discipline, toward a kind of functional apprenticeship. He considers that this movement will ultimately be to the detriment of the quality and dedication of newly trained teachers and is an element of the 'deskilling of the teaching profession.' Reiterating Kelly's (2009:1) concern, he is scathing in considering an "education versus training" debate. 'In the case of the "trained" teacher dare I say it might be to produce the same lesson objectives, same plans and plenaries lifted from the myriad government documentation year on year, class by class. An "educated" teacher however will have flexibility, purpose, vision, understanding and I would presume to suggest a little healthy cynicism of what is thrust before him or her.' (Walker, 2010)

To summarise, key evidence suggests that the quality of history provision in primary schools experienced by students is variable, which raises questions as to the quality of school based learning, and that the changes in ITT may also impact negatively on provision and students' domain pedagogical development.

## **Methodology**

The purpose of this research is to ascertain the experience of students both as pupils themselves and as trainees, in both school and university settings, and to gain an insight into their views of history as a subject, relating in particular to their confidence and perceived preparedness to teach history. The implications of the research findings are important for future ITT students in that it begins to give a student perspective which should be considered within a time of change in both national policy and training provision in the pedagogy of history.

I focussed on analysing what personal experience students have of being taught 'history', what their perceptions are of pedagogical history, and while on ITT, their experiences of observing history being taught and their opportunities to teach history. I consider a situational analysis of the student experience and their perceptions of what support has been given to teach history in a primary school, both as a discrete domain and as part of a cross-curricular approach, on completion of their training.

I then intended to consider some first thoughts on the effect students' personal view of history teaching may have on the quality of provision in the classroom. I made initial considerations on exploring the 'mindset' of ITT students towards history, as their experience develops.

To begin, an anonymous pencil and paper questionnaire was distributed among BA (QTS) Primary students in years 2,3 and 4 and PGCE Primary student teachers. The aim was to gain an overview of their personal history experiences and qualifications

and an attempt to take a 'snapshot' of the cohort's experiences of primary history teaching while they were on school placements. I have data from two cohorts of PGCE students (2008-9, 2009-10). Each PGCE cohort will have placements in a minimum of two different schools within the year. The majority of PGCE students spent their first and second placements in the same school but in different key stages.

The data was also collected from undergraduates within three years of the course. This allowed me to quantify their personal experience/qualifications in history, and begin to explore their 'mindset' regarding the teaching of history. It also begins to allow me to evidence any progression in school experience of history teaching/observations, while final year students, as with postgraduates, allowed me to take a 'snapshot' of overall experiences, and their initial epistemological views on history.

I plan to expand this research with greater cohort numbers, formed by another 'block' of data beginning with 2012-2013 cohort of undergraduates and postgraduates, which should allow comparison and highlight any changes/trends in student perception of history and teaching history. It is hoped this will run in conjunction with the introduction of the new National Curriculum, due for introduction in 2014.

Completion of the survey was not compulsory and was administered in history curriculum workshops to the different cohorts respectively. Research data was gleaned from:

PGCE 2008-9 cohort: 162

PGCE 2009-10 cohort: 168

This gave us a total postgraduate database of 330 students.

The survey had an undergraduate database of:

113 Year 2 students

111 Year 3 students

25 Year 4 (final) students.

(NB this cohort was a small final year participating in an optional fourth year. It is expected the proposed future collection of data will be with a larger cohort, participating in a compulsory fourth year)

The survey was designed to explore the following areas:

- The academic level of history experience of students.
- Frequency of opportunities for students to see history being taught.
- Frequency of opportunities for students to teach history.
- Frequency of students' ancillary history teaching/experiences i.e. displays observed.
- Students' perceptions of 'history' and history's place in primary education.

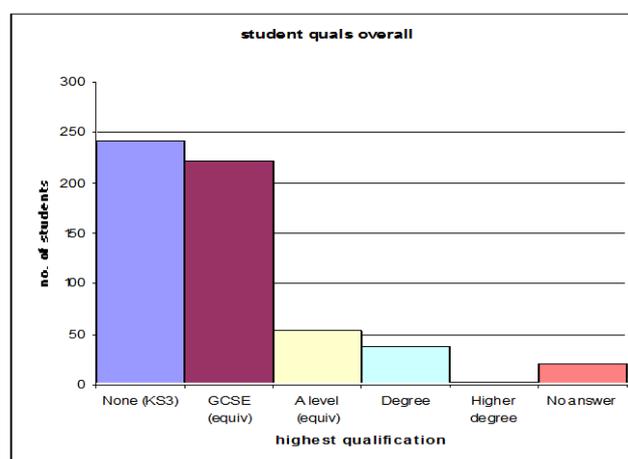
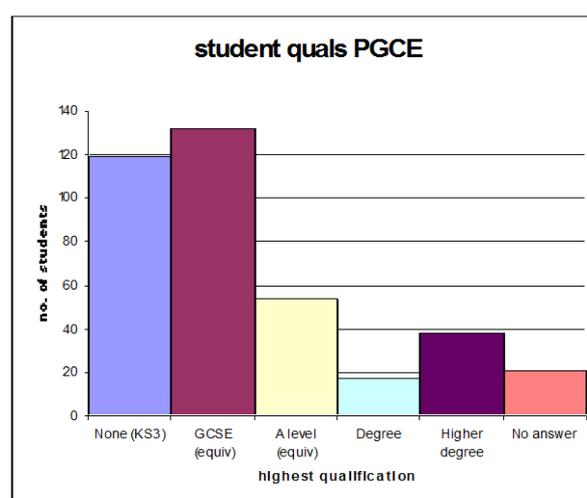
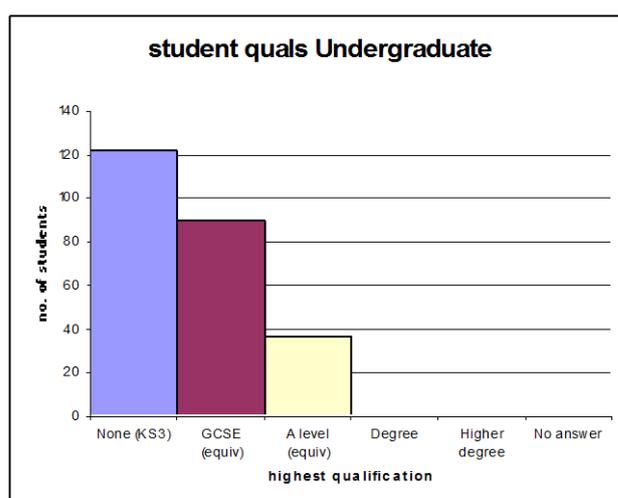
I hope to expand this research into exploring, in more detail, which aspects of history the students were involved in teaching/observing, but for this first analysis of student

perception an anonymous survey was the most straightforward approach for data collection.

## Analysis and Findings

I was minded to explore the students' academic background in history as I considered that 100% of ITT students must have Maths, English and Science at grade C GCSE to be eligible to enter both under- and postgraduate courses. Students were asked to indicate the highest level at which they had successfully studied history.

Highest Qualification	Undergraduate total / % rounded	Postgraduate total / % rounded	Total ITT survey total / % rounded
None (KS3)	122 / 49	119 / 36	241 / 42
GCSE (equiv)	90 / 36	132 / 40	222 / 38
A level (equiv)	37 / 15	17 / 5	54 / 9
Degree	0 / 0	38 / 12	38 / 7
Higher degree	0 / 0	3 / 1	3 / 1
No answer given	0 / 0	21 / 6	21 / 4



The academic levels at which the ITT students studied history, for GCSE and A level, are comparable, or slightly higher, than average, when compared to national data (see e.g. *DCSF 2007a, DCSF 2007b*) with 38% of students studying history as a GCSE and 9% at A level. However a significant figure to consider here is the 42% of students who do not have a formal qualification in history, and did not continue to study the subject beyond the age of fourteen.

I asked the students to give reasons why they continued, or why they chose to 'drop', history in their academic study.

Key reasons given for Postgraduates continuing with history studies included comments on themes:

- Enjoyment / interest in history: 89 students (27%)
- Enthusiastic / inspiring teachers: 40 students (12%)
- Preferred history to other option choices: 26 students (8%)
- I was good at history: 24 students (7%)
- It's important to learn history: 15 students (5%)

(My favourite answer was 'wanted to go on field trip to battlefields!')

Key reasons given for Postgraduates not continuing with history studies included comments on themes:

- School options forced choice to be made: 43 students (13%)  
(*NB many mentioned 'so preferred geography'*)
- Didn't enjoy/ not interested by history: 39 (12%)
- Content too repetitive / boring / irrelevant: 29 (9%)
- Boring/poor teachers: 20 (6%)
- Too large a workload / too many essays: 11 (3%)

More detailed comment data is available and more detailed evaluations of the students' perceptions has been made, but undergraduate comments closely mirrored those above, made by postgraduate students.

The reasons underpinning the continuation of history study, or not, are complex, but appear to range from option choices at GCSE, to teaching styles and perceptions of the subject. This latter point is relevant as it could be suggested that some students were 'turned off' the subject at school because of teaching styles, or their perceptions of relevance and this could lead to them being less enthusiastic about, or confident in, teaching the subject.

It should also be considered that academic understanding of history should be allied with appropriate pedagogical knowledge and in some ways those ITT students with A levels / degrees are perhaps starting from a similar point to those without

qualifications. Importantly, though, they perhaps have confidence and passion for the subject, which many who dismissed history earlier in their school studies may lack.

I believe it may prove an illuminating avenue to discuss reasons for choice in more detail with students in later research.

I then asked the students to consider their history experience within their school based learning (SBL). The PGCE students were able to call upon three school experiences, although some mentioned they had also considered their preliminary experience immediately prior to commencing the course, when considering observations and history displays.

asked 'Have you taught / are you teaching history during SBL experience?'

<b>PGCE cohort</b>	<b>2008-9</b> Number/% rounded	<b>2009-10</b> Number/% rounded	<b>Both cohorts</b> Number/% rounded
YES	102 / 63	111 / 66	213 / 65
NO	58 / 36	57 / 34	115 / 35
	2 students did not answer		

By the end of school experience 2, with one practice to complete, only 15 students had taught history in 2008-9 cohort but 45 had taught history by that point in 2009-10. This was largely linked to the students' 'special interest area' being history, and the course expectations being for students to teach their special interest subject earlier.

I asked 'Have you observed history being taught during school experience?' This related to SBL 1, 2 and serial attachment days for SBL3.

<b>PGCE cohort</b>	<b>2008-9</b> Number/% rounded	<b>2009-10</b> Number/% rounded	<b>Both cohorts</b> Number/% rounded
YES	96 / 59	128 / 76	224 / 65
NO	66 / 41	40 / 24	104 / 35

'Have you seen history related displays during school experience?'

<b>PGCE cohort</b>	<b>2008-9</b> Number/% rounded	<b>2009-10</b> Number/% rounded	<b>Both cohorts</b> Number/% rounded
YES	109 / 67	104 / 62	213 / 65
NO	53 / 33	64 / 38	117 / 35

It could be that in schools there were history related displays, but the students had not registered them or focussed on these at the time. In later informal discussion several students noted that they had focused on their main SBL classroom rather than the school as a whole.

Nevertheless, these figures may give some cause for concern. Of 330 PGCE students over two years, 115 (35%) of students had taught no history during their school experience on the course. 104 (35%) of students had observed no history teaching.

Was there any progression in history teaching on the undergraduate course? The same questions were asked.

I asked 'Have you taught / are you teaching history during school experience?'

<b>Undergraduate year</b>	<b>Year 2</b> Number/% rounded	<b>Year 3</b> Number/% rounded	<b>Year 4</b> Number/% rounded
YES	12 / 11	43 / 39	18 / 72
NO	101 / 89	68 / 61	7 / 28

I asked 'Have you observed history being taught during school experience?'

<b>Undergraduate year</b>	<b>Year 2</b> Number/% rounded	<b>Year 3</b> Number/% rounded	<b>Year 4</b> Number/% rounded
YES	67 / 59	91 / 82	16 / 64
NO	46 / 41	20 / 18	9 / 36

I asked 'Have you seen history related displays during school experience?'

<b>Undergraduate year</b>	<b>Year 2</b> Number/% rounded	<b>Year 3</b> Number/% rounded	<b>Year 4</b> Number/% rounded
YES	68 / 60	105 / 95	23 / 92
NO	45 / 40	6 / 5	2 / 8

Are these figures related to students' increased awareness of history as they progress through their course? The Y2 undergraduates had received minimal input on the pedagogy of history as this survey was conducted. As their ITT course progresses, so the input for history develops. Does this then sensitise them to note evidence of history teaching in the schools?

As with the Postgraduate students, there appears to be a significant number (28%) who have not taught history during their school experience, although the database of Y4 students is small. The position of undergraduates regarding teaching experience of history appears somewhat better compared to postgraduates, however. It is also interesting to note that a larger percentage of undergraduates have not observed history, than have not taught it. Does this possibly indicate that some students are being asked to teach history, without having experienced any modelling from teachers in school? Further semi-formal discussion with groups of students would indicate this was the case. Several post and undergraduate students not involved in these discussions also approached me for advice re pedagogical and contextual aspects of their proposed topics given by schools for SBL (eg *Victorian schools*,

*Great Fire of London*) and this lack of modelling in school context was certainly the case.

When the overall picture of both postgraduate and undergraduate student experience of observation and teaching history is considered, first views would suggest the picture is not strong. Of 355 students completing studies and hopefully moving into teaching positions, 132 (34%) had taught no history during their school placements. Link to that, 113 (31%) who have observed no history teaching (*although this is not necessarily the same students*) and the picture is again rather worrying.

I will be expanding my research to include exact figures, but informal discussion would also point to the fact that those students who did teach history, had taught a small number of lessons, generally varying between one and seven sessions (varying in organisation between one hour and an afternoon session depending on school curriculum organisation). A discussion on how well a strong pedagogical approach to history utilising enquiry and evidence can be structured in single hour sessions is not part of this paper, but worthy of the reader's consideration.

At this point it is also relevant to note that the quality of the teaching and learning in students' lessons, or in their observations of history sessions was not explored, just the perceived quantity. Also of concern is the suggestions that it is possible students are being asked to teach history with little opportunity to observe it being taught. This calls into question the notion that schools are actually providing learning opportunities based on modelling of good practice and may link to lack of confidence in schools relating to teaching of history (see *Ofsted, 2007*).

Data would also suggest a situation where not a lot of history seems to be being taught in Primary schools, although this could perhaps be a false view – schools who organise the teaching of foundation subjects in 'blocks' rather than 'per week' are perhaps in a situation where during the timing of students' SBLs the attachment classes are not expecting to teach history. As student SBLs are timetabled at similar times during the academic year, each year, this could exaggerate the lack of history teaching / experience.

Schools developing a thematic / creative approach to curriculum organisation might also lead to skewing of data, as students might not recognise the pedagogical aspects of history that may be developing as an integral part of the themes. This, however, is also important to consider – if students are not recognising key pedagogical approaches to history, then are they evidencing the ability to view the curriculum through the focus of a variety of pedagogical 'subject lenses' to enable them to successfully plan and facilitate strong history learning and teaching? When you also consider the qualifying students' school placements on average totalled over one hundred days (Minimum of ninety days for PGCE students - next year this will be considerably more - and 120 for BA QTS) the data would reinforce the notion of the marginalisation of history considered earlier.

My research would also seem to raise questions about entirely school led ITT routes. If, as Furlong et al (2006) contest, 'partnership' is more about contemporary practice

in school than exploring the complexity and contestability of professional knowledge and a range of evidence suggests that practice is variable and inconsistent, then the role of school placements in supporting development of appropriate professional pedagogical knowledge is perhaps open to question.

My research then moved to begin to examine students' 'mindset' towards history. I wanted to begin to explore personal views of history as a domain, and the students' view of history in the Primary School. I asked an interrelated series of questions to ascertain how students viewed 'history'. I made no comment regarding how to interpret the questions, but left this to the individual, so questions such as 'history is useful to me' does not specify whether this is as a teacher or as an individual. I did ask the students to answer the questions rather rapidly – the key was to gain a 'gut reaction' from the students:

PGCE students N=330	Strongly agree Total no /%rounded	Agree Total no /%rounded	Disagree Total no/%rounded	Strongly disagree Total no /%rounded
I enjoyed learning history in school	110 / 33	148 / 45	62 / 19	10 / 3
I think history is interesting	146 / 44	170 / 52	10 / 3	4 / 1
I think history is relevant today	151 / 46	172 / 52	7 / 2	0 / 0
I think history is useful to me	106 / 32	202 / 61	21 / 6	1 / >1
I think history is enjoyable	112 / 34	180 / 55	33 / 10	3 / 1
I enjoy watching history programmes on TV	78 / 24	156 / 47	82 / 25	12 / 4
I find visiting historic sites and museums interesting	108 / 33	185 / 56	30 / 9	5 / 1

Totals not always = 330 due to small number of 'no answers' given

When viewing these foundation questions in an attempt to analyse students' attitudes towards history my view is the picture appears more optimistic. The two PGCE cohorts paint a favourable collective 'mindset' towards the subject. While 22% had disliked history at school, 96% reported now finding history interesting, with 98% feeling it to be relevant and 89% enjoyable. When you consider that 36% of these students had no academic experience of history beyond the age of 14 and 35% had no experience of teaching history during the course, the cohorts still appear positive in their views of history.

It needs to be considered whether the history experiences in university, linked with their positive personal views of history, will enable them to ensure high quality

learning and teaching of history in their classrooms. Continuing CPD during their early career could reap dividends, but as mentioned earlier, this is usually not available (see Ofsted, 2007, Ofsted 2011, Historical Association, 2011). The unusual result was 29% did not enjoy watching history TV programmes. It would be interesting to explore this further; did the students consider documentaries, historically-based drama, or both? (This query is further expanded when you view the following data for Y2 undergraduate students where 50% of students disliked watching history TV programmes – currently I have no answers for this).

This survey was completed when some of the PGCE cohorts had undertaken history activities on the course. I do not know how, or whether, their attitudes have changed from the outset of the course. This may be a focus for future data collection. Nevertheless, this contrasts with earlier concerns regarding lack of pedagogical experience. It would appear that PGCE students are largely positive towards the subject. This will be further explored when I analyse their views on history's place in the primary school.

I now make an analysis of the undergraduate students. The questions asked were identical to those to the postgraduates

Year 2 undergrad students n= 113	Strongly agree Total no /%rounded	Agree Total no /%rounded	Disagree Total no /%rounded	Strongly disagree Total no /%rounded
I enjoyed learning history in school	25 / 22	46 / 41	35 / 31	6 / 5
I think history is interesting	28 / 25	65 / 58	14 / 12	2 / 2
I think history is relevant today	35 / 31	63 / 56	11 / 10	0 / 0
I think history is useful to me	25 / 22	60 / 53	25 / 22	3 / 3
I think history is enjoyable	19 / 17	60 / 53	28 / 25	3 / 3
I enjoy watching history programmes on TV	13 / 12	41 / 36	46 / 41	10 / 9
I find visiting historic sites and museums interesting	20 / 18	64 / 57	21 / 19	5 / 4

Totals not always = 113 due to small number of 'no answers given'

This Y2 survey was completed at the beginning of the students' history sessions in the institution. 36% of students had disliked history at school, which was the lowest enjoyment rate of any of the cohorts surveyed. Yet 83% of the students still found history interesting but only 70% enjoyable. Nevertheless, 87% felt it was relevant today.

Year 3 undergrad students n= 111	Strongly agree Total no /%rounded	Agree Total no /%rounded	Disagree Total no /%rounded	Strongly disagree Total no /%rounded
I enjoyed learning history in school	29 / 26	58 / 52	23 / 21	1 / >1
I think history is interesting	30 / 27	72 / 65	9 / 8	0 / 0
I think history is relevant today	30 / 27	74 / 67	7 / 6	0 / 0
I think history is useful to me	20 / 18	63 / 57	26 / 23	2 / 1
I think history is enjoyable	21 / 19	66 / 59	23 / 21	1 / >1
I enjoy watching history programmes on TV	13 / 12	46 / 41	42 / 38	10 / 9
I find visiting historic sites and museums interesting	22 / 20	61 / 55	27 / 24	1 / >1

78% of Y3 students enjoyed history at school, and that figure remained constant when looking at enjoyment of the subject. Yet 92% found the subject interesting, 84% relevant and 75% useful. The students evidence a positive attitude towards history.

Year 4 undergrad students n= 25	Strongly agree Total no /%rounded	Agree Total no /%rounded	Disagree Total no /%rounded	Strongly disagree Total no /%rounded
I enjoyed learning history in school	5 / 20	17 / 68	3 / 12	0 / 0
I think history is interesting	11 / 44	12 / 48	2 / 8	0 / 0
I think history is relevant today	9 / 36	15 / 60	1 / 4	0 / 0
I think history is useful to me	9 / 36	11 / 44	5 / 20	0 / 0
I think history is enjoyable	7 / 28	14 / 56	4 / 16	0 / 0
I enjoy watching history programmes on TV	5 / 20	8 / 32	11 / 44	1 / 4
I find visiting historic sites and museums interesting	5 / 20	17 / 68	2 / 8	1 / 4

Despite being only a small sample, the Y4 group appear to bear comparison to the other year groups. 88% had enjoyed history at school, 92% found history interesting and 96% relevant today.

The overall picture for undergraduates' 'mindset' towards history, then, mirrors that of the postgraduates, in they have a positive personal view of 'history' as a subject. These views now need to be explored with a sample section of student cohorts, possibly through semi-formal interviews.

## Conclusions

The overall picture that appears to be developing is one of the majority of ITT students having a positive perception of history as a domain, despite a significant percentage (42% overall) having no academic qualifications and having not studied history since the age of fourteen. This positive mindset will hopefully allow the students to develop their personal epistemology, despite the current reported situation of diminishing input within ITT, and lack of CPD once in their first post. Nevertheless, an expansion in expert stimulus would surely assist the students' pedagogical development. School experience gives rise to some concern, as 35% of postgraduates and 28% of undergraduates surveyed, 34% overall, perceive they have not taught a history session by the time they qualify. Linked to this, 31% of students perceive they have observed no history being modelled by teachers, during their school based experiences.

In considering Ofsted's (2005,2007,2011) reports on the teaching of history in primary schools, and views regarding the quality of experience being given, my small scale research would appear to echo the concerns raised, at a more personal level. History would appear marginalised in all aspects of the students' experience. The emphasis on literacy and numeracy is visible both in HEI courses (often driven by the QCA Professional Standards) and primary schools (driven by the 'Strategies' and Ofsted) to the detriment of the students' experiences in history.

If Ofsted's conclusions regarding history teaching are to continue to be improved, it must be ensured that both HEI and school based experience for the students allow them to develop stronger domain pedagogical knowledge, the ability to view curriculum development through a history 'subject lens', and develop a clear understanding of how to plan stimulating, challenging, enquiry based activities for their children. With Ofsted's (2007) view that children 'are also often weak in important history skills' and Ofsted's (2011) concern regarding ITT in history, it would appear essential that ITT training engages in the deeper pedagogical analysis that may possibly be seen to be lacking in purely school-based training.

Is students' experience marginalised in other foundation subjects? Kelly's (2009) research on students' experiences in Geography ally closely to my findings. What is the situation regarding other foundation subjects and students' experience? What of the subjects which many teachers admit to being a weakness in their teaching in Primary schools, for example, PE and Music?

A limitation within my research is that my data is collected within one institution. I would welcome input from other ITT institutions, regarding student experience and readiness to teach history, but also to evidence if my initial findings for history are mirrored in other domains.

Over the next time period I aim to increase my database for analysis through another 'block' of data collection, allowing comparison through training changes/time. Since completion of this first data collection, time allocated to foundation subjects within the institution has again been reduced. My next analysis will focus on whether this further reduction in ITT pedagogical input has had an effect on the students' perception of their ability to teach history.

I would also wish to analyse the Year 2 undergraduate students to see if their perceptions of history have changed as they progress through their studies by including the cohort in data collection during their final year. I would want to deepen the exploration of the key aspects of history pedagogy the students perceive they are teaching and/or observing in school and discuss with a sample of schools their development of students' history pedagogy.

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