**Preparing a Pathway of
Professional Development for
Teacher Educators in the
Lifelong Learning Sector**

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**Abstract**

This paper offers an extension to ideas discussed in 'Dealing with Change'
(Exley, 2010) which examined the transition of *teacher* to *teacher educator*
in the Lifelong Learning Sector, and the possible creation of a recognised
pathway, or pathways, for the professional development for teacher
educators in the sector. A preliminary suggestion is made for a possible
format suitable for a pathway in support of the professional development of
teacher educators. This is based on the analyses of findings from current
literature, education policy reform and primary research examining the
perceptions of teacher educators regarding their own development. The
original ideas on which this research is based were formulated from a
discussion between the authors at a Centre for Excellence in Teacher
Training (CETT) Conference in 2009, 'Just Suppose', a national Centre for
Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT) Conference, held at the Eden Project,
Cornwall.

**Key Words**
Teacher educator; teacher education; professional development; Lifelong
Learning Sector.

**Introduction**
The aim of this research is to identify perceptions concerning the
professional formation or development of prospective, new and existent
teacher educators in the Lifelong Learning Sector (LLS) with the intention of
enhancing that experience.  It is focused on teacher education and training
for the LLS, as Initial Teacher Training Education (ITTE) or Continuing
Professional Development (CPD) as offered in both HE (Higher Education)
and FE (Further Education) practice contexts. The preferred definition of
teacher educators applied in this paper is those who are:

[...] teachers of teachers, engaged in the induction and professional
learning of future teachers through pre-service courses and/or the further
development of serving teachers through in-service courses
(Swennen and van der Klink, 2009:29).

Through investigation, the potential for a pathway of professional development for teacher educators in the sector emerged based on the perceived needs of teacher educators, alongside current, on-going educational reform and relevant literature. In order to be consistent with available resources, the area of practice in question will be referred to as the LLS, rather than Post-compulsory Education and Training. The research for this paper followed an earlier project on the transition of 'teacher to teacher educator' in the lifelong learning sector (Exley, 2010), which considered definitions of relevant terms such as teacher educator, prospective, new or experienced teacher educators, professional formation and professional development.

Few teacher educators in LLS have the opportunity for specific professional development as they move from their previous teaching experience into being a teacher of teachers.  This research considers primary data that suggested there is the basis for agreement on the benefits of maintaining and/or creating opportunities to enhance professional development in this area, and that teacher educators believed professional development to be beneficial. The next question is what form would a pathway, or pathways, of development take?

Literature, a focus group, on-line questionnaires and discussions between experienced teacher educators at conferences and professional development events (e.g. *TELLing our story,* 2011; *TEAN* conference, 2012; *DPR10,* 2011; *DPR12,* 2012), have provided data that after analysis offer insight that indicate some common themes relating to professional development for teacher educators. While recognising the differences between Initial Teacher Education (ITE)/Initial Teacher Training (ITT) in compulsory education with ITTE in the LLS, it could be suggested that there is some cohesion in the professional development needs of all teacher educators. It is expected that colleagues across teacher education will see resonance with their own experiences as teacher educator in the suggestions of this research. We are all 'teachers of teachers' and can identify difficulties in the transitions into this role (Boyd, 2011).

**Review of further reading of available literature**
A four-part model for teacher educator professional identity has been proposed (Exley 2010), based on the Institute for Learning's (IfL) dual professional identity of subject specialist and teacher (IfL, 2009), but adding two more aspects particular to teacher educators: becoming a specialist in education theory and practice, and research. The term *teacher,* in this instance, uses the LLUK definition: 'It does not matter what your job title is - teacher, trainer, lecturer, tutor, instructor, etc. – what matters is what you do and who pays for it' (LSIS, 2011:2). An example of literature contributing to the discussion on these four possible aspects of identity would include Thompson and Robinson's (2008) outline and challenge to the

'step change' (DfES, 2004:4) promised for the quality of ITTE for the LLS alongside the establishment of 'career-long professional development' (ibid. 161). This also raises some interesting questions about the impact on teacher education, especially as the long term aspiration for parity of esteem with schools, was seen to have taken a huge stride forward. This move towards legislated parity began with Toni Fazaeli, Chief Executive of the IfL, announcing that:

> The Wolf Report […] shows that IfL has made progress for the further education teaching profession. IfL's persistent work to influence policy at the highest levels has resulted in a robust recommendation by Professor Alison Wolf that QTLS status must be recognised for teaching in schools as well as in further education
> 
> (Fazaeli, 2011: online).

Recommendations in the Wolf Report (DfE, 2011b), relating to recognition of teachers with Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) as being qualified to teach in schools, was accepted for immediate implementation by the Secretary of State for Education and is now education legislation, through an amendment to the Education Act, 2002 (*The Education (School Teachers) (Qualifications and Appraisal) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations, 2012*). This could certainly be perceived as part of the 'step change' instigated by government in 2004, but there is no indication of the role that teacher educators will play in achieving this, or the impact that dealing with such change may have on teacher educators themselves. In fact the recent interim report on 'Professionalism in FE' (BIS 2012) challenged the opportunity for future teachers in FE to achieve parity with school teachers through the recommendation to remove mandatory teaching qualifications. It seems there could be a return to the previous view, where:

> Teaching skills were seen as something to be 'picked up' through experience, and professional knowledge, when valued at all, was equated with subject expertise
> 
> (Thompson and Robinson, 2008:162).

And the assumption still appears to be that if teacher educators know their subject they can therefore, by definition, *teach how to* teach it to others (Robson, 2006 cited in Thompson and Robinson, 2008).

This notion of teacher educators being able to switch from teacher to teacher educator without additional preparation suggests a lack of recognition that the 'step change', referred to earlier, may be making additional demands of teacher educators. Government changes to ITTE in the compulsory sector (DfE, 2011a) appear to support the assumption of

expert subject knowledge supporting outstanding teaching and teacher training, where employer-led teacher *training* (not education) by *teachers* (not teacher educators) who learn their 'craft' on the job seems to be the preferred government pathway for ITTE. Robinson and Thompson note a range of possible pathways into teaching in LLS that are now available (ibid.) which also place demands of subject knowledge and expertise on teacher educators as educationalists. This has been identified as one of the four areas needing to be recognised as particular to the role of teacher educator (Exley, 2010).

When clarifying and defining the role of the teacher educator in this sector, and moving towards a shared understanding of professional identity, the impact that the arrival of Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted, 2003) had on practitioners should not be underestimated. Previously successful and well-established sector ITTE programmes came under the scrutiny of inspection:

> …from a paradigm of school teacher training that is overwhelmingly pre-service, all-graduate, and highly evolved in terms of links between training and placement providers, [and therefore] it is not surprising that Ofsted found what were, in its view, serious deficits
>
> (Thompson and Robinson, 2008:164).

As a result of these inspections, and of the subsequent criticisms, Thompson and Robinson note that the debate that followed was on the 'problems themselves rather than on the political, economic and special context underlying them' (ibid.).  This experience has been a difficult challenge for teacher educators and their sense of professional identity. Changes came about, but without the opportunity for teacher educators to engage in further professional development as practitioners in this specialised field. It is suggested that one of the reasons that this has happened is because teacher educators have not been clearly defined as a particular group, and lack recognition as specialist practitioners with a particular set of roles and responsibilities (Exley, 2010; Swennen and van der Klink, 2009).

Whether as prospective, new or experienced practitioners, clarity on what defines a teacher educator's specialist practice is needed to support professional development when dealing with change in the sector. Lucas, (2007) identified that for recognition of teacher education as a specific practice it might be helpful to include, for example, the identification of a pedagogy for LLS with less emphasis on subject specialist practices, and more on development of teaching skills 'that goes beyond that of "subject" knowledge' (Lucas, 2007:96). In this area, the professional role of the

teacher educator in LLS might differ from that of their compulsory education colleagues, which has at its core subject knowledge development. This said, all teacher education has the common denominator of developing outstanding teaching practice in teachers and trainee teachers through the understanding and application of how to engage learners with learning. This shared approach to pedagogy can be seen in areas which are of interest to both the LLS and compulsory education, learner behaviour being one example (Paton, 2010; Williams, 2010).

A shared pedagogy for teacher educators suggests confirmation that being a researcher is key to that role, essential in establishing the skills of the teacher to investigate and offer solutions to current practice issues. If it is recognised that all teachers in LLS have a research responsibility (IfL, 2010), then the case for knowledge and skills in research being an explicit part of the role of the teacher educator becomes clear. However, if teacher educators, in either sector, are not definable as a group or recognised as having a particular professional identity, and if they do not research into this as a professional body of practitioners, then this could leave the process in the hands of others. As professional practitioners, the need for engagement with direct and autonomous research, including research into their own practices, CPD and identities, is crucial. Without it teacher educators could be challenged to define themselves as 'professional' (Avis *et al.,* 2010; HEA, 2006), with research perhaps being undertaken only by external or governing bodies, or researchers from other sectors.

There has been a growth in research into teacher education in England, for both sectors (Boyd *et al.,* 2011), and so both should be considered in this debate. For example, Lunenberg and Willemse, working with schools in the Netherlands, suggest that teacher education research is an area that is still in need of further investigation, indicating that 'this group [teacher educators] lacks an opportunity for professional development and for improving their practices' (Lunenberg and Willemse, 2006:83) and conclude that that:

> Changes in teaching education and the emerging idea that teacher educators should have special competencies have promoted self-study research. Starting in the early 1990s, teacher educators have grown increasingly aware of self-study as an effective means of connecting the academic task of conducting research to their own professional development. However, as Cochran-Smith (2003) pointed out, many teacher educators have neither the time nor the knowledge to conduct research by themselves on their own practices
> (Lunenberg and Willemse, 2006:93).

Lunenberg and Willemse found that their research group often lacked the abilities needed to complete research into their own practice, but were nevertheless clear that professional development should be supported by research. They suggested five particular characteristics of research that could support the professional development of teacher educators. These can be summarised as: 'focus on the unique practices of teacher educators and on the value of their personal experiences' and 'respect for the […] teacher educators involved', of making efforts 'to enhance collective learning through collaboration and joint reflection', 'to enhance institutional learning by studying problems widely recognized in a teacher education institute and/or connected with the institute's standard tasks' and finally, 'the application of theory to focus the study and to gain insight into the views and the behaviour of teacher educators' (Lunenberg and Willemse, 2006:93).

Taking this into consideration, the case becomes even more convincing for teacher educator professional development to particularly include research as a fourth part of their professional identity. Teacher educators in LLS should at least be able to support teachers in the formation and development of their role, including an element of research (IfL, 2010), and at best be leaders in research into their own practices, CPD and identities. Therefore, specific professional development for teacher educators in the sector may be needed to support the knowledge, understanding and application of both Education and Research as fields of practice.

## Methods

Investigation methods consisted of a staff development day workshop for teacher educators in the LLS, focus group of four experienced teacher educators, an additional four e-mail questionnaire responses from a mailing of 62 and a literature search. To achieve validity within the research questions for the focus group and questionnaire, initial data was collected through informal discussions at the staff development day workshop. Analysis of this data enabled four semi-structured questions to be established. The questions were considered and piloted with focus groups, resulting in revisions to achieve greater validity for both the semi-structured interviews an e-mail questionnaire:

1. What route did you take to becoming a teacher educator?
2. What strengths and weaknesses are there in having a common route or routes [to becoming a teacher educator]?
3. What would have helped/would still help in terms of professional development [as a teacher educator]?
4. If a route was designed [for becoming a teacher educator], what form might it take?

The data collected from the total of eight responses to the questions was put through a process of theme analysis. The population sample was originally intended to be stratified representing prospective, new and experienced teacher educators, but all final participants who responded to the invitation to take part in the focus group and responded to the questionnaire were from the 'experienced' category. The participation and response rates were as expected for this method and, coupled with the qualitative focus of the research, cannot be described as 'context free' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007), indicating that generalisations from the findings should be tentative at this stage. Using these methods, the research was definable as qualitative and interpretative (ibid.).

The participants stated a range of individual teacher education experience from 3 to over 20 years, and all were teacher educators engaged in University PGCE/Cert Ed programmes (incorporating the Diploma to Teach in the LLS (DTLLS)[i]); some also taught on Preparing to Teach in the LLS (PTLLS[ii]), Certificate to Teach in the LLS (CTLLS[iii]) and DTLLS courses with other awarding bodies, and one was engaged largely in programme management. Some participants had research experience, some were published authors, and the majority had Masters Degrees and/or Doctorates. All had teaching qualifications.

In conjunction with these collection methods, it is also proposed that the five characteristics for teacher educators suggested by Lunenberg and Willemse (2006): are appropriate to form the scaffolding for further research into this area. These are:

- A focus on the unique practices of teacher educators and on the value of their personal experiences […]
- Respect for the (vulnerability of the) teacher educators involved […]
- Efforts to enhance collective learning through collaboration and joint reflection on the design of the study and, in a wider context, by writing for the community of teacher educators
- Efforts to enhance institutional learning by studying problems widely recognized in a teacher education institute and/or connected with the institute's standard tasks
- When possible, the application of theory to focus the study and to gain insight into the views and the behaviour of teacher educators

(Lunenberg and Willemse, 2006: 93).

If teacher educators need to maintain or regain agency, identifying and defining themselves as professional practitioners then applying this model would support and structure that process effectively.

Analysis of data collected was structured by using the four step approach outlined by Muller (Crabtree and Miller, 1999:228-229), including '*entering the text'* and going through the process of '*sense-making*', and each of the

four questions asked in the focus group and questionnaire were considered in turn to discover 'themes and patterns' (ibid.). As three methods of data collection had been used, and multiple voices contributing to that data, Muller's identified third step of '*verification and interpretation'* was achieved through careful balancing of the views offered to gain consistency (ibid.) using written field notes taken during the focus group as well as re-hearing the audio evidence. Having done this, the findings offer an interpretation of the data collected that is a '*text generated for a broader audience'* (ibid.). Ultimately, this paper reaches a cumulative although interim point in Miller and Crabtree's process: the 'Dance of Interpretation' (Crabtree and Miller, 1999:127).

**Findings and discussion**
From analysis of the empirical research that underpins this investigation, particular themes emerged. In addition, further reading of the available literature supported the ideas on benefits of maintaining, and/or creating, specific opportunities to enhance professional development for teacher educators. Analyses of the data gathered established four main areas of interest: pathways to becoming a teacher educator; the strengths and weaknesses of a common pathway or pathways into teacher education; professional development for teacher educators, including understandings of the term 'professional formation'; and the possible design of a pathway for teacher educators to include creative approaches.

When considering possible approaches or innovations in support of a pathway, several specific ideas were offered by participants. Especially for prospective and new teacher educators, it was thought that critically engaging with observations of teaching in all of the areas of practice that a prospective or existent employer might offer would be very beneficial. In the focus group it was felt a privilege for teacher educators to be observing a wide range of practice areas and that this should be encouraged and supported.  The importance of the role of mentors was recognised by most participants, and some also noted that mentoring systems should be put in place – with 'good' mentors. Similarly, suggestions were made in both the questionnaires and the focus group regarding observations. One suggestion was that teaching observations of trainee teachers could be done as paired observations with prospective teacher educators initially, perhaps with mentors, and that opportunities for team teaching on ITTE courses should be made available. To further support the observation process, it was suggested, during the focus group, that resources such as videos of taught sessions in LLS contexts could be used, especially to provide some insight into a wider diversity of learner groups and their teaching needs, but this pool of resources would need to be of high quality and readily accessible. For new teacher educators who come into a university and college partnership, one or two days working with existent practitioners was

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suggested in both the focus group and questionnaire responses, in the manner of inductions that are held for new members of college staff or being able to 'ghost' other teacher educators across a range of settings. This could be extended to the sharing of practice and meeting on a regular basis with existent teacher education practitioners in other centres, aimed at developing collegiality. It was suggested that as staff development days these events could include diverse and challenging topics, although this opportunity is not available with some awarding bodies, which was felt by some participants to be to the detriment of professional development. Attending such meetings can also prove problematic because of costs, in time as well as finance, although the development of online and electronic resources could ameliorate this.

To contribute to staff development it was felt by both the focus group and questionnaire respondents that there should be wider access to new books and reading resources for teacher educators. As with the prospective teacher educators, the opportunity to observe was felt to be very important, and it was suggested that opportunities to 'ghost' or shadow other teacher educators and External Examiners for more than the common one-hour observation would be good practice. Alongside the general staff development offered by employers, the dissemination of knowledge on education issues was cited, including the need for regular updates of education news, time for research, time for reading of current publications, and writing workshops.

There were also more general comments about the need for engagement with technology and making effective use of blended learning. It was felt by some to be particularly important that effective teacher education required familiarity 'with a whole range of strategies for teaching, learning and assessment to pass on to their students' and that, particularly for teacher educators in this sector, professional development should be infused with notions of democracy and negotiation. These observations and suggestions by teacher educators offer relevant and contextualised ideas useful in devising a pathway into teacher education.

Following this research, a minor revision to Swennen and van der Klink's (2009) definition of teacher educators is suggested for the LLS. It would read:

Teacher educators are not only the 'teachers of teachers who are engaged in the induction and professional learning of future teachers through pre-service courses and […] in-service courses' (Swennen and van der Klink, 2009:29), but also those involved in mentoring, instructing and supporting the professional development of practicing teachers outside of a formal course or programme of study.

**Citation:**

Key findings indicate that teacher educators need to receive effective professional development that is relevant, appropriate, inclusive, flexible, well-supported and made up of managed (accredited) pathway or pathways. It is clearly indicated that a more transparent, recognisable, and recognised pathway is desirable for teacher educators. If there were to be a single, common pathway for prospective, new or existing teacher educators this would only be tenable if it were truly flexible and adaptable, meeting the expectations, aspirations and demands of diverse practices, organisations and learners.

There is a growing body of contributing knowledge applicable to the professional formation and development of teachers into teacher educators, but at present this is largely unrecognised and seen, at times, as haphazard. From the research, current pathways to becoming a teacher educator could be classified as having been found by the participant through one or all of five approaches: through recommendation; direct action (by self); direct action (by others); informal, unrecognised progression; formal, recognised progression. Any proposed restructuring of this existent but informal framework would need to maintain the flexibility and variety already offered, yet be more transparent, thereby being more inclusive, and overtly cognisant of professional development and achievement.

The analyses of the findings suggest, as did the literature, that not all teacher educators have had the opportunity for professional development as they move from their previous teaching experience into being 'a teacher of teachers'. There was also a concern that the existing teacher education and training in the LLS leans towards a 'skills' approach, championing teaching skills over professional knowledge, which was felt to be only partly reflective of the Sector. The development of a high quality teacher educator professional development pathway requires consideration of significant areas: recognition and celebration of the breadth and diversity of professional practice experience (as a teacher); understanding of teacher educator programmes currently being delivered; the relative benefits of an incremental approach when moving from teacher to teacher educator.

**Preparing a Teacher Educator Professional Development Pathway**
These areas are particularly important given the recently published Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) interim report on 'Professionalisation in Further Education' (2012) that advocated the removal of mandatory teaching qualifications for FE Lecturers. Whether or not such changes occur, teacher education needs to remain flexible enough to accommodate amendments to legislation whilst still supporting trainees, new and existent teachers. Teacher educators in practice in the LLS will remain essential in terms of ensuring quality professional development for a

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range of staff, including those who have no formal teaching qualification. To support the range of needs that teacher educators will have in a changing environment, the professional development of teacher educators must be addressed.

To help provide consistency in such a climate, milestones could be drawn up. These would be used to help guide the path of those teachers wishing to embark on the journey to become a teacher educator. For example, length of time in the teaching profession, variety of posts held, involvement in curriculum development, associations with a range of organisations and extent of experience in teacher education could be acknowledged.  Formal, management-supported opportunities to participate in teacher education (whether through accredited provision or through formal mentoring systems) would also be a key factor in the establishment of an appropriate professional development pathway for teacher educators.

The research also suggests that consideration of the characteristics and qualities of those entering teacher education would be needed, as the transition affects a change in their professional identity. This would be true for both teacher educators in compulsory ITE and the LLS. Examples of specific characteristics and qualities identified through the research include having good communication skills and some knowledge of Education as a specialist subject. Similarly, it was felt that some management experience, skills and knowledge (e.g. having been an Advanced Teacher Practitioner, or a course manager) would be important, as would good interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and a diversity of teaching experience across levels, subjects, or contexts. Interestingly, a 'love' of teaching and a respect for students was highlighted.

**Recommendations**

From the research, key underpinning factors were discerned for any pathway. Firstly, it should be ensured that any teacher educator Professional Development Pathway (TEd PDP) be open, flexible, but formal. Formal CPD would offer validity to the process of becoming a teacher educator and be effective with regard to maintaining inclusivity, with different sector agencies recognising TEd PDP as part of CPD or Professional Formation. Secondly, a TEd PDP should incorporate accredited qualifications at different levels from a threshold pathway at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 4 to a postgraduate pathway at Level 7 (Masters Degree level). Finally, a portfolio based approach was preferred, that could be monitored remotely (online) if no proximal or regular mentor was available, enabling a TEd PDP flexible enough to meet the level and sector differences of career changers.

The findings of this investigation lead to the following six recommendations:

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1. The establishment of a teacher educator Professional Development Pathway (TEd PDP).
2. The TEd PDP should offer accredited and non-accredited programmes.
3. The TEd PDP should offer accredited programmes at different levels.
4. The TEd PDP should include a portfolio based approach to evidencing learning outcomes.
5. Senior Management in educational organisations should formally support the TEd PDP.
6. Education sector agencies should support or endorse TEd PDP accredited programmes.

To support the development of a recognised pathway, the proposal is that any certificated qualifications should be set at more than one level, for example a threshold pathway at NQF Level 4, then incrementally to a postgraduate version at Level 7. There are already examples of accredited programmes and modules of study for developing teaching through academic knowledge and understanding and application to practice that have the potential to be adapted to support this proposed pathway.

It should be noted that a requirement for higher level qualifications (first degree or above) was found to be too rigid and exclusive in nature for all teachers in the LLS, and should not, therefore, be the only pathway to teacher education available to existent teachers. Findings did, however, indicate that teacher educators teaching on ITTE programmes at Level 6 (which is the final stage of a degree) or above should hold a first degree. Any TEd PDP should be based on praxis, incorporating both theory and its application to practice.

**Concluding thoughts**
Interpreting the responses of the LLS teacher educator community sampled for this investigation suggests that the creation of a *recognised* pathway for the professional development for teacher educators appears to be both desirable and achievable: a mentored pathway incorporating a professional portfolio offering a semi-structured accredited programme of study with a minimum of two academic levels is recommended. This recommendation could also be suggested as a route for teacher educator professional development in the ITE for compulsory education, which also lacks any formal framework of support.

It is suggested that caution is needed if an attempt is made to establish a common pathway for all teacher educators across all types and levels of teacher education and training programmes. But, establishing a teacher educator professional development pathway could help to mitigate the risk

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of losing the opportunity to be recognised as a specific and identifiable group of professionals within educational practice. There are already examples of professional certificates and programmes of study such as PgCAP (Post Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice – teaching qualification for teachers in Higher Education who do not hold QTS) and MA in Education that demonstrate the success of a flexible and inclusive model. The recommendation supports the aspiration of those seeking to become teacher educators to achieve academically and engage in research.

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[i] DTLLS refers to the Diploma to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and is the
qualification to teach if a full teaching role is held.
[ii] PTLLS refers to Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and is an
introduction for those starting a teaching career in the LLS.

[iii] CTLLS refers to the Certificate to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and is the qualification for those undertaking some of the teaching role in the LLS e.g. assessing or delivering, but not a full teaching role.

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