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Intransigence, ignorance or innovation: linking education with business in initial teacher education

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Abstract
Recent changes in the educational system of England and Wales have severely curtailed the potential for Education Business Partnership (EBP) activities in Post-Graduate Certificate in Education courses. The implications of these changes are considered briefly in terms of their influence on initial teacher education institutions, teacher educators and students, and on a possible return to the perception that teacher educators and teachers promote an anti-industrial culture.

For some years, our Technology student teachers have been involved in an integrated programme of EBP activity which emphasises the workplace as a site for learning in the development of resource materials for use in the classroom. The success of this programme led to an expansion which now involves 13 partnerships and 49 students participating in cross-curricular groups.

The paper considers the rationale for workplaces as sites for learning, how this programme has been instrumental in generating resource materials, and concludes by considering a number of factors associated with the organisation, management and educational value of EBP activities and their future.

Introduction
In the late 1960s and early 1970s, schools were increasingly accused of inadequately preparing young people for a dramatically changing world of work. In his 1976 Ruskin College speech, Prime Minister Callaghan called for greater relevance in the curriculum to combat the anti-industrial culture, particularly among better students, and the 'need for a more technological bias in science teaching that will lead towards practical applications in industry, rather than towards academic studies'.1 Closer links between education and the world of work were obviously needed.

Many teachers have gone from school to university and straight back to school, and therefore lack experience outside the classroom. Indeed, some openly despise 'an industrial, materialistic society and conceive their task not as servicing industry's needs but as educating pupils who will change them'.2 To foster a more positive attitude to industry and encourage relevance, Her Majesty's Inspectors published a series of case studies in 1981 and a discussion paper, Teacher Training and Preparation for Working Life, the following year. This led the Department of Education and Science in 1989 to highlight 'the significance of links between schools and the wider community: including those between schools, local businesses and the world of work' as a criterion for the accreditation of initial teacher education (ITE) courses.

Education-business partnerships in initial teacher education
Government devolved the responsibility for training to local Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) in England and Wales and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) in Scotland and, in conjunction with local education authorities, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) funded a network of Schools-Industry Liaison Officers in the early 1980s to promote education-industry links locally. In 1989, the DTI funded a national network to identify places in industry for teacher placements and student work experience and the Teacher Placement Service (TPS) was born.
In 1991 the Department of Employment assumed responsibility for the TPS, to be administered by the TECs and LECs. Finally, in September 1992, the TPS became wholly responsible for promoting a better awareness of industry in ITE, its current remit also encompassing qualified teachers. The TPS has worked closely with initiatives such as the Enterprise Awareness in Teacher Education (EATE), also established by the DTI and the first national programme established specifically to promote education-business partnerships (EBPs) in ITE. Indications are that it made little impact nationally, but produced some excellent local examples.

In its 1996 document, *Skills for Choice*, the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) sees the benefits to business of working with schools in terms of:

- a better educated society, providing higher-quality potential recruits and well-informed customers and clients,
- improved community relations, in terms of attitudes both to the particular company involved and to industry generally,
- personal and professional development of employees.

SCAA also defines four main skills young people should develop:

- decision-making (how to choose effectively between options),
- action planning (how to set and reach goals),
- negotiating (how to reach the agreements needed to implement decisions),
- self presentation (how to present oneself to make the most of opportunities).

These skills will help them develop the self-reliance, autonomy and flexibility to assist their careers, which may nowadays involve several changes of direction. To facilitate the development of these skills in their pupils, the teachers need the right knowledge, skills, attitudes and values themselves. Poppleton and Riseborough categorise teachers as:

- restricted professionals (well qualified, but interested only in their subject),
- extended professionals (vocationally committed, with ideals to serve the community),
- coasters (relatively senior, high job satisfaction, low levels of stress, devote energy to the classroom),
- no hopers (mid career, going nowhere, unable to escape).

Extended professionals are essential within a school for effective team building and the establishment of an appropriate task culture, and EBP activities patently contribute to the development of extended professionals.

Intransigence and EBPs

Whatever SCAA might advocate, EBPs as an integral component of ITE were already facing increased indifference from other government agencies. In 1992, the Department for Education published revised ITE criteria without reference to the world of work, and some would even argue that Circular 9/92’s reference to ‘training’ rather than ‘education’ itself indicated a narrow perception of the preparation for teaching. The Teacher Training Agency (TTA) is not supporting EBPs and colleagues from Understanding British Industry suggest that the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) is equally negative in its perception of the role of such links in the professional development of teachers.

Our experience at Leeds supports this. Our secondary Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course includes ‘negotiated experience’, in which students enhance their professional awareness by relating theoretical aspects of the course to a practical activity rooted in schools. Occupying four of the course’s 36 weeks, it provided the ideal platform for launching an EBP programme for small groups of three or four students to develop resource materials for the classroom. Firmly based in schools, it is not confined to them and students are encouraged to work with a variety of outside organisations. They work with pupils in several schools, and although the materials they produce (the products) are important, our view is that the life-long skills they develop along the way (the processes) are more important.

A recent Ofsted inspection in our School of Education made it clear that negotiated experience should concentrate more on
classroom teaching, a view confirmed by a TTA consultation document of February 1997 which requires all trainees to ‘undertake substantial and sustained periods of class teaching in more than one school’. Indeed, ITE will focus more on the Ofsted/TTA assessment criteria detailed in their 1996 Framework for the Assessment of Quality and Standards in Initial Teacher Training. This may be seen as a mandate to teach only what Ofsted can easily assess, which may once more lead to the perception that teacher educators and teachers promote an anti-industrial culture.

Government statistics claimed that 92% of secondary schools in 1993 had links with local businesses but, in our experience, the majority of these were directed to informal links or work experience. Perhaps an awareness of this accelerated Government’s declining commitment to EBPs.

Ignorance
In 1992, the Department for Education and Employment suggested three main aims of EBPs:
• education for business, facilitating the transition of young people from school to adult and working life,
• education about business, seeking to improve young people’s economic and industrial understanding,
• education through business, seeking to raise standards across the whole curriculum by improving the motivation and attainment of young people.

Opposition to EBP activities may exist because politicians, administrators, teachers, students and others tend to see them primarily in terms of education for business, rather than through or about business. This view of EBP activities is convergent rather than divergent, and EBPs are seen in terms of work experience instead of providing workplaces as sites for learning.

A study we conducted in 1994 among our PGCE students revealed that the plethora of initiatives to foster a more positive attitude towards science and technology had largely failed. A strong anti-industrial culture persisted and education was still generally seen in terms of a liberal, humanist tradition rather than the preparation of young people for the world of work.

Innovation: the University of Leeds EBP scheme
At the beginning of the 1990s, we were considering how to improve our ITE provision and one area under review was the one week business placement all students undertook. Students held this in low regard because it was:
• considered unimportant as it occurred towards the end of the course,
• not accredited,
• thought to have little value in the classroom,
• perceived as learning about the workplace rather than using it as a site for learning,
• felt that schools did not take education-business links seriously in the professional development of teachers.

The few who enjoyed it considered a week insufficient to generate resource materials they could use in the classroom.

Although students wished to further develop their knowledge and skills, a return to the pattern of the first term was considered an anti-climax after their extended teaching experience. This necessitated a fresh approach and for the Technology students a pilot project to develop EBP activities was proposed. Begun in 1992, it involved seven Technology students who volunteered to work with a similar number of mentors from Elida Gibbs (now Elida Fabergé), a Unilever company, to produce classroom-focused resource materials for use with 11-14 year-olds. The materials were assessed as part of their coursework. The tutors’ objectives were to:
• provide a range of challenging and stimulating activities,
• ensure it was achievable in terms of time, facilities and experiences,
• raise awareness of the workplace as a site for learning,
• enhance the knowledge, skill, attitudes and values of students, mentors and teachers,
• develop lasting links between the students and mentors, schools and companies,
• provide a foundation for further
collaboration between the university and companies,
• to develop a model for replication with other students,
• erode the traditional barriers which hinder a better understanding between education and industry, and promote relevance in the curriculum.

However, the students had a narrower agenda whose objectives were to:
• increase awareness and understanding between education and industry,
• develop the notion of the workplace as a site for learning,
• become enterprising, and encourage their pupils to become enterprising, by developing the transferable skills which the business world most values,
• foster the development of long-term liaison with companies.

The package of resource materials contained computer software and over 200 pages of hard copy, including teachers’ notes, pupil activities and other support materials, formally presented to an invited audience representing a broad spectrum of interests.

The scheme has since gone from strength to strength, involving more and more students, companies and experienced teachers. In 1995-96, the scheme was extended to non-technologists, and some of the materials were put onto the Web. This year, the number of students rose to 49 (14 from Technology and 35 from other subjects, representing 15% of the total student intake) and the number of companies to 13, including Yorkshire Water, West Yorkshire Playhouse, the Leeds Environment Centre and the Thackray Medical Museum, encouraging as wide an interaction as possible with everyday life.

The development of EBP activities involves five phases:
• executive (tutors develop a proposal and define student group),
• inductive (students meet experienced teachers to plan an introductory visit to stimulate interest and meet company mentors),
• elaborative (students and teachers draft ideas and discuss them with mentors),
• productive (students and teachers generate resource materials in conjunction with mentors, trial and edit them),
• evaluative (tutors de-brief students, other teachers trial materials, and students give a formal presentation to an invited audience representing the education and business communities).

In addition to fulfilling the aims of the partnerships, the activities develop many personal and professional qualities essential to newly-qualified teachers in a rapidly changing educational system, qualities which improve their chances in the job market.

The National Curriculum identifies relevance as a key ingredient in motivating pupils in all subjects. Through participation in EBP activities and the production of classroom materials, the emphasis is on the contextualisation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.

And finally ...

The absence of any reference to EBP activities in the current ITE criteria severely curtails the more creative elements of ITE which characterise enthusiastic, extended professionals. Instead, it reflects an increasingly narrow perspective of ITE and a rigid accountability which characterise restricted professionals. Equally worrying are the conflicting messages emerging from different Government agencies, spreading confusion and uncertainty.

The paradox is that schools are increasingly urged to work within the community, but ITE now excludes any preparation for this task. As EBP activities are forced to the periphery of ITE, they can continue as additional demand in an already-crowded programme. Without being assessed their credibility will be eroded, both to students and tutors.

It is harder to negotiate and manage a large number of small-group EBP links which may change after a year or two than a single, recurring link, as with several highly successful schemes elsewhere. However, we see advantages in providing flexibility, matching
Figure 1. Schedule for EBP activities

Figure 2. Professional development through EBP
individual interests, ensuring greater participation, encouraging working in groups and involving as much of the business community as possible.

These activities have the support of our partnership schools, who see them playing a significant role in the professional development of their established teachers. By working with the students and pupils, they gain, both from the materials generated and from the knowledge of how to generate them. Such partnerships must be maintained and developed so that teachers keep up to date with the changing marketplace and industrialists with the changing face of the classroom.

Many students operate a ‘just enough’ principle to complete their courses, sticking to easy options and conventional pathways where possible. They see negotiated study as a ritualistic exercise of ‘jumping through hoops’. Not our students, however. They have discarded the security and stability of the easy way out and opted instead for the challenge, and risks, associated with an activity that is both creative and original. Our demands are very rigorous but our students respond accordingly to produce the best materials possible. They put in more hours than most of their peers, but they have fun and this enjoyment is contagious - so their pupils have fun too.

This view is shared by our external examiners, who have contrasted the emphasis on practical and professional activity with the overemphasis on theoretical aspects and the writing of essays elsewhere, in our PGCE course and in other institutions.

References
1 Callaghan, J. ‘Are we aiming in the right direction ...’, Times Educational Supplement, 22 October 1976, p 72.
4 ibid, p 1.