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Who should train the teachers?

The future of teacher education in England

Report of a Roundtable

House of Commons

19 March 2013



1. Introduction

'The future attainment of our children will depend on the availability of high quality teacher supply.'

In March 2013, the university think-tank million+ convened a roundtable in the House of Commons to discuss the impact of the Department for Education's School Direct programme on teacher education in England. School Direct is seeking to refocus teacher education on schools but concerns have arisen about the impact and implications of the programme for teacher supply. The roundtable attracted over 30 participants including MPs, members of the House of Lords, Headteachers, representatives from Teach First and university education departments.

Graham Stuart MP, the Chair of the Education Select Committee, had been due to host the roundtable. Unfortunately, an accident prevented him attending in person. We would like to record our thanks to all participants and in particular to Graham Stuart for his interest in this important issue. Copies of this report and the roundtable's recommendations have been sent to Graham and his fellow MPs on the Education Select Committee. These recommendations include a request that the Select Committee conducts a short Inquiry into the impact of School Direct on the future sustainability of teacher supply in England.

We would also like to record our thanks to the Education Departments of Wolverhampton and Birmingham City Universities for their support and to our three lead speakers. Professor Geoff Whitty, Director Emeritus, Institute of Education, presented a background paper to inform the discussion. Tom Johnston, Principal of Earls High School, Halesowen and Chair of the Teacher Education Advisory Group linked to Wolverhampton University, outlined the implications of the DfE's policy for schools. Professor Cliff Allan, Vice-Chancellor of Birmingham City University, highlighted the challenges from a higher education perspective. Kevin Brennan MP, Opposition Schools Minister, and the Rt. Hon Gillian Shepherd, former Conservative Secretary of State for Education and now a member of the House of Lords, provided further contributions.

All participants agreed that the role of schools in teacher education highlighted by the Department for Education (DfE) was welcome. However, there were real anxieties about the implementation of School Direct and the potential for the latter to undermine the acknowledged role of university education departments – a role which was endorsed and valued by the Headteachers and Principals present and by the representative from Teach First.

Roundtable participants also referred to wider concerns and, in particular, the decision by Ministers to remove the requirement for teachers to have a professional qualification. This has set England apart from other countries, including within the UK. For example, trainees who only gain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) rather than a Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) or BEd / BA will not have a portable qualification and will not be employed as teachers in Scotland or in Wales (or in many other countries).

Two days after the roundtable the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove MP, announced that a further £10m would be awarded to schools to promote the School Direct model. Social media is playing a part in this debate and during Michael Gove's speech the DfE tweeted that 'we need to move away from HEIs determining what should be happening in teacher training.'

On the following day (22 March) the Chief Inspector of Ofsted, Michael Wilshaw, issued a press release stating 'that the Government is right to put greater emphasis on new teachers being trained in schools where they can best develop the practical skills they will need as teachers – rather than in higher education institutions, which have traditionally trained the majority of trainees'.

These remarks have caused further unease since they seem to be based on twenty-one Ofsted inspections of providers since September 2012, only seventeen of which were visited; three of these were delivering further education ITT only. Of the thirteen providers of initial teacher training for schools inspected, only four were higher education institutions.

Ofsted also stated that one of the outstanding 'school-led employment-based partnerships, the London East Consortium, was part of the University of Cumbria's initial teacher training provision'. In fact the programme is not school-based but is based on an equal partnership between the University and the Schools – a situation which will continue in 2013.

After representations Ofsted corrected its press statement in this respect but it is puzzling that the Chief Inspector has reached such a sweeping conclusion, bearing in mind the limitations of the evidence base. Ofsted was also silent on the role of universities in validating the qualifications offered by the school providers which were inspected.

There was, of course, no opportunity to debate the merits of these announcements and statements at the roundtable. However, they are symptomatic of a further concern voiced by participants, namely that the School Direct programme is being progressed rapidly without evaluation and on a partial interpretation of the evidence base in which the role of universities in teacher education is being devalued and inaccurately described.

Without any guarantee of initial teacher education numbers, the viability of university-led teacher education provision and the partnerships which currently deliver the majority of teacher education in England will be undermined. In these circumstances the Government would have to rely on school-led provision. This is unlikely to be able to deliver the sustainable, high quality teacher supply across all subject disciplines, for primary and secondary provision, in urban and rural areas, that will be required on a national and regional scale.

Three key outcomes were unanimously agreed by roundtable participants:

- 1. Headteachers agreed to seek a meeting with Ministers.**
- 2. A report of the roundtable should be widely circulated including to parliamentarians.**
- 3. The Education Select Committee should be requested to convene a short Inquiry to in-**

investigate the impact of School Direct on the future sustainability of teacher supply in England.

The future attainment of our children will depend on the availability of high quality teacher supply. We hope that this report will cause parliamentarians to ask some searching questions about the future of teacher education in England, the Select Committee to enquire further and the Department for Education and its Ministers to consider how the concerns outlined at the roundtable can be met.

2. Background

Professor Geoff Whitty CBE, Director Emeritus, Institute of Education

Recruitment to initial teacher education and the nature of teacher training have been identified as crucial aspects of high performing education systems worldwide. For example, a recent McKinsey Report concluded that 'getting the right people to become teachers is critical to high performance'.

At the present time, there are about 438,800 teachers in England's publicly-funded schools. 202,500 of these teach in primary schools, 220,900 in secondary schools and 15,400 in special schools. About 37,500 students complete training each year, and around 26,000 of these newly qualified teachers (NQTs) join the teaching profession.

Ever since the mid-1980s, successive governments have introduced reforms designed to enhance the quality of the initial teacher education these recruits receive.

Teacher training arrangements to date

Since the establishment of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE) in 1985 and its successors, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and now the Teaching Agency (TA), initial teacher training (ITT) in England has been subject to central government regulation to much greater degree than in most comparable education systems.

All courses leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) have had to meet criteria based upon the

Government's Teaching Standards and they are inspected against these standards by Ofsted, acting on behalf of the Secretary of State. Since 1992, all courses led by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) leading to QTS have had to involve 'partnership' with schools and it is these partnerships that are now inspected by Ofsted. Meanwhile, HEI-led courses have been complemented by the development of a series of 'alternative' and 'employment based' training routes.

Thus, in recent years, accredited initial teacher training has been carried out by 74 HEI-led partnerships (HEIs), 55 School-Centred Initial Teacher Training schemes (SCITTs), and 98 Employment-Based schemes (EBITTs). However, in 2010-11, HEI-led partnerships trained 78.8% of the recruits to initial teacher training programmes, compared with 16.6% in EBITTs and 4.6% in SCITTs.

The HEI figure includes three- and four- year undergraduate courses (BEd or BA) and one year postgraduate courses (PGCE or PgCE). These different routes tend to have different characteristics in terms of cost, student profile, accreditation arrangements and employment prospects. The EBITT figure includes trainees on Teach First programmes, which while highly successful in many respects, are also relatively expensive and difficult to take to scale.

According to Ofsted, the current combination of training approaches produced the best trained generation of new teachers yet. High quality had been found in all training routes. 43.8% of HEI-led partnerships were rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in 2009-12, compared with 35.1% of SCITTs and 19.4% of EBITTs. On the other hand, of the 'top 20' providers identified by Smithers *et al* in the Good Teacher Training Guide 2012, 4 were HEI-led partnerships, 11 were SCITTs and 5 were EBITTs. However, differences in scale of the different types of providers make it difficult to draw strong conclusions from these figures.

Coalition reforms

The broad drift of current policy in relation to teacher education was prefigured in the 2010 White Paper *The Importance of Teaching*. While recognising some continuing role for universities, including the creation of a small number of Univer-

sity Training Schools, it was interpreted by many in the HE sector as presaging a further and significant erosion of the wider higher education presence in teacher education nationally. Some subsequent statements by Ministers and officials have suggested that the Government may have rowed back somewhat from its more extreme ambitions in this respect but the overall direction of travel towards school-led teacher training is certainly being maintained.

Teacher training is now being affected not only by specific reforms to accelerate the growth of school-based training, include the creation of School Direct, Salaried School Direct and Teaching School Federations, but also broader policies such as those to encourage the growth of Academies. Like Free Schools, Academies are no longer required to recruit teachers with QTS. Academy Chains provide an alternative source of support for teachers' professional development and school improvement, which may come to include the provision of 'branded' initial teacher training.

Cuts in secondary ITT numbers have already impacted on HEIs that do not have the highest Ofsted grades and virtually all institutions are likely to face cuts in core numbers in the future as a result of the new and more demanding Ofsted inspection framework and the increasing emphasis on school-based training routes. The biggest impact is likely to come from the rapid roll-out of School Direct (already up from 300 places in this 'pilot' year to over 7,000 places) and the possibility that at least half of all ITT numbers will be allocated via that scheme in the near future. Even if overall numbers allocated to HEIs by one means or another are retained, the volatility of funding from year to year and between different subjects and universities could be quite considerable.

The importance of partnership

All this is leading a number of universities to re-view the extent of their on-going commitment to involvement in initial teacher training. However, in its 2012 report entitled *Great Teachers*, the House of Commons Education Committee argued that: '*a diminution of universities' role in teacher training could bring considerable demerits ... [T]he highest-quality initial teacher education...will involve significant school experience but*

include theoretical and research elements as well, as in the best systems internationally and in much provision here' (HoC Education Committee, April 2012).

Yet, while there is now widespread agreement that the best approach is partnership between schools and universities, current developments may lead to significant diminution in the HEI role by default. Even if the schools and federations that adopt school-led routes wish to work with HEIs, as most though not all do, the transaction and opportunity costs for HEIs may prove prohibitive. HEIs will find it impossible to predict staffing needs from year to year and there may well be damaging conflicts over the cost of the support they provide to school-led schemes.

The risks of current policies

Current developments seem to involve moving from unprecedented levels of central control to unprecedented levels of deregulation. As well as the deregulation of teacher qualifications, the Head of the Teaching Agency has recently suggested an end to the national planning of teacher training numbers. Commentators have identified a number of key risks in these policies. These include unfilled training places, training places without appropriate HEI support, national or regional shortages in some secondary subjects and a driving down of quality through competition on price. They also predict that some leading universities will eventually withdraw from initial teacher training completely.

Other risks of deregulation include lack of portability of teaching qualifications. Training that leads to university qualifications, such as the PGCE, as well as QTS, are recognised not only nationally, but also in other parts of the United Kingdom and internationally. Yet it is not always clear to applicants that some school-led training leads only to QTS and not to academic qualifications that are fully portable.

Implications for continuing professional Development (CPD)

The dismantling of the HEI ITT infrastructure in some areas could lead to a loss of capacity for CPD and educational research and reduce opportunities for continuity between initial training and further professional development.

The emphasis by successive governments on reforming initial teacher training has not been matched by the same attention to reforming CPD, despite a pledge by the previous government to re-professionalise teaching. Yet, as recognised by the Select Committee, creating a world class school system cannot be achieved merely by improving the new intake to the system, nor indeed will the current intake continue to perform at the highest levels if they do not have access to appropriate CPD.

Many other countries, including Wales, are actively encouraging or even requiring teachers to work towards advanced qualifications. Yet, in England, on one estimate, central government support for teachers undertaking postgraduate professional development has fallen from £30m to £3m a year. The Government argues that funding is now in school budgets and implies that CPD is best provided at school level or school federation level. While this may be true of some aspects of CPD, there is a danger of great variability in what is available to different teachers and of a reduction in access to university-accredited professional learning. This is particularly disturbing when teachers in Academies and Free Schools may now enter the profession without initial training.

Research-informed practice in teacher education

At a time when evidence-informed practice is being encouraged by all political parties, it is important that a closer relationship develops between educational research and teacher training. This too will require collaboration between schools and universities.

Evidence from around the world indicates that the most effective teachers are those who are able to combine excellent practical skills with the ability to understand and use research in their development of their teaching. In Finland, for example, new teachers take a programme that combines clinical experience with a strong emphasis on using research to inform their practice. Although a small number of University Training Schools in England may contribute to the development of state-of-the-art practice, the Finnish experience suggests that the role of research in the education of all teachers is at least as important.

In the light of this, the British Educational Research Association (BERA) has recently established an Inquiry investigating the role and contribution of research in teacher education and its association with school improvement. Over the course of the next few months BERA will be commissioning a range of papers and accepting submissions on different aspects of this topic. It will examine evidence from across the UK and internationally and produce papers designed to stimulate debate and inform future policy.

'It is important that a closer relationship develops between educational research and teacher training.'

Time to pause

In its response to the Select Committee report, the Government stated that it 'agrees that strong relationships between schools and universities are key to effective teacher training' but it is not at all clear that its current policies will ensure this. It is to be hoped that the Government will pause and take heed of the concerns identified here before risking the creation of a system (or lack of a system) that damages both teacher supply and the quality of teachers entering and continuing in the profession.

3. Summary of roundtable discussion

The School Direct website offers the following advice to schools but is silent on the role of universities:

Don't wait for a good teacher to come along – train your own.

With School Direct you can hand pick the graduates you want and train them the way you want, and they'll be part of your team from day one. School Direct offers careers, not just teacher training. This means you can attract, and retain, the best recruits.

School Direct is a way of growing your own teachers and future leaders; it can make a key contribution to your school improvement strategy and help the continuing professional development of your staff. So what are you waiting for?

Benefits of School Direct for your school:

- *You're more likely to recruit the right person for you.*
- *Customise the training to suit the needs of your school and trainee.*
- *Trainees get on board very quickly.*
- *Snap up the best new talent.*
- *Develop tailored training programmes with your chosen provider.*
- *Build stronger partnerships with other local schools, across teaching phases, and teacher training providers.*

Roundtable participants agreed that there was no fundamental opposition, in political or public policy terms, to the objectives which the DfE had identified for teacher education. However, a number of key themes and concerns emerged from the round table presentations and discussion.

These centred on:

- a. the impact of the changes on schools**
- b. the impact of the changes on university Initial teacher training (ITT) providers**
- c. quality and distribution**
- d. the pace of change**

'The Government are saying the market will decide. It is a bit like saying it is up to the car manufacturers to decide whether or not to install seatbelts.'

a) Impact of changes on schools

The reaction to School Direct has been mixed amongst school-based education staff and Headteachers, with some welcoming the opportunity to develop training and associated continuous professional development in their schools; others have expressed concerns about the new training role particularly if university providers are weakened by funding instability arising from changes in student teacher numbers from one year to another.

Many Headteachers remain concerned about the equality issues that will arise if concentration of teacher education provision impacts upon the quality and distribution of teaching staff across the country.

The Head of a National Teaching School favoured the policy direction which worked well with the seven higher education providers with which the School is engaged but expressed concerns that some schools would be left in a weaker position.

Further, it was strongly argued that a sound research base had a positive influence on practice in the classroom. The quality of applicants was very varied and there were concerns about the potential weakening of involvement from specialists in higher education which would in turn weaken provision in schools.

A worrying picture would emerge if the 'research literacy' underpinning ITT was eroded. High performing school systems elsewhere (e.g. Finland) had successfully managed to balance theory with practice in their training systems.

The discussion consistently reiterated the need to get the mix right. There would be considerable additional management burden on the Head Teacher of a Training School and additional work, if the pace of change was too fast and a risk that this might overload a school.

'When you are buffeted by rapid change and uncertainty in schools you retrench core provision, teaching children, not training teachers.'

It was acknowledged that the country needed a sustainable supply of teachers but quality and standards consistency were already an issue. It was recognised that the nature of partnership across the country varied.

'Not all HEI/School relationships are rosy. Some HEIs treat schools as an occasional client rather than as a partner.'

An example of the system working well was outlined with rigorous selection of trainees with very positive support and involvement of two universities. It was agreed that the opportunity to work with universities should be available to all schools and this would be unlikely if the School Direct model undermined the role of universities in ITT. The discussion highlighted concerns about the capacity of schools to accommodate new responsibilities together with the shifting Ofsted frame-

work, administrative demands on teacher training schools and the availability of wider expert support. There was some evidence that some schools approached university partners with little or no experience of the subject requiring support.

b) Impact of changes on university providers of initial teacher training (ITT)

Universities faced 'constant disruptive intervention' across their provision in respect of student fees, NHS reforms and ITT. As a result many university providers were thinking seriously about the viability of continuing to engage in ITT.

There was a concern that, with resources shifting to schools, the role of universities might be reduced to a validating body. Universities wanted to embrace the changes but this needed to be based on partnership with the quality of teacher supply being the shared aim.

The cumulative effect of a significant amount of change, at pace, would result in unintended consequences and the failure to guarantee an allocation of ITT numbers would create instability and undermine sustainability.

The roundtable agreed that the quality of teachers is what matters most and this would be best served by more carefully getting the mix right between the partners in the ITT relationship.

It was agreed that this was not an 'us or them' (schools v universities) situation and that it was in everyone's interest to build a sustainable partnership model.

'We should aim to have outstanding teacher trainers developing outstanding teacher training in schools.'

There was an urgent need for there to be reflection bearing in mind that School Direct had been running for nine months and that no review had been undertaken or published. It was proposed that DfE should adopt a three 'Es' strategy of evidence, evaluation and evolution.

'Can we have an evaluation now?'

c) Quality and distribution

Many contributors aired concern about the quality and the distribution of training and subsequently the deployment of teachers. There was a view that the selection of Training Schools for School Direct programmes (Salaried and Training) lack the necessary rigour to ensure trainees will receive good or better training.

'The Teaching Agency seem to spend a lot of time persuading Heads that School Direct is a good idea. Universities' capacity to support schools may shrink.'

There were real practical challenges in rural (as well as in some urban) areas of getting around to all school partners.

Some Academies were supportive of School Direct. Others schools were not in the same position and different local contexts and environments needed to be taken into account. As a result some schools and some regions were likely to benefit more than others from School Direct resulting in a patchy supply of new teachers across the country.

'Sustainable quality provision is potentially under threat.'

Throughout the discussion there was confusion as to what was meant by a 'region'. Was it a local community, a LEA area, a city or county? It was agreed that such confusion was likely to impact adversely on the ability to plan for a sustainable supply across the country.

It was emphasised that it was important to identify the characteristics of high performance in ITT and roll these characteristics out through all training provision. The potential to do this could be undermined by the zeal and pace of change.

4. Conclusion and next steps

Throughout the roundtable session all contributors emphasised that there was no policy or political objection to the direction of travel of the changes to ITT provision across the country. Indeed, all contributors want the changes to work, for the benefit of schools, universities, trainees and ultimately

future generations of young people who will be taught by the next generation of teachers.

In conclusion the issues crystallised into an overriding concern about the pace of change from which the other issues highlighted within this report flowed.

The roundtable reiterated its desire to see the three Es applied (evidence, evaluation, evolution).

Next steps

The following actions were agreed:

- 1. Head Teachers to seek a meeting to discuss concerns with Ministers.**
- 2. The report of the roundtable to be widely circulated including to parliamentarians.**
- 3. The Education Select Committee to be requested to convene a Short Inquiry to investigate the impact of School Direct on the future sustainability of teacher supply in England.**
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million+ would like to thank all those who attended and participated in the round-table.

List of participants

Professor Geoff Whitty CBE	Director Emeritus	Institute of Education (S)
Tom Johnston	Principal	Earls High School (S)
Professor Cliff Allan	Vice-Chancellor	Birmingham City University (S)
Kevin Brennan MP	Shadow Schools Minister	MP for Cardiff West (S)
Rt Hon Baroness Shepherd of Northwold	Member	House of Lords (S)
Pam Tatlow	Chief Executive	million+ (S)
Kate Bargh	Head	Rushall Primary School
Dr Sally Bentley	Dean of Faculty of Education and Sport	University of Bedfordshire
Suzanne Burley	Academic Leader for Higher Education	London Metropolitan University
Paul Drake	Head of Public Affairs	million+
Lynn Fulford	Associate Dean Student Experience and Quality Assurance	Birmingham City University
Professor John Gabriel	Dean	London Metropolitan University
Professor Gary Holmes	Dean & Pro-Vice-Chancellor	University of Sunderland
Dr Michelle Lowe	Head of School	Staffordshire University
Dai Meredith	Head	Perryfields School
Dr John Moss	Dean of Education	Canterbury Christ Church University
James Noble-Rogers	Executive Director	UCET
Dr Simon Pratt-Adams	Head of Department of Teacher Education	Anglia Ruskin University
Ann Slater	Dean, Cass School of Education and Communities	University of East London
Patrick Smith	Associate Dean, School for Education Futures	University of Wolverhampton
Sir Christopher Stone	Head	Arthur Terry School
Amanda Timberg	Executive Director - Programme	TeachFirst
Dr Samantha Twiselton	Executive Dean of Faculty of Education	University of Cumbria

Host:

Graham Stuart MP, Chair of the Education Select Committee

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