

The diversification of routes into teaching in England and Wales 2000-2002

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A growing shortage

Increasing and severe teacher shortages in many areas of England and Wales have begun to re-order our government's priorities in education. After a major shortage in the early 1980s the problems of recruitment and retention began to return after 1995 and headlines in the mainstream and educational press often highlight classes being sent home, recruitment from abroad and shortening the school week. The knock-on effect on teacher training institutions and on schools involved in training new teachers is considerable.

It is difficult to quote precise figures in connection with teacher numbers and vacancies, presumably because of the highly political nature of any shortfall. There are around 368,000 qualified teachers in the UK. Chris Bunting in February 2002 quotes an estimated 4,980 teacher shortages (January 01) with 25,000 posts unfilled or covered by supply staff. Estelle Morris, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, warned in November 02 that that figure was likely to rise to 40,000 by 2006, roughly 10 per cent of all teaching posts.

True figures are difficult to assess. Smithers and Robinson (2000: p i-v). For example, if a school has a vacancy, advertises it and cannot fill it, a head teacher is faced with three options:

- the school can continue to show the vacancy or
- the school can suppress the vacancy by reducing the school timetable or
- the school can avoid it by recruiting outside the required subject specialism and use non-specialists to teach the shortage subject.

The vacancy only shows on most government statistics if it is the first of those three. Smithers and Robinson (2000: p9-20) provide a number of quotes from headteachers which give examples of how they are adopting a number of coping strategies such as changing contracts, recruiting overseas, modifying the curriculum and increasing class sizes to alleviate the problem.

One cause of the shortage is the number of teachers leaving the profession. Hutchings, Menter, Ross and Thomson (2002: chapter 8 p204) suggest that in the next 15 years 60 per cent of the current teachers in England and Wales, being over 40 will leave the profession. It is estimated that 58 per cent of secondary trainees never make it beyond three years in the job. The situation

is particularly acute in London and the south–east where house prices and other living costs are very high and career changes are commonplace because of a large employment market. Hutchings, Menter, Ross and Thomson (2002: chapter 8 p204) quote a school population rise in London boroughs of 15 per cent in the next ten years, exacerbating the problem further.

The response

The government has responded to this growing crisis, although not everyone would accept that this *is* a crisis, by doing more to recruit and retain teachers. It has done this by offering higher salaries (starting salary is currently €27923 (plus € 4,927 London allowance), a better professional development career programme and action to promote workforce reform and tackle workload issues. A summary of the written evidence to the School Teachers' Review Body (September 2002) on teacher workload can be found on www.teachernet.gov.uk. Millions of pounds are now being made available through the schools' Standards Fund for career development to retain teachers. Some of the most recent research into recruitment and retention issues was funded by the Teacher Training Agency and is reported in Menter, Hutchings and Ross (2002)

The Teacher Training Agency (TTA) has spent millions of pounds on advertising campaigns trying to reach a variety of people. They have advertised in tube stations and the sides of busses and on cinema tickets, sandwich bags, and on beer mats in our British pubs! Slogans used in such campaigns such as 'no-one forgets a good teacher' and 'Those who can, teach' have become familiar phrases. However Coulthard and Kyriacou (2002: Chapter 2 p. 51) suggested that the campaign is simply preaching to the converted.

Financial incentives for training

To attract more teachers into the traditional, one-year PGCE route a number of financial incentives are now offered. From September 2000:

- €9,520 training bursaries for all postgraduate PGCE courses but controversially not for undergraduate courses.
- After completion of the one-year induction, €6,348 Golden Hellos for shortage subjects [maths, geography, science, modern languages, English and technology]

From September 2002, new teachers in shortage subjects, will be able to apply to have their student loans paid off for them over a 5, 7 or 10 year period. For those students who have studied in London for four years, this could mean a saving of over €20,630.

29,000 people began to train as teachers in 2001/2 and recruitment for 2002/3 is even more healthy. However, most train through traditional courses so any new routes into teaching can only have a limited impact on overall numbers. Nevertheless this changing pattern is significant for it signals important changes which may in time become more mainstream.

QTS or PGCE?

Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) is the statutory qualification for teaching awarded on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education. All trainees on any route into teaching have to demonstrate how they meet these required standards. Ofsted inspections evaluate and report on the quality of training outcomes and the results of these inspections are on the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) web site (www.canteach.gov.uk) A B.Ed. or PGCE (with QTS) is awarded by a university and is recognised by many teachers as an additional depth of teacher training requiring academic reflection and writing. It is less of an apprenticeship model and more one of a reflective practitioner. For young teachers aspiring to middle and senior management such a qualification is arguably advisable. It has currency for other professional and academic courses, such as at diploma and masters' level, as well as providing a more thorough grounding for a teaching career. However for those people who may be career changers or coming into teaching from overseas or later in life and want to remain as classroom teachers or department managers, a QTS only route can be appropriate.

The Institute of Education

London has 27 London providers training approximately 20% new entrants to the profession in England and Wales. At the Institute of Education we have around 720 Secondary, 250 Primary and 100 post compulsory trainees. Over the last two years staff at the Institute-school partnership have piloted a number of the new routes into teaching promoted by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA). The following text explains each of the new routes, outlines who they are aimed at and then assesses some of the advantages and issues we at the Institute of Education found with each. As yet there is insufficient longitudinal evidence to judge the success or otherwise of many of these routes for training new teachers.

Flexible routes

One of the main government responses has been to look for more flexible ways to train to be a teacher and to open up new routes into teaching for a more diverse group of people. This includes classroom assistants, men and women with children at home and older people who wish to change careers but can't afford to lose a year's salary to train. Flexible courses have been designed for people unable to train over a one-year period or who want greater flexibility in where and how they train. Training is through the usual training institutions but as yet only 30 have decided to offer training in this way.

The programme started in 2000 with 263 flexible training places and this has grown to over 2000 in 2002/3. Some trainees undertake modules in the evening or weekends or via distance-learning packages. Some trainees undertake an intensive full-time programme over a short time while those with significant teaching experience may be able to follow an assessment-only route to QTS. The Open University, the main provider of distant learning courses in England and Wales has become a new secondary training provider and from 2002 offers 500 places for flexible training in the shortage subjects.

Creating flexible courses with a more distant learning element is complex. Trainees require individualised training programmes to fit in with their busy and complex lives. Preparing these materials and activities is time consuming and expensive. Communicating individually by phone and by e-mail can also be more time consuming than initially perceived, especially for tutors.

Case study: Janeen

Janine's training provides an extreme example of some issues with flexible provision. She is a mother of three from the Scilly Isles, just off the Cornish coast. She wanted to train to be a geography teacher and hoped the flexible route would allow her to train without leaving her family for a traditional PGCE course. The flexible route allowed her to study at home and to attend a limited number of sessions at the Institute of Education in London. Janine's journey to London took over 24 hours and included boat, helicopter and train but she was a dedicated mature learner with a clear agenda and she was prepared to set up child care arrangements and face the journey. It took much tutor time to establish relations with a good school department on the mainland where Janine could do her placement and once it was set up Janine found the lack of alternative childcare possibilities on her island prevented her from leaving to do a school placement at a useful time of the year. Janine will complete. She is dedicated and absolutely suited to teaching. But the tutor time and any travelling costs involved will far outweigh the training fee.

From the trainees' point of view there is much to be said for this route, although it does require a mature, self disciplined, approach. Most trainees continue to do paid work while studying, taking periods away from that work to complete school-based placements.

At the Institute we offer flexible provision in three different PGCE courses, Art & Design, Music and Geography, but have decided the time and funding are not right for us to expand at present. We have found working on individualised programmes at a distance more expensive and until a greater expansion into this method of training is adopted by the mainstream course it remains an uneconomic option.

Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP)

The GTP allows trainees to gain Qualified Teacher Status while working and training within a school. It aims to attract mature adults, over 24, into teaching. Trainees are paid as either unqualified or qualified teachers, and the minimum salary whilst training is currently €19,815, that is around €6,800 more than a traditional route. Nationally there are more applicants than places for this route and many applicants, around 600 in 2001, are disappointed. Trainees also attract €6,300 to pay for their training. However another 500 schools whose applicants had been turned down for this programme in 2001 were given the €6,300 training grant if they wished to employ the unqualified teacher themselves and train and assess with the help of a local Higher Education Institute. It seems an expensive route and because of this may not expand much beyond the 2000 places currently offered. However calculations are being made by the TTA about cost effectiveness when withdrawal rates and take up of teaching positions are taken into account.

Although schools may find GTP an attractive route because it gives them a trainee supernumerary teacher for a class which would otherwise not have

one, there are some key issues. The training quality is highly dependent on the school and often the particular department within a school. Schools have often thought they could train a new teacher easily but have found the responsibility and paperwork more complex than they envisaged. Any school that takes on an unqualified person with a view to training them through this route should be clear about what is expected of them. Our own experience suggests that quality training occurs where there has been a tradition of teacher training in the school with experienced mentors and trainers. Secondary schools in particular often appoint and train their own GTP teacher sharing school-based sessions with other trainee teachers working on traditional PGCE routes. They commonly recruit in severe shortage subjects such as IT or maths and it may be the only way schools can provide a class with a teacher who will ultimately be qualified, "home grown", and likely to remain in the local area. Success has proved more likely where schools pay for clear support from Higher Education Institutions and Local Education Authorities. Where the trainee is not judged at interview to be of the highest quality then a school needs to beware of taking on that trainee despite the obvious school's need for a qualified teacher in the subject. An additional issue is that Higher Education Institutions' subject departments have found the time element needed to support schools' GTP work at irregular intervals throughout the year, burdensome and expensive. Deploying staff to work with GTP trainees has also stretched HEI resources.

To examine early concerns that were being raised about the GTP scheme, an Ofsted enquiry was initiated. It concluded that "too many trainees are failing to meet the high standards of which they are capable" due to "weaknesses in the training" Ofsted (2002 p29). As a result training bodies have now to be approved and will be subject to rigorous Ofsted inspection procedures. The programme has grown considerably in recent years, and is currently responsible for about ten per cent of the output of newly qualified teachers (NQT) in England. However, the demand for places still considerably outstrips their availability.

Fast Track

The Department for Education and Skills, anxious to capture the brightest and best of the new or recent graduates introduced a Fast Track route in teaching. Contrary to its name, it is not intended to be faster through training but to offer faster promotion into posts of responsibility, either as excellent practitioners or school managers. At the end of the first year numbers applying have been fewer than expected but the quality is high. At July 2002 there were 220 people on Fast Track of which 110 were due to start teacher training in September. 90 were Newly Qualified Teachers who trained in 2001/2 and 20 were experienced teachers (1 or more year's experience). At the Institute of Education we have one of the largest cohorts of new trainees with 24 who completed in the first year and 28 who commenced training in 2002.

Many school and university staff were sceptical about having a Fast Track trainee in their midst but finding that the trainees were not only high quality but also 'nice people' largely helped change their minds! Whether the group as a

whole can help to make a difference in schools where they teach will be the proof required for the profession to accept the scheme.

One of the most contentious points about Fast Track is the enhanced salary. Posts have additional salary points funded by the DfES. Fast Track trainees receive an additional €7,930 bursary; €4,760 at the start and €3,170 when a Fast Track post is taken up. A digital camera and laptop computer are also part of the incentive package. An additional programme of regional and national events is organised providing high quality speakers and activities. Teachers on Fast Track are expected to change schools frequently and to maintain outstanding levels of performance.

Acceptance onto the Fast Track scheme is via a rigorous assessment trail, beginning with an on-line self-evaluation and ending in a two-day residential assessment centre. All of these elements are undoubtedly expensive and critics question it's value in selecting those who should be on a fast track route.

Fast Track opportunities and rewards are being given to a tiny percentage of the new entrants to the profession and the divisiveness of the route may cause ill feeling across the profession. Many trainees are unable to apply before training because of early deadlines for applications, complex application routes or lack of training places at universities near their homes. However it is early days for this new route and changes are being made to react to any criticisms.

Case study

Jenny is an ambitious, married lady, 32 years old. She gained a 2.1 maths degree from Cambridge, worked for Price Waterhouse accountancy firm and passed her accountancy exams first time. She did well but did not completely enjoy the ways of the London business world and was attracted by teaching. The Fast Track scheme showed her that education could offer a supported career with interesting rewards, prospects and opportunities. During her PGCE year she performed at the highest levels and made valuable contributions in her school placements. She had several job offers and has chosen to work in an urban comprehensive where she feels she will be able to make a significant difference through her work.

Overseas Trained Teachers (OTT)

Faced with classes starting a new term without a teacher, an increasing number of heads of schools have recruited teachers from abroad, often with the help of teacher supply agencies. Common sources of such teachers are Australia, New Zealand and South Africa but many others come from locations without English as the first language, such as India, China, and parts of West Africa.

The TTA, keen to maintain accountability and work to their agenda of improving the quality of training, insist that these teachers are assessed against the QTS standards to show that they are of similar quality to trained teachers in England and Wales. Critics would certainly be vocal if they were not. Therefore a special, assessment-only programme has been provided for teachers trained overseas, providing a route to QTS and allowing exception from an induction year for suitably experienced teachers. The TTA pays HEIs

to advise school heads about the process and to prepare and assess the overseas teachers.

Many heads face a dilemma in drawing staff from countries such as South Africa, where they are also badly needed. Boyland and Mansell (2002), Crace (2002). Yet faced with teacher-less youngsters for whom heads are responsible, overworked existing staff and angry parents it is perhaps understandable that they turn to a quick and effective solution.

Undergraduate Credit Scheme

In 2001/2, the TTA piloted a new scheme that enables 2nd and 3rd year undergraduates to gain early experience of teaching, during their undergraduate course. It was designed to attract *potential* teacher trainees while on undergraduate courses. The University of Liverpool has run a student tutoring scheme since 1995 which includes many of the features which were adopted in the Undergraduate Credit Scheme. McKernan and Taylor (2002: chapter 1)

Most applicants to initial teacher training welcome the opportunity to experience classrooms before they commit to a course and students on this pilot are paid a small sum to do just that. It is therefore not surprising this is proving to be a popular scheme.

During the training, students attend sessions at Higher Education Institutions and work in schools enabling theory and practice to be mutually beneficial. Individual schemes vary and participants spend around 10-45 days in a school, are paid a small sum and gain between 15 and 30% of QTS. How exactly this credit can enable any future training to be adjusted is the next challenge facing those in implementing teacher training programmes.

Case Study: Martin

Martin was studying at University College, London. He joined the Institute course focusing on Citizenship and spent 10 days in an Inner London comprehensive inter-spaced with six sessions based at the university. Martin found he really enjoyed the classroom and applied to do a PGCE at Reading University, near his parents' home. "I feel more confident and really keen to continue my work in class. I have more to say in the sessions at university. I'm keen to do better rather than work faster through the training programme but I'll probably be ahead of my peers when we begin a teaching placement"

Taster Courses

Taster courses are short courses for people considering becoming a teacher which are designed to provide participants with some experience of what it means to be a teacher. In one sense they are a shortened version of the undergraduate credit course outlined above although there is no credit allowed for their work.

Such courses have been run for several years and are useful for candidates who are unsure about which age-range they would like to teach, or whether life in the classroom would be for them. A number of Higher Education Institutions and schools offer taster courses to give prospective teachers an insight into what life in the classroom is all about.

Taster courses usually last between two and four days. There are courses for different subjects and phases with many aiming to attract participants from groups currently under-represented in teaching: men (especially in the

primary sector); members of minority ethnic groups; people with disabilities. All courses include a school placement and provide information and advice on the various routes into teaching.

Returns' Courses

Trained teachers who have taken a career break may lack confidence and feel their skills need polishing before they're confident enough to face a class again. Returner's courses usually last between six and twelve weeks and give an insight recent changes. A typical course includes coverage of the following: the National Curriculum; the National Strategies; the use of ICT in subject teaching; assessment of pupils' performance; classroom and behaviour management. A supported classroom placement is also offered.

Teach First

Teach First is the latest initiative in attracting a different type of person into teaching. This is an employment based training route like the GTP, which aims to recruit graduates interested in a business career to spend two years teaching in London schools first. It is sponsored by a number of London-based companies who value the transferable skills developed through teaching and wish to make a contribution to raising standards in London schools. The scheme is modelled on 'Teach for America', which has run successfully in the USA for some years. The programme is sponsored by business – the graduates will not be seconded from industry but will be guaranteed an interview with the sponsoring companies at the end of their training. They will then have a choice of either staying in teaching – up to half are expected to do so – or moving to a career with one of the business sponsors of Teach First.

The programme will consist of training for school-based tutors, a preparatory summer school for the trainees, a year-long programme of employment-based ITT and support for trainees in their induction year.

Are the new routes making a difference?

The number of graduates applying to train as teachers in 2002/03 up to 21 June 2002 was 14 per cent (primary 18 per cent, secondary 10 per cent) higher than at the same time last year. Figures at the beginning of the 2002/3 year seem likely to be even higher. A downturn in the economy seems as ever to be the best news for recruitment. What continues to be worrying in the short term is the recognition of the growing number of untrained 'teachers' who work in schools. The DfES probably knows virtually nothing about these unqualified staff, other than that they have been police-checked.

As with all new initiatives some of those described above will be more successful than others and some will need to be changed as a result of feedback. However the initiatives described above, made in response to recruitment difficulties, have made a significant contribution to opening up initial teacher training to a greater diversity of entrants and have stimulated more interest in teaching from a wider range of potentially good teachers.

Useful web-sites and contacts

The TTA home page has clear links to all the routes mentioned in this article and is well worth exploring. <http://www.canteach.gov.uk/> A TTA Teaching Information Line is available on 0845 6000991 (0845 6000 992 for Welsh speakers).

The Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR) has information on applications for post graduate initial teacher training www.gttr.ac.uk Tel: 01242 544788 The UCAS website www.ucas.co.uk holds information on all undergraduate courses available.

There is a dedicated Fast Track web site www.fasttrackteaching.gov.uk.

The Institute of Education, University of London's web site is www.ioe.ac.uk

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