

Education Select Committee Inquiry: Royal College of Teaching and Impact of School Direct

About million+

1. million+ is a university think-tank which provides evidence and analysis on policy and funding regimes that impact on universities, students and the services that universities and other higher education institutions deliver, including in respect of teacher education. We welcome the Committee's decision to take evidence on a Royal College of Teaching and to review School Direct in the light of its previous Inquiry.

2. Concerns about the impact of School Direct on future teacher supply were considered at a roundtable convened by million+ in the House of Commons in March 2013. This was attended by a wide range of stakeholders including Headteachers, Teach First, Deans of Education, MPs and Peers. A report of the roundtable was forwarded to the Secretary of State and can be found here

http://www.millionplus.ac.uk/documents/Who_should_train_the_teachers_Report_March2013_Final.pdf

A Royal College of Teaching

3. We welcome the discussions about a Royal College of Teaching. A Royal College has the potential to improve the professional status of teaching. The extent to which this might be achieved will depend upon the development and leadership of any Royal College being 'profession-led'.

4. The potential for the development of a Royal College should not deflect policy-makers and Ministers from acknowledging that teaching is a profession and that students will be best served if teachers are required to have professional qualifications with an expectation that they engage with a recognised framework of continuous professional development during their careers. Both are essential to high quality teaching.

5. In the context of this follow-up Inquiry the Committee's attention is drawn to the fact that its previous recommendations about the value of a professional qualification framework for teachers beyond initial teacher training have not been progressed. The Secretary of State has also suggested that CPD should be led by schools. We do not consider that a focus on school delivery is likely to deliver the robust framework that is required to enhance the quality of teachers and teaching.

School Direct

Key points

- The national planning and delivery of future teacher supply is at risk: allocating ITT and School Direct numbers is not the same as ensuring the successful recruitment of trainee teachers including in specialist and shortage subjects
- No overview has been taken by DfE / NCTL of the *allocation* of School Direct places and the regional impact of School Direct on teacher supply has not been monitored
- There has been a failure in transparency in respect of NCTL marketing and promotion which has focused on School Direct, information available to applicants and out-turns in respect of recruitment to School Direct places
- The rapid expansion of School Direct has destabilised ITT provision in universities which have had to use their own resources to support School Direct partnerships but without any short or long-term guarantee that they will be allocated core ITT places; the involvement of universities in teacher education, research and supporting school and college improvement and professional development risks becoming unsustainable
- No holistic view is being taken in DfE of the combined effects on teacher supply of:
 - the new Ofsted regime in Schools (which is leading to fewer schools being classed as outstanding)
 - the new rules applied to ITT allocations by which universities classified by Ofsted as 'good' ITT providers have no guarantee of ITT numbers
 - the expansion of School Direct places
- Pending a full evaluation of School Direct, the numbers allocated to School Direct should not be increased in 2014-15 and should potentially be reduced.

6. In a parliamentary answer to Tom Blenkinsop MP (12 June 2013) the Schools Ministers David Laws stated that 'In a school-led system, schools will lead the commissioning of tailored training from HEIs which is matched to their own needs. HEIs offer schools in-depth subject knowledge and access to research. Universities also have a key role in responding to the demands of school partnerships, supporting the increase in capability within alliances and contributing their own expertise in training the next generation of teachers'.

7. It remains unclear how a system that relies on school commissioning via School Direct can provide for the future delivery of national and regional high quality future teacher supply, the retention of sustainable ITT provision in universities and a robust CPD framework for the profession. There would also appear to be a blurring of the lines of accountability and responsibility for the latter in Government.

8. The rapid expansion of School Direct has destabilised University provision in teacher training. There is no certainty regarding allocations for more than one year ahead. For example, one University's PGCE Secondary places have reduced by 60% from 350 to 140, leading to redundancies and loss of expertise. Currently DfE / NCTL are planning the expansion of School Direct numbers in 2014/15. If this scenario is progressed ITT numbers in universities will reduce further but actual numbers for 2014/15 will not be known until October 2013. The inability to plan strategically risks creating an untenable position.

9. *Delivery* of places, including in specialist and shortage subject places, on a national and regional basis appears to have broken down. Current proposals to limit the involvement of some universities in the provision of Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) programmes further risks the supply of teachers in shortage subjects. Universities which formerly provided SKE places in specialist subject(s) will not be allocated SKE places even if they have been deemed by Ofsted as being 'good' providers because there is no guarantee of ITT numbers being allocated to them in the following year (2014/15) under the 'rules'..

10. There is extensive engagement between schools and universities, including joint admissions and universities are very supportive of the principle of further engagement with schools. However for schools involved in School Direct there is not the same business case to recruit to all allocated places and there are no penalties for under recruitment as apply to Universities. There is no guarantee that schools involved in School Direct will continue to be involved in training provision. Schools in rural areas, especially primary schools, will also find it more difficult to engage. If increasing numbers of places are transferred to School Direct this will have a further destabilising effect on university provision. It is difficult to see how an adequate supply of teachers across subject and phase ranges can be delivered or guaranteed.

10. The introduction, promotion and marketing of School Direct by NCTL has impacted significantly on demand for core training places in some universities and in particular in PGCE Primary.

11. The increasing shift in the balance of control to schools risks an undervaluing of the pedagogical aspects of training. Schools Centred ITT providers (SCITTs) frequently offer training programmes leading to QTS with no academic credit attached. This training removes the underpinning academic rigour that is strongly associated with the contribution of universities to teacher training.

12. No assessment appears to have been made by DfE of the risk to capacity to deliver high quality teacher supply of the combination of the new Ofsted regime in schools, the rules governing allocation of core ITT numbers to universities (also linked with Ofsted) and the expansion of School Direct.

13. Until a proper evaluation of the capacity of the School Direct model to deliver teacher supply has been undertaken no further expansion of the School Direct programme should take place in 2014-15.