

Recruitment and retention of teachers

Adjournment debate

18 June 2015

Introduction

1. million+ works with modern universities in England and Scotland. Our work with these universities has long focused on the issues around recruitment of training teachers and continuing professional development of teaching staff. In March 2015 we published a [Manifesto for Teacher Education](#).

Background

2. An Adjournment debate on Teacher Recruitment and Retention will take place in the main Chamber at the close of business on Thursday 18 June, following Day 2 of the Committee of the Whole House on the EU Referendum Bill. This is likely to be about 5pm, but this may vary.

Teacher shortage: the Issues

3. Headteachers in different parts of the country are reporting teacher shortages, including in specialist subjects and subjects linked with the government's E-Bacc on which future secondary school performance in England will be judged. These shortages have their roots in 4 key but inter-related areas which centre on:
 - i. increasing problems of retaining teachers in the profession
 - ii. deficiencies in the teacher supply and workforce planning model
 - iii. a failure to evaluate the short and long-term impact of rapid changes in teacher training which have resulted in the transfer of thousands of teacher training places from university providers to schools since 2011
 - iv. an increasing reluctance of graduates to enter the profession
4. Newly trained teachers (NQTs) usually seek posts to commence at the start of the academic year. However evidence is emerging of shortages across a number of subjects which are likely to be exacerbated in 2015 and 2016 once the current supply of NQTs is no longer available. A survey undertaken by a London University¹ of local schools has also confirmed that Headteachers are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit experienced teachers and teachers for some management posts. This becomes a Catch 22 situation: if there is a lack of middle management in schools or middle management where there is not a great deal of experience, schools find it increasingly difficult to support NQTs and trainees. There is also evidence that schools graded by Ofsted as 'Requiring Improvement' find it very difficult to recruit – again triggering 'Catch 22'.
5. Teacher Vac has estimated that secondary subjects where there are likely to be problems in some parts of the country include Languages, Music, History, Mathematics and some other science subjects. Subjects where schools anywhere in the country could face recruitment problems are Physics, English (but not Drama), IT/Computer Science, Religious Education,

¹ Survey undertaken by London South Bank University 2014

Geography and Social Sciences. Subjects where there is already a crisis in recruitment and where recruitment for the remainder of the 2015 year is likely to be ever more of a challenge include Design & Technology and Business studies.

6. In addition universities and schools have been reporting that applications and recruitment to ITT courses scheduled to commence at the start of the 2015-16 academic years are less robust. While universities in particular will continue recruitment until the start of that year, UCAS statistics currently suggest that there is a shortfall of 6795 secondary trainees (39%) - across all routes into teacher training. Not all of these applications and acceptances will be converted into enrolments.
7. The issues around retention are complex but there is evidence that increasing pressure on schools, working conditions and lack of professional development and support all play their part in teachers leaving the profession.
8. Ministers need to recognise the potential for these shortages to develop into a wider crisis and amend the strategy that they inherited from the coalition government. Going forward this strategy should recognise the international evidence which confirms the benefits of universities being given a lead role in teacher education and in supporting school and college improvement and professional development.

NCTL, the teacher supply model and regional priorities

9. The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), the national agency responsible for the training and development of the school workforce in England which reported to parliament, was abolished by the 2011 Education Act. TDA functions were transferred to an executive agency of the Department for Education which is now known as the [National College of Teaching and Leadership](#) (NCTL). NCTL has a much wider remit than the former TDA and reports to Ministers.
10. While questions remain about its efficiency and communications' strategies, the robustness of NCTL's workforce modelling which in turn influences NCTL's assessment of how many primary, secondary and subject specialist teachers need to be trained each year, has been called into question. For example, schools and universities have concerns about what they consider to be an under-assessment of the current and future need for English and primary school teachers by NCTL. The teacher supply model has recently been improved but NCTL and Ministers continue to rely on a national supply model which, unlike the TDA, takes no account of any regional needs or priorities. This needs to change.

Reforms to Initial teacher Training

11. The former Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, reformed initial teacher training (ITT) by establishing a new route into teacher training called School Direct, a school-led teacher training programme. He described the impact of these reforms on ITT as 'revolutionary' and said that 'by the end of the Parliament well over half of the 30,000 ITT places allocated annually would be delivered by schools'.
12. In autumn 2012, 9,000 ITT places were top-sliced from the ITT numbers allocated to universities and transferred to the School Direct programme for admission in 2013-14. By the 2014-15 admissions year, 17,000 places had been transferred from universities to the School Direct programme.

13. In spite of requests, no evaluation has ever been published of the potential short and long term impact on future teacher supply across primary and secondary subjects of the transfer of ITT places to the School Direct programme or of a school-based commissioning system for ITT.

The role of universities

14. The language used to promote School Direct has often implied that trainees engaged in undergraduate and postgraduate teacher training programmes on university-led provision are not engaged in schools. In fact these trainees spend the majority of time in schools and since 1992, all university-led courses leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) have had to involve 'partnership' with schools. Universities have and do support the School Direct programme but the loss of ITT places and the uncertainty arising in respect of ITT allocations which have varied each year, has meant that universities have been forced to make subject specialist staff redundant and three universities have withdrawn completely from ITT provision.
15. The impact of these changes on teacher supply should not be under-estimated. Until 2011 university education departments working in partnership with local schools were the primary providers of trainee teachers. In 2010-11, university and higher education providers trained 78.8% of the recruits to initial teacher training programmes, compared with 16.6% in Employment-Based schemes (EBITT) and 4.6% in School-Centred Initial Teacher Training Schemes (SCITTs). The HEI figure included 3 and 4 year undergraduate courses (BEd or BA) and one year postgraduate courses (PGCE or PgCE). The EBITT figure included trainees on Teach First programmes, which while highly successful in many respects, are also relatively expensive with attrition an accepted feature of the scheme².

High quality teaching, retention and professional development

16. The approach adopted in England stands in sharp contrast to that in countries which perform highly in respect of educational outcomes and attainment. Where children perform well in school, teachers are highly qualified and universities are central to teacher education. Teachers are expected to study for an academic qualification of high standing. Undergraduate degrees may combine subject specialisms with a focus on primary education and teaching or specific subjects at secondary level. In addition to gaining an academic qualification, teachers are also required to study for a professional qualification. For example, in Finland, teachers are required to have a masters as well as an undergraduate degree. Trainee teachers undertake teaching practice in different settings, supervised and mentored by school and university teacher educators and specialists. The government funds professional development programmes in which all teachers are expected to participate throughout their careers.
17. Teacher education, teaching qualifications and career-long support for professional development are the bed rock of high quality teaching and teacher retention. Whatever the future role of the College of Teaching, the role of universities in delivering initial teacher training, developing innovative ways of meeting government targets to increase the numbers of teachers trained in specialist subjects and supporting teacher CPD, school improvement and retention is recognised internationally.
18. A teacher shortage will only be averted if the role of universities is recognised by government not just by warm words but by a return to a system in which universities are recognised as key deliverers of ITT with allocations of ITT numbers to match.

² Prof Geoff Witty, former Director of Institute of Education 'Who should teach the teachers' million+ March 2013

Allocations, targets and under-recruitment

19. Some schools and Academy chains have welcomed and engaged strongly in School Direct. However the success of the latter must be judged against the overall need to deliver national and regional teacher supply. In fact, School Direct has *under-recruited* against the number of places allocated to this route every year since its introduction in 2011. In spite of this, increasing numbers of ITT places have been transferred from universities to School Direct.
20. This under-recruitment has not always been obvious: NCTL has adopted a policy of over-allocating teaching training places against the target of teachers required under its own teacher supply model. Over-allocation reached a record high in 2015-16 with 11,000 places allocated in excess of the numbers required. This strategy risks teachers being trained in subjects that are not required while at the same time acute shortages in the number of people coming forward to train in specialist subjects including math and the sciences remain unresolved.
21. The strategy of over-allocation appears to have been adopted by DfE / NCTL to mitigate the risk posed by the rapid expansion of School Direct (a decision which ran counter to the recommendations in the Education Select Committee's 2012 *Great Teachers* report) and took precedence over the need for a national strategy in which target ITT numbers and recruitment more closely align.
22. Excessive over-allocation of numbers as a means of managing the risk of School Direct is not a sustainable or long-term strategy for providers, aspiring teachers or the taxpayer.

Ofsted, school participation in School Direct and teacher supply

23. The Ofsted grade of a school has no bearing on its entitlement to provide School Direct training and this grade does not take into account its work in teacher training. However, new inspection regimes may amend Ofsted rating of school performance. In these circumstances, schools may well focus on core business i.e. teaching pupils rather than training teachers – but regardless of Ofsted, there is no guarantee the schools participating in School Direct will continue to do so in subsequent years.

University providers

24. Ministers will agree allocations for the 2016-17 year with NCTL in the next few weeks. If current policies continue and further capacity is lost in respect of university-led provision, this will impact on future teacher supply.

Conclusion: amending the strategy

25. Ministers cannot leave teacher supply to chance or simply rely on the long-term development of a College of Teaching to resolve some of the issues related to professional development and retention. The challenges are more immediate and require Ministers to act now. They should amend the strategy that they inherited from the Coalition government and
 - i. outline to MPs and the Education Select Committee the basis on which they intend to deliver a national and regional workforce planning system in the future which goes beyond allocation of numbers and seeks to ensure that targets are met and that there is not over or under recruitment in specific subjects
 - ii. halt the policy of transferring increasing numbers of ITT places to School Direct; there is no obvious case for School Direct numbers to be increased and evidence suggests that these numbers should be scaled back: interest from schools for School Direct is not in itself a robust basis on which to deliver national and regional teacher supply

- iii. restore a system of guaranteed ITT numbers for university providers for 2016-17 and develop a 2 / 3 year allocation strategy of core numbers
- iv. review with teaching organisations, schools and universities the reasons for and seek to address the problems with retention
- v. work in partnership with universities and schools in order to deliver
 - a. national and regional teacher supply across all modes and subjects and which serves rural and other areas where enthusiasm for School Direct is more muted
 - b. new and innovative ways of recruiting and training teachers in shortage subjects
 - c. CPD and a professional post-ITT qualification framework that embraces both academic and professional training and practice

While the above measures are unlikely to assist Headteachers who are facing immediate challenges in respect of teacher recruitment, they are likely to mitigate the very high risk that these problems will get worse if the current strategy is maintained. They also offer the basis for a more collaborative approach than that which was pursued between 2010 and 2015.

About million+

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For further information about this briefing or about million+ please visit www.millionplus.ac.uk or contact Pam Tatlow, Chief Executive, pamtatlow@millionplus.ac.uk / 020 7717 1656 or Alan Palmer, Head of Policy and Research, alanpalmer@millionplus.ac.uk / 020 7717 1657