Training our next generation of outstanding teachers

Consultation report

November 2011
Training Our Next Generation of Outstanding Teachers Consultation Report

1. In June 2011, the Department for Education (DfE) published its strategy for initial teacher training (ITT), *Training Our Next Generation of Outstanding Teachers*. An online consultation on the strategy took place over the summer. The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) also ran regional consultation events. This document provides an overview of responses. In November 2011, DfE published an implementation plan to follow up on the ITT strategy.

**General**

2. The online consultation received around 250 responses.

3. The regional consultation events comprised seven sessions around the country. 137 representatives of higher education institutions (HEIs) attended, 20 employment based initial teacher training (EBITT) partnerships, 21 graduate teacher programme (GTP) schools, 24 school-centred initial teacher training partnerships (SCITT) and 64 training schools.

4. There were many positive comments about the document from all types of institution and individual. The consultation events were well attended by professionals keen to engage with government and committed to training the next generation of outstanding teachers. There was an overall sense that the paper reflected an understanding of ITT and that HEIs' contributions to training were appreciated by Government.

5. It was accepted that these proposals would also apply to SCITTs but there was concern that this would lead to reductions in current funding levels for SCITTs and that trainees may be more inclined to pay higher tuition charges to established universities than to SCITT providers. This risk would need careful management.

6. There was agreement that the more opportunities there are for trainees to learn from outstanding practitioners the better. Some providers registered an issue with capacity where the cohort of trainees exceeded the number of opportunities with outstanding schools/departments/teachers available.

7. Timing and having sufficient notice were seen as very important factors in determining how well ITT providers could embrace the changes. This also applied to bursary levels if they were to change.

8. Some said that the document could do more to address primary ITT. These comments pertained mainly to the bursary proposals, the GTP and the school direct proposals. It was felt by some that implementing the GTP and school direct ideas could be more difficult in primary schools. The subject associations called for more subject training and specialism in primary ITT.
Responses to DfE Consultation

Do you think the proposals for enhancing selection will improve the quality of new teachers?

9. There was little argument over bringing the skills test forward. Comments included:

a. Pre application or pre acceptance. There was no firm consensus on whether tests should be pre-application or pre-acceptance, but ITT providers sought early confirmation either way.

b. If tests were imposed pre-application, respondents pointed out that the opportunity to support some candidates before taking the tests would be lost. On the other hand, pre-application tests would cut down the numbers providers had to select from and help them improve the rigour of their selection processes. Providers pointed out the logistical problem of offering someone a place who did not go on to pass the tests – with the subsequent risk of having lost an alternative candidate who would have passed.

c. Are skills tests necessary? There was agreement with the idea of dropping the IT test. It was suggested that the GCSE requirement should be relied on with the skills tests dropped altogether, or, that the GCSE requirement could be replaced with pre entry skills tests. Some individual cases were cited to question the purpose of the skills tests and the benefit of support from providers.

10. Respondents welcomed the significant investment in financial incentives to attract the best graduates into teaching. Some commented on the use of degree class to determine bursaries, including:

a. The correlation between 1st class degrees and the skills required to be a good teacher. Some respondents thought that there were likely to be exceptions to the connection between degree class and teacher potential. ITT providers saw people with excellent interpersonal skills, but lesser degrees. But providers understood that the decision about whether to accept a candidate was ultimately theirs, and nothing in the consultation changed that.

b. Fairness and diversity. Some respondents were concerned about difficult cases of those without a 2.2 or above. For example people who had obtained a post graduate qualification in addition to a poor undergraduate degree; or those with non-UK degrees.

c. A few respondents highlighted perceived degree class inflation over time and variable standards across universities.

d. Degree class is not the only measure of subject knowledge. Related professional experience was seen as a valid way of enhancing an
applicant’s subject knowledge. Examples were given of people who had obtained a poor degree in German but had then improved their knowledge and understanding by spending years working in Germany. Subject associations said the subject match was as important as degree class.

11. The majority of providers at the consultation events said they would prefer autonomy in choosing how to assess inter-personal skills. Of those that wanted this choice, some welcomed the option of using an assessment provided by the government. There was general acceptance of Ofsted inspecting these and other selection processes.

**What are your views of the vision of schools leading teacher recruitment and training, working in partnership with universities and other ITT providers as they require?**

12. Most respondents welcomed the emphasis on school/HEI partnerships and wanted to see schools’ involvement in ITT augmented.

13. There were some pragmatic concerns that were common to each type of provider, the teacher and head teacher respondents. The issue of economies of scale was raised, as were questions about who would oversee quality and ensure that the supply of teachers met national demand.

14. Many school respondents, unions and the subject associations said that they valued the input of HEIs. They were credited with bringing innovation, a broader perspective and subject expertise.

15. Schools that were eligible for teaching school status particularly welcomed the vision of schools taking the lead and acknowledged the greater confidence that they had in ‘re-defining their ITT partnerships’.

**If you are a head teacher, or teacher, do you think your school would be interested in recruiting trainees through the school direct proposal described in chapter three? What opportunities and difficulties do you think this approach would present?**

16. There were no objections to the principle at the events.

17. Respondents judged the employment offer more likely to appeal to a school operating in a teaching school alliance or formal cluster than a single school. For instance, one interested school, which was applying for teaching school status, indicated it would make an offer of employment within the group, rather than at their particular school. HEIs anticipated that it would appeal to schools without strong links to an ITT provider and that had recruitment difficulties.
If you work in a university or other ITT provider, would you be interested in working with schools that recruit trainees in this way? What opportunities and difficulties do you think this approach would present?

18. There were no objections to the principle at the events and the majority of ITT providers who responded on line agreed. Some existing HEI-based providers were concerned that school direct would mean that their direct place allocations would be reduced, while others saw it as an opportunity to expand their work with schools.

19. There was a perception that the trainees’ experience would be limited to one school, but this would be assuaged if the place was offered by a school cluster.

20. Some HEIs thought that there might be pressure to award qualified teacher status (QTS) to a trainee the school had taken on, and was relying on, to fill a vacancy. They also queried the Ofsted implications, asking whether responsibility for selection would rest with the HEI or the school. It was also felt that if the HEI provider was responsible for the outcomes of the training, then they should have a key role in the selection of trainees.

Would it be more attractive for a trainee to be able to apply to a particular school for teacher training, rather than a university, with the expectation that the school will offer employment after training?

21. Students that the TDA spoke to found school direct (including the offer of employment) an attractive proposition. A small number of those interested in a career in teaching who responded on line said they wouldn’t want to select the school they would work in before starting training.

22. Respondents from HEIs expressed some reservations about whether applicants would be able to identify a good school match for themselves without having experienced in different schools or having had discussions with other trainees on their course.

23. Some also highlighted the possibility that this would lead to trainees only applying to schools they saw as less challenging, and that these schools would not be able to employ many trainees.

Do you agree that we should offer more financial support to trainees with good degrees and mathematics and science specialists? Do the proposals for funding in chapter three strike the right balance in the different levels of funding individuals?

24. Recruitment (see also answer to Q1) Respondents suggested that if the bursaries did start to attract more highly qualified graduates into teaching, then that could begin to raise the status of the profession and its attraction as a career choice.
25. Some respondents at the events and the market research among students/recent graduates and career changers cautioned that incentives for teacher training might not cause the best graduates to reappraise wholly teaching as a career option. A focus on career progression opportunities and continuing professional development would also be factors. For some of those who would or were considering teaching mathematics, chemistry or physics, the bursaries would tip the balance.

26. **Retention** Some participants said that some of the bursary should be held back to avoid paying people who do not go on to complete the course and go into teaching.

27. **Amounts.** Some cautioned against frequent adjustments to bursary levels and others said information would need to be made available to prospective applicants as far in advance as possible so that they can make informed decisions about training options.

28. **Subject prioritisation.** Although there is wide acceptance to certain subjects attracting higher bursaries than others, the difference between the maximum amounts for primary trainees against priority subject trainees caused a few to say this looked as if the non-priority areas were not valued sufficiently. However, many respondents acknowledged that having any bursaries at all was welcome in the current economic climate.

29. Suggestions from respondents:
   a. Enhancement courses in interpersonal skills for highly qualified candidates
   b. Guidance on how postgraduate qualifications (such as Masters, PhDs) would be taken into account
   c. Discretionary funding pot for exceptional candidates
   d. Consider how higher education achievement reports could operate alongside degree class as a basis for awarding bursaries
   e. Hold back some of the bursary until QTS was completed and an ‘outstanding award’ was made

**Do you think that it is right to give more initial teacher training places to providers that are working in close university/school partnerships?**

30. The proposal was not fully understood. Some providers at the events assumed that this was being put forward as something completely new, rather than something intended to reward effective practice. When the proposal was explained, it was generally popular except for the ‘outstanding school’ requirement, on practical grounds (see paragraph 5). Additional features suggested included: mentor training, joint action research and common teaching
methods across ITT and in school e.g. systematic synthetic phonics.

31. Some HEIs said they were already engaged in sharing ITT staff with schools and welcomed mutual representation on school and university governing bodies.

**Do you think that a single gateway for PGCE and Graduate Teacher Programme applications is a good idea?**

32. There was overall support for the single system. Some implementation issues were raised. A GTP school voiced its unease with a national system for what it saw as a local scheme. There was also a suggestion that GTP has more than one deadline for applications. Some ITT providers were concerned that parallel applications would lead to having to interview more candidates than at present. Respondents suggested imposing some time limits on how long a provider can retain an application before releasing it to the next choice to speed up the existing system.

**What more would you change to improve initial teacher training?**

33. There were a number of potential trainees asking for a route into teaching designed for career changers that recognised their experience in industry and professions.

34. A frequent suggestion from HEIs was that schools be required to take part in ITT, especially those that are outstanding.

35. Respondents suggested making more of the continuum between ITT, early and continuing professional development. Some were keen to make teaching an entirely Masters profession.

36. There was a suggestion that QTS should be made a qualification.

37. Some wanted to see incentives to encourage good people to work in schools in challenging circumstances.

38. Respondents also suggested:
   a. funding more part time ITT provision to encourage more high quality career changers
   b. identifying the features of the most effective ITT provider/school partnerships and disseminating them
   c. encouraging paired placements for trainees
   d. making the role of mentor a specific post of responsibility within schools with guarantees of reduced timetables given to mentors to carry out their roles.
Would a reduction in salary subsidy for the Graduate Teacher Programme make it less likely that you will take part in the programme?

39. The impact of reducing the salary subsidy was seen as difficult to quantify until it actually took place.

Does the removal of the supernumerary requirement for the Graduate Teacher Programme make it more likely that you will take part in the programme?

40. Some GTP schools said that having the option to remove the supernumerary requirement would help them to continue with GTP if the subsidy was reduced. For those schools this proposal just gave them more flexibility.

41. Some EBITTs thought that this would be a retrograde step for the quality and reputation of GTP. This was because of fears that some schools would overburden the trainee with class teaching. This would reduce the time available for the trainee to reflect and experience other training, possibly even their second placement and lead to an insular experience for them.

42. EBITTs also said that this proposal, combined with a reduced salary subsidy, would result in GTP trainees being used for vacancy filling. In their view, this would lead to schools ‘dipping in and out of training’ and therefore the schools wouldn’t make the same investment that they do now in providing high quality, experienced mentors. They were also concerned that vacancy filling may put pressure on selection and assessment decisions.

43. One large EBITT thought secondary schools would be better able to absorb a cut in the salary subsidy than primary, and that secondary schools could accommodate substantive trainees more easily. In primary schools a substantive trainee could be given responsibility for a whole class and ‘the children would be frequently missing out on their class teacher’.

44. Suggestions from respondents:

  a. Introducing flexibility over the number of required training days, rather than removing the supernumerary requirement completely. This would enable schools to deploy their mathematics GTP trainees instead of a supply teacher or a teacher from another subject to take a mathematics class when a teacher was absent through illness. It could also allow a particularly strong/highly qualified trainee to gain more classroom experience.

  b. Another EBITT suggested reducing the salary grant for secondary by £1,000 and for primary by £500, possibly mitigating the funding shortfall by offering an 11 month training contract rather than the current 12 month contract.
Additional Points Raised

Undergraduate

45. Questions arose about how the DfE was going to ‘focus allocations on courses where trainees are at least of the same quality as those on typical post-graduate courses’. The Higher Education Statistics Agency only collects data on the highest qualification of entrant so comparing undergraduate University and College Admissions Service (UCAS) scores with postgraduate scores is not possible based on existing data. HEIs wanted to know how A level equivalents such as BTEC or Access courses would be accounted for in this proposal.

Funding/fees/allocations

46. There was a common plea from providers to have more notice of allocations in order to be able to plan and invest properly in ITT and to make sure that they did not lose high-quality applicants.

47. It was also acknowledged that allocations should be aligned with employment figures.

48. There were queries about whether or not self-funded trainees with a 3rd class degree could be included in the total counts of those doing ITT and whether or not a self-funded trainee would count against providers’ allocations. In the case of undergraduate ITT, the ability of the TDA/Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to control allocations at all was queried.

49. There were questions from some participants about the new allocations system that TDA would need to create to implement the strategy, leading to requests that the TDA review its control system (grant conditions, accreditation, allocation of places, award of QTS etc.) to ensure effective regulation and to reward the higher quality providers.

50. Clarification was requested about how much the TDA would grant fund the difference between a science course and the tuition fee maximum. Providers explained this was urgent as it affected the level of fees they were intending to set.