



TEACHER EDUCATION AND SCHOOL DIRECT



Background

*'We want to continue to improve the quality of teachers and teaching, and to raise the profession's status. Part of the solution will be to recruit more of the most talented people to the profession.'*¹

The Department for Education's (DfE's) strategic priorities in relation to teacher training are to:

- raise the quality of new entrants to the teaching profession;
- increase the proportion of time trainees spend in the classroom;
- sharply reduce the bureaucratic burden on schools, cutting away unnecessary duties, processes, guidance and requirements.

The question arises as to whether these objectives are being met.

School Direct

In 2012, the DfE established School Direct in England as an alternative route into teaching. It is a key plank in the Coalition Government's strategy to raise the quality of teaching.²

School Direct offers two types of training places:

- School Direct Training Programme – open to all graduates and funded by tuition fees paid by the trainee (bursaries may be available from the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL).
- School Direct Training Programme (salaried) – an employment-based route into teaching open to high-quality graduates (e.g. a degree class at 2:1 or above) with three or more years' career experience. The trainee is employed as an unqualified teacher by a school and the NCTL provides funding to schools to subsidise the trainee's salary and/or training.

Improving teacher quality

The DfE's initial teacher training (ITT) strategy says that the Coalition Government will raise the quality of teaching by raising the bar for entry to ITT.

From 2012, primary trainees and those in most secondary specialisms will require at least a 2:1 class degree to be eligible for a bursary from the NCTL. However, other non-salaried and non-bursary trainees may not be required to hold a 2:1 or higher degree class.

In addition, the Government has removed the requirement for schools to employ teachers with qualified teacher status (QTS).

School Direct numbers

*'From a minimum of 500 places in 2012/13 we will aim to increase the number of "school direct" places quickly in future years, in line with demand from schools.'*³

The current DfE target for School Direct is 10,000 trainees per year. Initial indications are that this target is far from being met. It is unclear what contingency arrangements are available to the DfE and schools (other than greater flexibility to appoint unqualified teachers) should there be a shortfall in School Direct trainee numbers.

¹ Department for Education (2010), *The Importance of Teaching*, pp.21-23.

² Department for Education (2011), *Training Our Next Generation of Outstanding Teachers*.

³ *ibid*, p.11.



Data on the School Direct policy is beginning to emerge and suggests that target trainee numbers is already an issue for the Government.

An initial analysis by Professor John Howson (University of Oxford) has found that by August 2013, there were substantial shortages of trainees in science, technology and mathematics (STEM subjects) for September 2013.

By August 2013, Professor Howson found that 5,630 trainees had been accepted onto the scheme. The DfE wants 10,000 new teachers to go through the School Direct route instead of the traditional university routes.

In physics, 75% of salaried trainee places were still empty at the start of August, as were 77% of unsalaried places. In chemistry, 63% of salaried places were unfilled and 57% of unsalaried places. In mathematics, 56% of salaried places were unfilled and 61% of unsalaried places.

The DfE has insisted that applications to School Direct are high (some 22,500 by May 2013). The selection of School Direct trainees is a matter for individual schools.

The future of HEI-based provision

There are reports that some schools believe that they are being 'forced' to participate in School Direct. The NASUWT has obtained some feedback that the NCTL is promoting Schools Direct as the preferred training route to schools.

School Direct training programmes are also being promoted on the basis that there is an 'expectation' that placement schools will make an offer of employment once the period of training is complete. This is clearly intended to be an incentive for those thinking about entering teaching to choose School Direct rather than some other route. However, it remains to be seen whether these schools will employ their trainees given that the Government has refused to place them under an obligation to do so.

The implementation of School Direct is being driven in a context of a critical and antagonistic view by the Secretary of State about the future contribution of universities (labelled 'the Marxist blob') in the provision of teacher education/training.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play an important and valuable role in initial teacher education (ITE) and the teaching profession values the contribution of HEIs in the provision of ITE.

The Union has also received reports that School Direct has been 'aggressively' promoted to prospective ITE students, in an effort to divert trainees away from HEI-led provision.

In a policy context of extended autonomy for schools and choice for students, it is ironic that the Coalition Government is seeking to restrict choice for schools and for students by insisting on School Direct.

The currency of School Direct

The NASUWT is concerned about the 'mis-selling' of School Direct by the NCTL.

Anecdotal reports indicate that the NCTL is promoting both School Direct pathways as equivalent to more 'traditional' ITE programmes, including the PGCE. This is not the case.

Applicants who have been canvassed by the NCTL to swap from the PGCE to the School Direct route may not be advised about the critical distinctions between School Direct and other routes into teaching. This could only be considered as the 'mis-selling' of School Direct.



The PGCE is a recognised qualification throughout the UK, the EU and globally. School Direct is not. The School Direct route to QTS may mean that those who complete the programme will not be recognised to teach in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, or elsewhere in Europe, the USA and Australia.

The NASUWT is concerned that trainees may find that they have been misled about the currency of their teacher status/qualification and find that they have credentials that may not be recognised elsewhere outside England.

Administration of School Direct

There are considerable workload challenges for schools associated with the administration necessary for allocating training places. This may dissuade many schools from participating in School Direct.

Schools have benefited from working with partner HEIs that undertake all aspects of quality assurance, programme administration, the applications system, administration of fees and management of the conduct of student teachers. A move away from conventional HEI-based provision could shift many of these burdens onto schools.

A significant amount of recruitment to ITE programmes takes place during the Summer, when schools are dealing with the heightened demands/pressures of public examinations and during the period of end-of-year school closure.

University admissions departments are geared to these issues in a way that the overwhelming majority of schools will not be. This could lead to increased uncertainty and anxiety for applicants and unnecessarily high levels of unfilled training places at the start of each academic year.

Moving to a system in which 23,500 schools lead, manage and administer teacher training (rather than, as now, in around 80 HEIs) will inevitably increase costs to the system at a time when there is acute pressure on public spending.

Overarching issues and concerns

The NASUWT is concerned that:

- School Direct will not generate the number of trainees the system needs;
- a system organised around School Direct may not be able to respond quickly enough or in the right way to meet future changes or trends in teacher supply and demand;
- the reduction or closure of HEI-based provision could remove the ability of the system to respond quickly to local/regional supply problems;
- the shortage of trainee teachers in particular subject specialisms could become more acute;
- the absence of necessary economies of scale within School Direct will inevitably increase the overall costs of teacher training across the system;
- the workload demands on schools associated with administering high-quality teacher training will be considerable;



- the way that School Direct is administered will make it difficult to deal efficiently with applications and allocations late in the academic year, potentially resulting in unnecessarily high levels of unfilled training places;
- the quality of training on School Direct may be extremely variable and unpredictable;
- poor quality School Direct provision could result in increased drop-out rates amongst by trainees and increased rates of teacher wastage;
- there are no national levers in place to ensure fair access to teacher training through School Direct;
- because of the way the system is managed and administered, potentially suitable applicants risk being turned away even if places on School Direct across the country are unfilled;
- trainees on a School Direct route are being misled about School Direct, including with regard to the future currency of their qualifications;
- opportunities for mobility for teachers will be greatly reduced as School Direct credentials may not be recognised in many other jurisdictions;
- the shift to a School Direct system could downgrade teacher education and undermine the status of England's teaching profession within the UK and globally.

Maintaining world-class teacher education

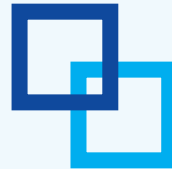
The NASUWT believes that:

- 1 High educational standards depend upon teachers being confident professionals, who feel respected, valued and committed to teaching as a career.
- 2 The Government must have a coherent and credible workforce strategy, with the levers necessary to deliver system needs and requirements.
- 3 Teacher education (not mere training) should equip teachers to take control of their professional practice. It should provide a deep grounding in scholarship and practice.
- 4 A strategy for world-class teacher education should not rely on encouraging provision that is either wholly school-based or wholly HEI-based; it must be contingent upon both, and the Government should create the conditions for effective partnerships between schools and HEIs.
- 5 The quality of teacher professionals working in every school must be guaranteed through a national framework of professional qualifications and professional standards, underpinned by a framework of professional terms and conditions of service.
- 6 The requirement to hold QTS for every teacher and leader of teachers/teaching must be non-negotiable.



- 7 Quality, breadth and depth must be the hallmarks of the ITE curriculum, as it should be for the school curriculum. ITE programmes should support the development of teacher quality, transition and agency in the context of teaching and learning in 21st century schools.
- 8 The content and level of teacher education programmes should be nationally mandated.
- 9 A Masters-level teaching profession should be the Government's goal for all teachers working within public education, underpinned by guaranteed access and entitlement to high-quality ITE, QTS, career-long continuing professional development (CPD) and appropriate remuneration.
- 10 The requirement for a pre-qualification skills test should be revoked.
- 11 Government policy on teacher education and development should ensure that:
 - a) public education is led by a postgraduate teacher workforce that is well educated and professionally accredited as teachers in accordance with nationally agreed standards;
 - b) teacher education equips all teachers to demonstrate deep theoretical and empirical knowledge and high cognitive and intellectual skills to meet the learning needs of children and young people;
 - c) programmes of ITE provide teachers with the conceptual knowledge and capacity to be reflexive practitioners who will continue to develop, apply and evaluate subject knowledge, theory and teaching methods to meet the developing and differentiated needs and aspirations of pupils;
 - d) new entrants to the teaching profession benefit from structured programmes of support which enable them to consolidate and extend the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired during ITE in the context of their work as qualified practitioners;
 - e) the leadership of teaching and learning in schools is undertaken by lead professionals who are qualified and accredited as teachers;
 - f) teachers and school leaders can commit to participate in their own ongoing professional learning with an entitlement to regular, high-quality CPD that enables all teachers to develop their professional knowledge and expertise, including through their contribution to educational research and development;
 - g) teacher collaboration and collegiate working practices are supported and encouraged within classrooms, departments and faculties, and within and across schools.





NASUWT

The Teachers' Union

Tel: 0121 453 6150

E-mail: nasuwt@mail.nasuwt.org.uk

Website: www.nasuwt.org.uk



www.facebook.com/nasuwt



twitter.com/nasuwt