

IRGEE – Research Forum: Emerging Models of Teacher Training in England.

Since the late 1980s changes have occurred that have had a fundamental impact on Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in England. There has been a move from a model dominated by the higher education institutions (HEIs) to a school-HEI *partnership*. High stakes inspections have been given a greater role by the government and this has led to a more homogeneous curriculum. Finally, for this paper at least, there has been an increased diversity of training routes, widening access into the profession. These trends appear to be similar to trends in the USA, Australia and New Zealand, as reported in Young (1998). Geography teacher education in England has the added pressure of experiencing these changes at a time when the very existence and strength of school geography is being threatened.

Political/National contexts for changes

1992 can be viewed as a watershed year for change in ITE with a government circular 9/92 setting out radical changes and the introduction of a set of competencies that had to be achieved in order to receive Qualified Teacher Status, (QTS). A later circular 4/98 renamed these competencies 'Standards' and these were themselves comprehensively re-written in 2002 and published in 'Qualifying to Teach: Professional Standards for Qualified Teacher Status and Requirements for Initial Teacher Training' (TTA, 2003). This document contains the standards and requirements for all trainee teachers and for ITE providers, whatever pathway they take. Although the Teacher Training Agency, the government's body responsible for recruitment and quality in teacher training, states that they 'do not set a curriculum, nor do they specify how training should be organised or run' (TTA, 2003 p4) there is no doubt that providers of ITE have become more uniform in their provision since the introduction of the competencies/standards.

It is interesting that two levels of qualification exist. Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), the ability to achieve the Standards, is the government baseline, while universities mostly deliver the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), which also includes QTS. The difference can be illustrated in the terminology utilised. For example the TTA usually refers to initial teacher *training* (ITT) while universities usually prefer initial teacher *education* (ITE). The latter implies added critical reflection, the ability to use research to improve practice and a desire to link practice with theory. So one of the tensions around the different routes into teaching lies in the depth that teachers need 'to know' and be able 'to do'. Darling-Hammond (1999) suggests that if teaching is about imparting knowledge then teachers need little more than a grasp of their subject area. However if teachers need to cater for pupils with diverse learning needs where barriers and problems must be overcome, then higher-level skills are necessary. A more theoretical underpinning of how pupils learn, of what tools might be utilised and how different learning styles can be catered for, are all needed.

In the last two years, and in recognition of the demand for continuing professional learning, a move to a third level of qualification has begun to take

place with a few universities now offering masters level qualifications for some trainees leading straight on from their PGCE. e.g. *Master of Teaching* at the Institute of Education and a *PGCE with MA* at Durham University.

As a result of the QTS Standards and the inspection process, initial teacher education courses for geography teachers across England therefore have a remarkably similar content and format of delivery. There are no geography-specific elements within the Qualifying to Teach (TTA 2003) document though trainee teachers of pupils under the age of 11 must have 'sufficient understanding of a range of work across....history or geography' to be able to teach the age range for which they are training. For secondary level pupils over 11, the subject expectations are stated as an 'understanding of the (geography) National Curriculum Programmes of Study' and focus on school and work-based national qualifications for examination at and post 16. TTA (2003 p 8). Government control over the workforce is further strengthened as the revised Standards include guidance on the use of the latest initiatives for improving pupil achievement e.g. Strategies for pupils aged 11-14 in literacy, numeracy and ICT, and Key Skills (for pupils post 16).

Furlong et.al. (2000) argue that the system has been moved from one of diversity and autonomy to unanimity and central control. If the government's aim was to produce training with common standards and procedures, no matter who provides it and where, this has been largely achieved. Though it could be argued that this high level of control may have stilted creativity, difference and innovative models of training, few would argue that ITE courses overall are of higher quality than 5 years ago.

A national week-end conference organised by and for geography educators facilitates a sharing of good practice, practitioner research and keeps colleagues up to date with national changes. That Ofsted geography inspectors are invited and eagerly join in the debates indicates the community and commitment that exists despite, or perhaps aided by, the imposed ITE changes.

Teacher recruitment and retention

19,500 secondary teachers and 16,300 primary teachers will be trained in 2004/5. At the TTA's 2003 annual general meeting Ralph Taberer, the Chief Executive estimated that with 40,000 teachers beginning to train in 2003/4 there has been a 50% increase in recruitment in recent years.

For 2004-5, at secondary level, there are 935 geography training places in 40 HEI-school partnerships and 5 school centred initial teacher training providers, (SCITTs), a drop in total numbers from 2003/4 of 14%. Is this reduction linked to the health of school geography and the estimated number of teachers required in the workforce? The geography team from the Qualifications and Assessment Authority, QCA (2003) identifies a 'continuing concern about downward trends in entries for GCSE and A level geography' and identifies several reasons why this might be occurring; competition from newer subjects, inflexible curriculum structures at 14-16, outdated GCSE, AS and A level specifications, insufficient progression and variety and a 'growing

awareness of a 'gap' or discontinuity between the subject as taught in schools and as represented in higher education. These raise issues about public image, schools/higher education transfer, subject-based scholarship and the liveliness and dynamism of the school subject'. If so this is a worrying picture and one that the geography community needs to address with some urgency.

One of the most important changes and probable reasons for the turn around in teacher recruitment from significant shortages in 2001-2 has been the introduction of financial packages, particularly a £6000 bursary, (available to most, but not all trainees) and additional sums for shortage subjects and some new training routes. Geography was added to the TTA's shortage subject list that makes trainees eligible for an additional, means-tested hardship grant in secondary subjects where there is a national shortage of teachers. However the picture is confused as it has not been added to the list of subjects eligible for a 'golden hello' – a taxable incentive of £4,000 which aims to retain recently qualified teachers.

Role of schools as partners

Until the late 1990s the dominant model for training new teachers was strongly influenced by higher education where the institution, usually a university, provided the knowledge, skills and methods and the schools provided the setting for practice. One key change since then is encapsulated in the term 'partnership' which emphasises the importance of the school element and the much greater proportion of the time and training programme which is delivered through school placements. The main model for training teachers is through a school-HEI partnership with a minimum of 24 weeks spent in school (secondary) or 18 weeks (primary) and the balance in a 36 week year, within in the HEI. 'Partnership' also indicates a joint responsibility and in theory gives schools a greater involvement.

However the move to this partnership model is not always positive or complete. On the positive side Totterdell and Lambert (1998), argue that the artificial barriers between theory and practice have been broken down. Many schools have been quick to see that the mentoring process promotes staff engagement with teaching and learning and can lead to school improvement and high pupil achievement. To facilitate this, one government initiative has approved 168 Training Schools, whereby additional funding is given for training projects and outreach work.

On the negative side the partnership can be rather one sided. The partnerships require a specific number of quality placements yet schools may find it hard to meet that requirement. Some schools, especially in challenging areas such as the inner cities, will terminate agreements, for example, when a department loses an experienced teacher, when their school Ofsted inspection is due or when trainees are viewed as a threat to examination results and a school's position in league tables. While these reasons are understandable it does leave the partnership vulnerable and with variable placements year-on-year.

Many HEI partnerships have argued that funding does not cover costs and increasingly new models of ITE are being considered. Murray (1999) argues for a Professional Development School (PDS) rather like a teaching hospital.

Here there would be clinical professors who would practice what they preach, putting into action innovative teaching techniques. My own HEI, the Institute of Education, University of London, is currently looking into a number of new models and some new school-based providers such as a three-school consortium, training 26 trainees in Devon and Cornwall, has been approved a new provider of ITE. Times Educational Supplement (2004)

New routes for teacher education

At the very end of the 1990's the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) introduced a number of new routes into teaching to widen access and attract groups of teachers who otherwise may not have considered teaching or been able to train to teach. I estimate that there are now 18 different routes from which an aspiring teacher can choose! Geography teachers have been able to participate in each of these though on some of the new routes places are reserved for core subjects such as maths, science and English. However most of the 1000 or so new secondary geography teachers each year train through traditional PGCE routes with less than 5% training through employment based routes.

In 1993, following the success of the Licensed Teacher Scheme a new training initiative was established enabling groups of schools to form consortia and provide a training role based on their collective expertise. There are now over 30 *School Centred Initial Teacher Training* (SCITT) providers. The *Graduate Teacher Programme* (GTP) allows trainees to train 'on the job' rather than being based at a university or other training provider although there are usually areas of support and assessment by higher education. There were over 5000 GTP trainees in 2003/4 though only a small percentage of these are likely to have been geographers. Trainees are recruited by the school and can earn almost £13,000 while training, making it an attractive route. Ofsted (2002) described the standard of trainee GTP outcomes as 'adequate .. rather than achieving the high levels of which they should be capable' and the training experience is highly dependent on the quality of the department and the school.

Flexible routes towards a PGCE or to QTS only, allow a trainee to mix work in another area, with training to teach on a part time basis and to undertake some work at a distance. For example, a supermarket manager, a mum bringing up children at home or an IT consultant running his own company. Numbers on flexible training courses have risen from 657 in 2000/01 when they were first introduced, to 2,356 in 2003/04. (Ofsted 2003 p 10). The Open University offers the majority of the geography places with 20 places for 2004-5. One case study (Figure 1) highlights an extreme example but one where the flexible route helped produce one teacher who otherwise could not have trained through traditional routes. Providers have found this route expensive in staff time largely because of catering for individual needs at variable levels of entry and start times. This route has also enabled experienced but unqualified teachers to study a reduced training programme and gain QTS within one or two terms.

Two new schemes aim to attract the most able graduates into the profession. The high profile *Fast Track* route was begun in 2000 and offers successful candidates an increased training bursary of £5000 (making £13000 in all) plus

a laptop. It also offers enhanced opportunities for continuing professional development during training and in the first years of teaching. One teacher now only in her second year of teaching describes ways she has benefited from the Fast Track scheme as follows: *“I have been given a computer and digital/video camera which I use to produce resources. I have received really focused continuing professional development (CPD) and have a teacher mentor who makes me reflect on where I’ve come from, where I am now and where I’m going to. I attend national conferences and meet and communicate by e-mail with other Fast Track teachers all over the country. I have shadowed a deputy head and joined my school’s senior management team, helping to develop a three-year school strategic plan for CPD. I now induct new teachers into the school.”*

Another new scheme, *Teach First*, which is still in its initial year, encourages bright graduates to receive a brief training, spend two years in challenging schools and then enter other employment or perhaps decide to remain in teaching. Both Fast Track and Teach First have attracted geography graduates. Both routes have their sceptics and it is too early to assess the impact of these routes but as both involve a considerable additional funding stream, critics will be quick to examine the value added in coming years.

The final innovations to be mentioned here are the *Teacher Associate Scheme* and *Students Associate Scheme*. These have developed from earlier initiatives and encourage undergraduates to work in schools on an occasional basis during their degree and to receive some training alongside that school experience. Providers have been enthusiastic about supporting these routes, largely because they are small scale and can be adapted from existing structures and materials. Again it is too early for an assessment of impact to have been made.

Mentoring arrangements

Teachers are increasingly interested in gaining some form of qualification for their continuing professional development. Fullan (2001: 265-266). Describes this teacher interest as ‘a whole range of new skills, relationships and orientations (that) are changing the essence of professionalism’ More cynically teachers also need this evidence for their career progression and specifically to enable them to pass beyond a threshold point on the pay scale. For 2004, The Geographical Association has introduced into its UK annual conference, a new scheme of certificated, quality-controlled Professional Development Units. Conference participants, sign up in advance, attend a number of pathways suited to their own development needs and receive further reading packs. Further work can be undertaken to enable candidates to gain a module towards an Advanced Diploma.

Teachers who engage with ITE are now looking for certification and accreditation for their work in mentoring beginning teachers. A London wide initiative, begun in 2003-4, provides a three-stage model of mentor certification to recognise skills gained. This is particularly valuable as London teachers move schools more frequently than most. In 2004, in response to demand, a Professional Diploma in Learning and Teaching was launched by The Institute of Education in partnership with Edexcel, one of the UK examination groups. While teachers value the learning gains that working with

a beginning teacher brings they now demand, on-the-job training experiences which 'count' as valuable professional development and may also aid promotion. Most teachers do see mentoring as beneficial to their day-to-day work, as one geography mentor explains: *'having a geography trainee makes me think more carefully about what I'm doing. It's easy to fall into ruts. Even observing their lessons makes me reflect on what I'm doing in similar classroom situations.'*

Assessment matters

Providers of initial teacher training/education are all inspected at regular intervals by Ofsted, the government inspection body for education. Through this, providers are subject to inspection regimes similar to school rather than to other universities. All providers have now been inspected, most more than once, and the ratings published. Figure 2 shows a graph of the grades allocated to all providers of geography courses up to 2003. Courses have been closed, expanded or restricted in numbers on the results so these are high stakes inspections. Inspection frameworks have become key texts for course leaders. Because of this, any changes in government policy, quickly reflected in Ofsted's inspections are equally quickly adopted by ITE, thus increasing homogeneity and central control. Such change is considered by many as the vehicle which has raised standards and certainly it has encouraged providers 'to examine quality assurance and enhancement issues and to articulate our vision for the future'. Taylor (1997).

In terms of assessing the geography teacher trainees, the Standards for QTS offer a 'can do' list which many ITT partnerships have reduced to 'tick-lists' and evidence columns. For some assessors of beginning teachers this represents a useful and achievable assessment method. Evidence is gathered against each standard, e.g. lesson observation notes, examples of recording grades, preparing pupil reports and talking with parents, logs of extra curricular activity, professional development opportunities and evaluated by school staff and assessors. The process of how a beginning teacher reflects or assesses the origins, purposes and consequences of their work is less easily assessed. Brant (2003) argues that the reflective teacher views 'knowledge as problematic rather than certain and the role of curriculum as reflexive (i.e. reflection in action), rather than received' and claims that the written assignments and presentations that assess these elements in most PGCE courses are the additional aspects of PGCE over QTS.

Subject knowledge assessment usually takes place through an initial needs identification and thereafter usually by inputs of workshops, self-supported study and individual suggestions made by tutors. In 2002/3 TTA funding was allocated to the production of subject-based support materials, a development which suggests increased control and perhaps further verification of Aldrich's(2002) claim that a national curriculum for ITE has been established.

Summary including the issues faced.

There is now a plethora of routes by which teachers can train and these have attracted significant numbers of trainees. Teacher recruitment in England now looks healthy but against a 14% reduction in the numbers of secondary

geography teachers being trained between 2003 and 2004 this is alarming. Geography educators will be monitoring the further changes closely. There is a circle of geography education which must be broken in order to improve the geography education of our young people. We must educate new teachers to adapt their school geography courses to make them relevant and motivating. We need to excite young people sufficiently to study geography at university level so that our supply of future teachers is able and dynamic. Finally we must continue to make teaching an attractive career. We must listen to our new geography teachers and identify what we must do to retain them within the profession. It is not simply about financial reward but about their feeling valued, receiving further training when required and about being able to work without huge stress and workload pressures.

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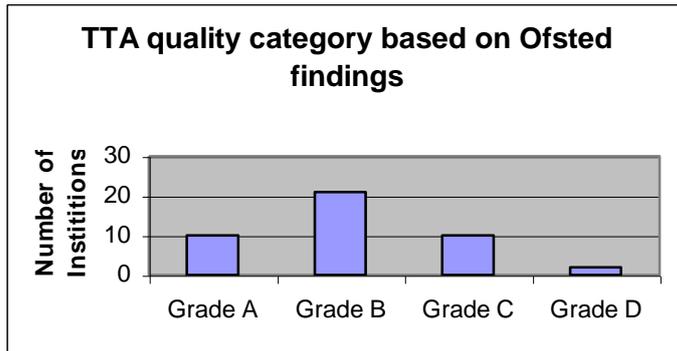
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Websites with relevant information

Teacher Training Agency www.tta.gov.uk

Department for Education and Skills www.dfes.gov.uk
Teacher net www.Teachernet.gov.uk
Teach First www.teachfirst.org.uk
Ofsted www.ofsted.gov.uk

Figure 2 TTA quality category based on Ofsted findings



Raw data

Grade A	10
Grade B	21
Grade C	10
Grade D	2

Figure 1 Training through the flexible route. A case study: Janine's story.

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 but 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. After a delay in her training and considerable efforts to find alternative school placements, Janine has now completed. She is dedicated and absolutely suited to teaching. But the tutor time and any travelling costs involved will far outweigh the training fee.