

FACTORS RESTRICTING THE EARLY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OF SECONDARY TEACHERS IN SCOTLAND AND HOW THESE MIGHT BE TACKLED

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ABSTRACT

The initial teacher education (ITE) process for those who wish to become secondary teachers in Scotland has been remarkably static over the past two decades. By examining a variety of sources and particularly a recent study of some of those who are becoming Geography teachers, it is suggested that custom and pragmatism combine to sustain the one-year consecutive entry route (Professional Graduate Diploma in Education [PGDE]) as the dominant form of ITE for secondary teachers. Three key areas relating to the PGDE(Secondary) route are explored: the dominance of the one-year course; how fit for purpose the course is within the continuum of early professional learning; and the opinions of stakeholders. The source material is also critically interrogated to explore what might be a better preparation of secondary teachers and what roles ought to be played by the Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in that preparation.

BACKGROUND TO SCOTTISH EDUCATION

There is a long history of pride among Scots in their education system. Despite international data which showed weaknesses in the achievements of young Scots, it was seldom the schools and even less often the teachers who were blamed for these weaknesses. More blame was attached to poverty and lack of investment in education. So when Scotland achieved constitutional devolution within the United Kingdom in 1999, radical change in the initial training of secondary teachers by a one-year consecutive route was not anticipated.

Education is a priority for post-devolution Scotland. *The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act* (Scottish Executive 2000a) was the first major piece of legislation which set the tone of the new Scottish Parliament and introduced a whole raft of changes, such as, the five National Priorities, Improvement Planning at Local Authority (LA) and school level, inspections of LAs and increased powers to school boards. This was followed by *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century: The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Professional Conditions of Service for Teachers* (Scottish Executive 2000b). This report focussed on Scotland's place in a global economy and the need to ensure that the teaching workforce was equipped for the future.

Promoting teacher professionalism was at the heart of the McCrone agreement (Scottish Executive 2001a) which resulted in a simplified career structure and a guaranteed probation year for all newly qualified teachers as part of the New Teacher Induction Scheme (NTIS) (Annex B). The career stages in the preparation of teachers, from ITE to Headship, have become more than ever dominated by a series of professional standards, such as the 'Standard for Initial Teacher Education' (SITE) (GTCS 2006).

There have been similarly significant changes in the nature of what teachers teach. *A Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive, 2004) signals a policy change away from a traditional, knowledge-driven curriculum towards a more skill-based, flexible, creative system which highlights the importance of transferable skills. The importance of that innovation is highlighted in a recent external report on Scottish Education, viz: 'Scottish schools are changing in what they teach, in instructional emphasis, in what teachers are encouraged to value and to expect, and in the quality of interactions between teachers and students...' (OECD 2007: 90).

The role of the teacher and nature of pupils has also changed. The OECD Report (ibid: 122) highlights some of the current challenges facing Scottish teachers:

the widening achievement gap from about P5; marked social differences in basic achievement in the compulsory years (as reflected in deprivation measures); declining student engagement and interest (especially in secondary); marked gaps in SQA attainment.

There is evidence, therefore, to suggest that Scottish Education is undergoing a period of major transition. However, whilst ambitions are high at governmental level, Scottish secondary schools have undergone little structural change since the introduction of the comprehensive system, subject hierarchies remain fixed and curriculum architecture is relatively unchanged.

Ball, cited in Menter *et al.* (2006: 283), describes these policy changes as ‘potent policy condensates’ which reflect the increasing colonisation of education policy by economic policy imperatives.’

BACKGROUND TO SCOTTISH INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

There is little evidence of major change within ITE for secondary teachers in Scotland. One of the most obvious features in the professional experience of today’s secondary teachers is the remarkable similarity in their ITE irrespective of when they undertook it. If anything, the trends have been in the directions of conformity and uniformity rather than in the directions of innovation and diversity. Irrespective of trends, most secondary teachers entered the profession after a single year of training, up to half of which was spent on placement.

Secondary ITE has been dominated by the one-year model to a greater extent than most other European countries (Eurydice 2002). Indeed, in Finland, which is one of the main nations against which Scottish politicians benchmark our country, there is no equivalent of the PDGE and the typical preparation for a teacher is a University five-year programme with a heavy emphasis on theory. While four of the seven ITE providers in Scotland offer a combined degree in Education and a teaching subject, only the University of Stirling is a significant provider. And while there are also specialist BEd degrees in four institutions for Music, Technology and Physical Education teachers, the combined total of graduates from the specialist and combined programmes amounts to only 20% of new entrants to secondary teaching, with the remaining 80% being produced by the one-year route.

As far as changes in ITE are concerned, there have been numerous discussions and much tinkering, but no major change in the fundamental shape and purpose of secondary programmes. For example, progressively from the early 1990s all teacher training establishments have become affiliated with universities. But rather than re-energising programmes, the main results have been tensions in relation to teaching hours and school visits versus research demands. Universities have found it difficult to recognise ‘university-based teacher educators as constituting a significant occupational group with its own professional ends and purposes’ (Nixon *et al.* 2000: 255).

Similarly changes in the outcomes of ITE, towards competences and then standards, which occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s left Scottish ITE establishments with considerable freedom over the design, delivery and assessment of the training programme. ‘Any attempts to change the nature of Initial Teacher Education which are perceived as politically motivated have been resisted, particularly those which could be seen as directly or indirectly threatening to the professional status of teaching’ (Christie 1999: 907).

The GTCS, created in 1965, has considerable powers over ITE in Scotland in relation to entry regulations and standards but has moved very slowly in terms of changing the model of teacher preparation. A recent report by the OECD identified the ‘strong practical and contextual emphasis’ (2007: 30) of Scottish training as a strength. That emphasis is one which teachers, teacher educators and the GTCS apparently share.

As with any public sector activity, government and its agencies have also been scrutinising teacher preparation. For example, the 'First Stage Review of ITE' (Scottish Executive 2001b) raised several questions with regard to the credibility of ITE staff and quality of campus-based elements of ITE courses, asking whether they illustrated and promoted best practice. The review also indicated the need for ITE to build upon the essential thread of continuous professional development (CPD). Next, *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century: Agreement reached following recommendations made in the McCrone Report* (Scottish Executive 2001a) yielded several critical comments from students, probationers and registered teachers about the quality of ITE they had received. *The Second Stage Review of ITE* concluded that ITE was only 'the initial phase in a continuum of teacher education'. (Scottish Executive 2005a: 7) Finally, the GTCS (2007) recently highlighted the need for Higher Education (HE) to re-examine courses and CPD role in the light of the introduction of the NTIS.

In addition, there has been international data which throws light on Scottish teacher education. Looking directly at Scotland, the OECD examiners comment (2007) that 'training remained too subject-centred and too little focussed on the challenges of diversity and inclusiveness' (p. 40) and lacked 'cross-professional training' (p. 89). Looking around the world at twenty-five school systems, McKinsey and Company (Barber & Mourshed 2007) highlight 'teacher quality' as the key factor in influencing pupil learning (p. 12), mention the importance of varied and flexible routes into teaching (England has 32 such routes against Scotland's five) so as to get the best graduates into the profession (p. 20), and conclude that classroom learning is the most important learning for student teachers (p. 27).

If we are to ensure that ITE prepares students for the challenges of a 21st Century school, the way teachers are trained and the extent to which they feel prepared to meet these challenges must be examined. Aberdeen University is using mainly external funding to provide a programme (*Scottish Teachers for a New Era*) more tailored to meet the needs of future teachers. But that funding is for the four-year programme for future primary teachers. Any innovative practice which does exist in Aberdeen and elsewhere with regard to the majority of Secondary ITE students on PGDE courses is still modest and low key. We feel therefore justified in concluding that little progress has been made in changing the fundamentals of teacher preparation for secondary teaching within the past twenty years.

RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY

This paper seeks to understand the dominance of the one-year route in secondary ITE and its appropriateness for teaching in 21st Century schools. Empirical data, policy debate, and the views of stakeholders will all be taken into account.

Our rationale for the paper relates to previous findings. Brown (1996: 36) reports that 'analysis of teacher education policy is a minority activity among Scottish teacher educators' and Brisard (2003) comments that 'there appears to be a dearth of studies reporting student-teachers' current perceptions of PGCE secondary courses in Scotland'. These comments resonated with our own experiences as a subject leader and a senior member of Education Faculties and public bodies respectively, and with our experiences as tutors in Scotland's largest TEI where 40% of all secondary teachers are trained, almost exclusively through the one-year route. Even with a recent expansion in research into ITE in Scotland (Teacher Education Group 2007) most studies are either about four-year or Primary courses or make the curious assumption that the commonalities across all forms of ITE are greater than the differences between different forms of programme.

We have adopted a mixed methods methodology, drawing on our own personal experiences and particular institution, the published literature (albeit that in the

absence of a large number of empirical or refereed studies much credence has to be given to 'grey' literature, and an empirical study (Reid 2007) of a recent group of PGDE students who were training to be Geography teachers.

This research examined probationer and mentor perceptions of the value of the university-based element of the Geography PGDE(S) course in relation to their probationary year. This small-scale reflective case study analysed questionnaire and 2006 GTCS Interim Profile data gathered from 25 probationers and 19 mentors.

This data allowed the researcher to:

- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the PGDE(S) Geography course and suggest improvements;
- Consider the success of the course in relation to the Standard for Full Registration (SFR) competences for Professional Skills and Abilities and identify improvements;
- Suggest subject related Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities that could be provided by the university to further support probationers.

Issues of significance to the wider field of ITE were raised relating to the PGDE(S) model, CPD and the use of benchmarks.

All of those sources of data are therefore used to support the arguments in this article.

THE DOMINANCE OF THE ONE-YEAR ROUTE

For generations the preparation of secondary teachers in Scotland has been based on the conceit that Scottish Universities produce high quality graduates who need only a modest one-year preparation in order to successfully teach the subject on their degree parchment to young people. Accordingly, unlike most other European countries (Eurydice 2002) which use a full degree in education and 'subjects' as the main preparation for secondary teachers, almost no Scottish secondary teacher studies education as an undergraduate but receives only a token grounding in that academic discipline while undergoing a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) or Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE).

Prior to the mid-1980s there were two combined or concurrent degree routes into the whole range of secondary teaching subjects as well as specialist routes for the small numbers teaching Music or Physical Education or Technology. Of the concurrent routes, the generic BEd for secondary teaching was discontinued at that time by a Conservative government which preferred more practical and school-based programmes, leaving only the University of Stirling to offer its unique four-year degree which gives a dual qualification in Education and a teaching subject.

And yet there is ample opportunity for other universities to create concurrent or combined degrees leading to recognition as a secondary teacher. In almost every school subject a student can qualify to teach that subject by accumulating 80 credit points (one-sixth of the total in a typical undergraduate Honours degree). It would be easy, therefore, to offer Education as a second principal subject and still maintain a critical mass in the main subject discipline. A small number of universities do offer a limited concurrent degree programme but the take-up is low and the logistical difficulties are great.

The major force which ensures the continuing dominance of the one-year consecutive route is governmental control over teacher education intakes and overall university numbers. Governments are afraid to increase teacher education numbers because of the public relations backlash of students not finding employment in permanent posts. Teacher unemployment always hits the headlines, especially when more outlying or rural areas have vacancies for teachers. In a discussion on BBC Radio Scotland on 27 November 2007, the Schools Minister, Maureen Watt, acknowledged the problems of workforce planning and confirmed that 700 of the 3500 probationer teachers from the previous session were currently unemployed,

while Aberdeenshire alone was advertising 55 vacancies and seeking teachers abroad. In situations such as this, it is easier to quickly increase or decrease the numbers on one-year courses than on four-year courses.

In addition, when the Labour/Liberal Democrat administration in Scotland (2003-2007) set ambitious targets for teacher recruitment within the lifetime of that Parliament, these could only be met by large increases in one-year programmes. And, even if the administration wished to increase four-year course numbers, the Executive's Education Department had no control over undergraduate numbers, even for BEd and had not been able to persuade the Executive's Lifelong Learning Department to increase them.

As a consequence, numbers on the one-year route into secondary teaching rose between 2000/01 and 2005/06 from 80% of the total student teacher intake to almost 90% and the same route into primary teaching from 30% of the total to over 60%.

A telling difference in perception emerged, however, when a new SNP Government took power in Scotland in 2007. As one of its early acts, it brought the Education and Lifelong Learning Departments together and next it announced further increases in the primary teacher workforce in order to meet its class size targets for P1 to P3. But, as Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, made clear to the Scottish Parliament on 20 June 2007:

Yet the teaching profession is clear that the 4 year route allows newly qualifying teachers to make a more confident start in the profession. In truth the one-year and 4 year routes attract different types of high quality teacher and it is important that each is kept as healthy and stimulating routes into the profession. But we need to return them to a better balance than they have been in the last number of years.

Because BEd output had dominated primary schools for decades and their worth had been proven, it was easier for bodies such as the Association of Heads and Deputies in Scotland to present a case against flooding their primary schools with PGDE output and to persuade Ms Hyslop to increase BEd intakes. There was no similar tradition in secondary schools and the benefits of four-year courses were seldom researched except by their major protagonist, the staff of the University of Stirling. The rapid expansion in teacher supply alone was so welcome to Secondary Headteachers when demands on teachers were increasing and the workforce was ageing. Thus the case for a four-year route into secondary teaching was not put to or adopted by the Scottish Government.

Our empirical study examined the strengths and weaknesses of the PGDE(S) Geography course. In the early stages of their careers as teachers, and looking back on their PGDE course, probationer comments highlighted the time constraints such as lack of reflection and limited opportunity for post-experiential learning:

'It was too close to the experience to discuss it objectively and talk it over with peers'.

'It would have been much more meaningful if we had looked at educational theory after school experience'.

Philpott (2006) also explored the complex problems of learning transfer in the context of PGCE courses and student placements. She concluded that effective partnerships were essential if the application of theory and practice were to be successful and highlighted time and resource limits placed on school and university staff. PGCE courses should be designed to correspond more closely with the learning experiences that students are likely to encounter during placement. Reid's study (2007: 81) concluded that the one-year ITE model 'needs to be reviewed in relation to Early Professional Learning and ongoing weaknesses such as classroom management and inclusion'. To what extent any of these weaknesses could be addressed by using

alternative models such as the four-year course is still a matter of speculation but it is likely that a truncated experience such as the one-year course will always leave students with a feeling of large gaps in their experience and knowledge.

IS THE ONE-YEAR ROUTE STILL FIT FOR PURPOSE?

Even without addressing the four-year versus one-year issue, recent trends within the one-year programme for secondary teaching are a cause of concern about how well teacher education is equipping its students to deal with the new demands placed on schools.

In our own institution, the core components of the course are remarkably similar between 1987 and 2007, mainly because the staffing structures of schools and the subject-based nature of the curriculum are similar over that period. However, a number of underlying factors have changed.

The 1987 Course Validation document, submitted to the Council for National Academic Awards (Jordanhill College of Education: 7-8), still reflected much of the tradition of highly-esteemed colleges which were well-grounded in both theory and practice. The purpose of secondary teacher education is, 'to equip new teachers with sufficient professional skills and knowledge to enable them to take up their first appointment with some confidence', while the philosophy of teacher education, is that 'the course should be based on a unifying conceptual model. The SPIE (specify, plan, implement, evaluate) model has been chosen'.

By the time of the most recent re-accreditation of the same course much of that confidence had been eroded. The 2004 document (University of Strathclyde: 4) states the purpose as, 'to support the development of student teachers in achieving SITE (Standard for Initial Teacher Education) for the secondary sector within the context of a partnership model for teacher education'.

The two most noteworthy changes here are: (a) having to work with an externally-derived Standard; and (b) having to acknowledge that more authority and control is now vested in the school partners who are the basis of half of the course.

In the same manner the philosophy has changed, viz: 'the vision of a teacher in the 21st Century is – aware of the changing context cognisant of the inter-relatedness of classroom management and positive behaviour; understand(s) teaching and learning and the needs of young people; can motivate; is critical and analytical' (ibid: 4).

This is a worthy vision but much less student-centred and much more school-system oriented.

The changing climate for teacher education is also reflected in resourcing over those twenty years. Student/staff ratio has doubled and class sizes have risen, budgets have been cut, pastoral and judgemental visits to students on placements have halved, and student contact hours on campus have declined from 375 hours to 275 hours, reaching the point where the less highly-motivated student can perceive the campus component as part-time (in many cases requiring only 15 hours of attendance per week).

The responsibilities placed on teachers in schools for the successful preparation of new professionals have grown and teachers (part-time or on secondment) deliver a growing portion of the campus as well as the off-campus part of the course. Yet these school-based practitioners have their own agendas (Cope & Stephen 2001; Christie *et al.* 2004; Ball & Goodson 1985) for teacher preparation which are more concerned with classroom survival and teacher sub-cultures than with the bigger pictures of educational theory and teacher professionalism. At the same time, the problems for HE in delivering its part of ITE are compounded by 'the massive increase in student-to-staff ratios, financial constraints, the commodification of research and teaching, the growth of the higher education bureaucracy and the triumph of the higher education entrepreneurs' (Bridges 1996: 255).

While there is always a need to improve provision and use public funding efficiently, the changes do not seem to be located within a rationale nor within an evidence-based debate about the nature and purpose of initial teacher education.

THE CORE ISSUES IN TEACHER EDUCATION?

Perhaps the trends in initial teacher education simply reflect the realities. When Morrison and McIntyre (1969) published their classic text they found that students on secondary teacher education courses:

- saw greatest value in teaching practice and least value in academic subjects;
- wanted a course which contained more on new methods; class management and discipline skills; group methods; how to teach pupils of below average ability;
- adopted the attitudes of staffroom colleagues rather than teaching college mentors within two years of entering teaching.

That set of phenomena where school practice is typically seen as superior to academic learning was subsequently described as the 'two worlds pitfall' (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann 1983). It has now become a regular and seemingly intractable part of the ITE discourse, referred to, for example, as 'the expression of anxiety inherent to the very nature of the process of learning to teach and symptomatic of the painful construction of trainees' professional identity' (Brisard 2002: 52).

In our empirical data, and confirmed in other recent studies such as Hobson (2003) and Winter (2006):

- Practical elements of the course which could be directly applied to the classroom environment were most highly valued: 'assessment, syllabus knowledge and learning and teaching elements of the course were valued most during the PGDE(S) year.'
- Teaching subject content was more valued than generic (academic) content: '...more in depth focus of particular courses e.g. Standard Grade.'
- Questionnaire and GTCS Interim Profile data indicated that 48% of probationers would have valued greater input on managing behaviour and syllabus content and 36% on differentiation and assessment of pupils.
- 40% of students felt lacking in the practice and the skills of working cooperatively with other school personnel.

Not much has changed. A variety of factors contribute to continuity of the 'two worlds' phenomenon. The students are graduates who want to finish academic study and enter practice; the 'word of mouth' from one intake to the next is that schools are where you learn most; and many students are experienced workers and learners (around one-third of our 2006 output were over 30 years of age) who want to gain a salary and then a permanent post as quickly as possible.

What has of course changed is the stage immediately after initial teacher education. Since 2002, students now enter the teaching profession through guaranteed employment in an Induction Year, with a reduced teaching load, a school mentor, and access to significant amounts of CPD.

The official line from government (Scottish Executive 2005b) states that 'the high proportion of probationer teachers achieving the Standard for Full Registration during their induction year suggests that...virtually all are sufficiently competent from the outset'. Modest applause then from the Scottish Executive to ITE.

The Chief Executive of the GTCS recently (GTCS 2007: 2) analysed the success of the Induction Scheme and was less generous to ITE. He invited further change in the preceding and succeeding stages of teacher development, claiming that 'we let them [new teachers] down so badly in their second year of teaching' and suggesting that universities also need to respond to the scheme, asking:

Have they changed any part of their courses because of what has happened [in the Teacher Induction Scheme]? How do they see themselves becoming a more integral part of the CPD continuum?

His comments are paralleled in a recent analysis of newly qualified teachers (NQT) by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) (2008: 23), who report that:

TEIs were insufficiently involved in the continuing professional development of NQTs. They should continue to develop their involvement in providing courses for teachers on the process of mentoring.

HIGHER EDUCATION'S ROLE IN QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION

At present in Scotland there are three formal components in the professional preparation of teachers – ITE, Induction and CPD. No one of these is without its problems.

A major issue is the means by which underperforming teachers are identified. To what extent is there an active process through assessment or a passive process using informal (and often imprecise) means? For example, few people fail PGDE or Induction (a total of around 5%), but the total wastage over these two years of preparation for a career in teaching can reach 25%¹.

The system of pressure rather than performance is defended by the President of the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (The Herald 2007: 7).

The process of competency starts at university and quite a number of student teachers are weeded out at that stage or during their probationary period. Where a teacher does get to the classroom and is found not to be up to the job then it is my experience that the matter rarely gets to the dismissed stage because the member of staff concerned resigns.

Yet, all our experience of these 'resign rather than be sacked' procedures is that there is no adequate measure which can confirm that those who resign or give up are the least capable teachers.

A second issue is the extent to which placing Induction in the hands of peer teachers is a satisfactory means of improving teacher quality. A senior Headteacher and Vice-Convener of GTCS (Thewliss 2007: 14) says that despite the success of the Induction Scheme, some 'supporters' lack training and/or commitment; some schools provide poor access to CPD for probationers; much CPD in school-focussed not probationer-focussed; and teachers place little importance on the Standard for Full Registration.

His experiences are also reflected in other studies, where Brown (2001) describes the characteristics of effective mentors, and Jones and Straker (2006) observe that mentors find it difficult to relate to the wider interests of probationers and are still guided by the 'theory is bad, practice is good' philosophy.

The comments of our subjects when they were reflecting on their Induction experience also relate to these views:

'Don't think it (GTCS Interim Profile) matters too much. As long as you've ticked all the boxes by the end of the year'.

'I think the interim profile has to be full of stretched truths (as I call it) otherwise you can't fill it in sufficiently'.

Findings also indicated that Probationer teachers found that the CPD on offer to them was too heavily school or system-oriented and not sufficiently geared to their classroom and subject needs.

A third issue is whether the quality of existing teachers is sufficient to entrust the delivery of CPD to them. HMIE have identified crucial weaknesses in today's teachers as CPD providers (HMIE 2007).

training was increasingly being delivered through in-house twilight sessions, offered by school staff (p. 19)

.....however, there was little evidence yet of sufficiently effective and cohesive monitoring and evaluation of the impact of CPD on pupils' experiences and attainment at school level. (p. 21)

Higher education has the potential to play a part in addressing each of these three issues.

In their review of ITE in Britain, Menter *et al.* (2006) draw attention to a range of options which have been raised by other authors. Among these are – making courses responsive to local contexts and needs; using 'communities of practice' approaches; putting learning at the heart of ITE; and running courses like a fashion house rather than a production line. Furthermore, in terms of the specific issue of the contribution of one-year and four-year programmes, the *Australian Future Teachers Project* (Ingvarson *et al.* 2004) concluded that teachers who had completed a four-year programme of training felt better prepared to enter the teaching profession than those who followed a one-year route.

As far as Induction is concerned, Conlon (2003) welcomes the NTIS but suggests that a merging of the induction year with an adapted and extended PGDE course to create an integrated two-year curriculum would be a far more suitable model.

Finally, with regard to CPD, Reid (2007: 81) sums up the dilemma thus: 'a more coherent and progressive programme of CPD is required. HE must develop a clear CPD role which meets beginning teachers' needs'.

There is clearly ground to be recovered in establishing the legitimate expertise of HE across all of ITE, Induction and CPD. As Humes (2007: 21) says, 'the academic world bears some responsibility for colluding in its own intellectual containment'.

DISCUSSION

There is no clear consensus on the specific weaknesses in the career-long development of teachers. From the perspective of this analysis, however, one of the remarkable aspects is the apparent lack of concern over secondary teachers' ITE and the enduring commitment to the 'quick fix' one-year course.

While it is to Scotland's credit that the Induction Scheme for probationers and the CPD processes for experienced teachers are attracting favourable international attention, is it not also desirable to make these two phases of teacher development even more successful by improving the quality of output from initial teacher education?

There seems to be a desire amongst stakeholders to ignore any negative evidence about the quality of training for secondary teaching. That is all the more remarkable when one of the most comprehensive catalogues of weaknesses in ITE provision has been provided by HMIE.

In a Scoping Review of ITE (HMIE 2003) the following findings were reported:

- It is not yet proved or disproved whether higher education institutions provide a better environment for ITE.
- PGDE is too time constrained and information intensive; the classes are too large and there are too many lectures; the staffing on PGDE is more unstable than BEd.
- Reducing the number of observed visits could compromise the reliability and consistency of assessments.
- Linking ITE to induction and CPD is the most desirable way forward.

Stakeholders would respond by saying that they are constantly reviewing ITE courses and keeping them fit for purpose. Indeed in the last twenty years there have been five major revisions to ITE Guidelines or Standards, two major reviews of provision by government, and the continual re-accreditation events from GTCS. On further examination of the outcomes of these accountability elements, more concern is apparent in relation to entry standards, keeping school partners content over placement

expectations and adding items such as behaviour management to course content in order to keep the public happy, rather than concern about the processes and purposes of the courses themselves. Indeed the last (GTCS, 2006) review of Guidelines added twenty major aspects to the courses, at a time when concerns had already been expressed about overloading ITE, especially the one-year courses. The view among some teacher educators already was that ‘the wide number of issues to be addressed at ITE level increased the risk of superficiality of coverage of important issues’ (Brisard *et al.* 2006: 56) and these additional demands would only harden that view.

There are stark contrasts between primary and secondary ITE. In primary, the PGDE has normally been the minority provision, used as a regulator to cope with major fluctuations in the demand for teachers. Recent years have seen the fluctuation reach extreme levels and PGDE provision has come to dominate but the Scottish Government is anxious to restore the historic balance. Four-year provision is returning to the norm and is wide ranging enough to cope with increased external demands while still remaining innovative, as the *Scottish Teachers for a New Era* programme at the University of Aberdeen, adequately demonstrates.

Secondary ITE is dominated by the PGDE and, as the last twenty years demonstrates, has been constantly buffeted by ‘tinkering’ without having the capacity or extent to develop to the level that Induction and CPD have. It is now the poor relation of ‘the three I’s’ – initial, induction, in-service.

CONCLUSION

Many questions remain unresolved about secondary ITE. It seems clear that there is a lower priority given to ITE by most stakeholders than to Induction and CPD. That view remains unchallenged and is reinforced by influential reports (Barber & Mourshed 2007). The evidence thus suggests that the initial preparation of secondary teachers remains much as it was for most of the Twentieth Century – a matter of low importance.

Students with degree level qualifications in a specific subject go in to teacher education to be trained to teach that subject effectively and largely succeed in that ambition. Those who are likely to be dangerous or incompetent are persuaded out by pressure rather than failed by assessment.

Secondary teacher educators are largely recruited from successful school subject teachers and use that skill diligently to train the next generation of subject teachers. They are now, however, being progressively marginalised by their university masters who increase class sizes and cut contact with students in order to release resource for the university’s ‘real’ job of doing research. Remarkably for institutions which pride themselves on their research excellence, these universities provoke these changes in the ITE process without evidence to indicate the impact of reducing placement visits and increasing class sizes on the quality of output.

Governments have a simple objective – provide the nation with enough teachers quickly and within a modest budget. Both Labour and SNP administrations have competed to see who could increase the teacher workforce by the greatest number. They have done this predominantly by massive increases in PGDE cohorts, which their advisers clearly feel will maintain the quality of secondary teaching at a high level.

Only ITE providers themselves can change these perceptions and change their processes to make stronger links with Induction and CPD. That not only means winning the intellectual argument within their own universities, but it also means establishing a closer political alignment with the GTCS and the Scottish Government in order to demonstrate that there are novel and important things which only TEIs can do, and which will add value both to teacher development and to pupil learning. Some glimmers of optimism can be found in a number of TEIs, but more is required from all seven TEIs so that any future lobbying of GTCS and Government can secure a dynamic rather than a static role for ITE.

The pressure to change may also come from other sources, and a few speculative factors can be alluded to. For example, if the secondary school curriculum moves far away from a subjects base towards a skills base, the graduate in a subject discipline may no longer be automatically looked to as the future teacher. Or, the tendency by universities to allocate a decreasing proportion of the government's funding for ITE to the actual teaching of courses and a growing proportion to infrastructure costs, management posts, and as a subsidy to research, may lead to new models of ITE based on a strong evidence base and not just on expedient cost-cutting.

Our argument is that there is much to celebrate in teacher preparation in general, but that celebration has led to some complacency, while a specific set of problems associated with the initial teacher education of secondary teachers goes barely noticed.

Finally it is disappointing that the HE community itself has generated comparatively little research on the initial teacher education of secondary teachers. More research is needed on: the relative strength of education graduates versus PGDE diplomates; the respective added values of ITE, Induction and CPD; the nature of the pool of potential teachers and the strategies which would ensure that more of that pool could access the form of ITE which was most suited to their backgrounds, geographical locations and ambitions.

ENDNOTE

¹ It is remarkable that there is no systematic collection of data about the flows from initial teacher education into the teaching profession or about the survival rates of those who enter the profession. For some reason this has not been seen to be worthy of attention from the GTCS or the Scottish Government or the academic community. The figure quoted here is therefore based on a number of facts and assumptions. A Scottish Parliament answer of 9 June 2006 to a question by Maureen Watt MSP elicited the information that in 2004/05 13% of PGCE Secondary entrants failed to complete the course; a Scottish Parliament answer of 6 September 2006 to a question by Murray Tosh MSP elicited the information that in 2004/05 2.5% of probationers failed to achieve full registration at the end of that year; ITE courses try to over-recruit by at least 5% so that early drop-out does not affect the calculation on funded numbers which is made around November each year; and then there are those who complete ITE but do not enter the profession or those who complete Induction but do not enter the profession, and both of these figures have to be estimated. But, after all of those assumptions and calculations, the estimate of at least 25% of those entering PGDE and not achieving Full Registration within two years seems fair.

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