

Initial Teacher education in England: The role of Higher Education and Teach First

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Internal and external evaluations have reaffirmed the importance of ‘effective’ teachers and ‘high quality’ teaching, which is now widely acknowledged to be the most important school-level factor influencing student achievement (McKinsey, 2007, 2010; OECD, 2004, 2005).

Whilst there has been a general shift internationally over the past three decades towards greater professionalism in teacher education, with higher entrance standards and higher qualifying requirements,

there has also been an important counter trend, away from conventional programmes led and administered by university departments of education, towards more flexible, school-based routes, including in some cases deregulated and more accelerated, 'fast-track' options (Musset, 2010) (Tatto and Furlong, 2015, p. 145).

Current policy trends in England towards Teaching

- A) essentially a craft rather than an intellectual activity;
- B) an apprenticeship model of teacher training that can be located entirely in the workplace; and
- C) the related assumption that more time spent in schools inevitably—and unproblematically—leads to better and ‘more relevant’ learning.’ (MacNamara and Murray, 2013)

Teach First

In England a Teach First eligible school is determined by a points system that combines economic deprivation amongst pupils as well as the local achievement gap between poorer children and their wealthier peers. The criteria means about 32% of English primary schools and 36% of English secondary schools are eligible to work with Teach First.

Size of routes - number of trainees recruited (for academic year 2014/15):

Route	Trainees recruited⁴
All Routes	32,543
Main Routes	
Post-graduate (total)	26,218
Provider-led	16,986
School Direct (unsalaried)	6,451
School Direct (salaried)	2,781
Undergraduate (total)	5,938
Additional Routes	
Teach First	1,387 ⁵
Troops to Teachers	93 ⁶

There is too often too little attention paid to the broader economic and political contexts in which such training is taking place.

Where government propels the discourse that all that is done within teaching and learning needs to be measurable, accountable and, easily regulated without taking full account as to how social policies in other arenas of civic life *might also effect* the educational outcomes of children from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Teacher training should not lose sight of the important role that further study in collaboration with universities might have in contributing to the retention of high quality and reflective practitioners regardless of their route into teaching.