

The state of initial teacher education in England and what's happening in business and economics

Subject degrees and teaching qualifications

It may be hard to believe, but teaching has been an all-graduate affair only since 1970s. In many respects what is deemed necessary to become a good teacher echoes the debate of knowledge versus process in the school curriculum and reflects the tension between traditional and progressive education. In days gone by, top private schools demanded high-calibre graduates from Oxbridge (or at least a red-brick university) but with no requirement for a formal teaching qualification as strong subject knowledge was deemed sufficient preparation for life in the classroom. The need for well qualified teachers is now almost universally accepted within the teaching profession and it has been the norm until recently for teachers to complete a first degree in their subject and then take a one-year (master's-level since 2007) PGCE in the process of gaining qualified teacher status (QTS). However, we are now in a period of unprecedented change in the realm of teacher preparation and it is once again possible to teach in the state sector (in a Free School or an Academy) with no recognisable teaching qualification.

What's in a name: ITT or ITE?

Initial teacher *training* implies a conceptualisation of teaching as a craft. The apprentice teacher can learn the skills of the classroom from an experienced 'old hand' and one can see the important school role of passing on 'best practice'. Initial teacher *education*, however, implies the role of theory and research and a unique role for university in developing a critical approach that enables the teacher to understanding his or her classroom and to be able to realise learning opportunities as they arise. I am sure most readers will be familiar with the concept of the reflective practitioner or even the reflexive teacher. Conceptualising teaching as a craft *or* science creates a false dichotomy; it seems reasonable to me that a combination of substantial practical experience with university study of pedagogy and research is an excellent grounding for a career in teaching. Yet, the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, has argued for a return to "learning the craft". This does signal a move away from the established School-University Partnership model to a much more school-focused approach to *ITT* with a target of "50% of ITE becoming school-led" in the next few years.

Routes into teaching

Teacher supply and retention is now the responsibility of the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) which is part of the Department for Education (DfE). The NCTL issues strict targets for ITT (to both HEIs and direct to schools) with the aim of matching teacher supply with teacher demand. In addition to the proven PGCE, Teach First (TF) and School Direct (SD) offer alternative routes into teaching and it is also possible to gain QTS via School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT). Teach First (loosely based on Teach for America) was established in England in 2002 and designed to attract high calibre graduates who otherwise might not have considered teaching. In 2002 there were just 200 participants (the TF name for apprentice teachers). By 2013 there were 1260 participants with a target of 2000 for July 2015 intake. Teach First is characterised by a six-week 'summer school' in a Higher Education Institution (HEI) prior to taking up a position in a school with participants gaining QTS at the end of their first year and additionally a master's level PGCE awarded by the host university at the end of the second year of teaching. School Direct is new and

was launched in 2012. 'School Direct Salaried' largely replaced the old GTP and offers trainees an employment-based route in gaining QTS. Trainees may still spend some days at a university during their first year of teaching and some universities offer master's level credits as part of their training input. 'School Direct Training' allows schools to recruit teachers and then send them to an HEI for their PGCE. Typically the pattern of practical teaching experience will be different to a 'regular' PGCE, trainees spending 90 days in their 'own' school and 30 days in a contrasting placement.

One small step for economics?

In 2013/14, a total of nearly 17,000 Secondary ITT places were allocated and for 2014/15 the figure is just over 19,000 (of which 9,386 are HEIs, 8528 are SD and 1,287 are SCITTs). For business, there were 199 places in 2013/14 and 301 for 2014/15 (178 for HEIs, 106 for SD and 17 for SCITTs). Considerably fewer than the 500 odd allocations of just a few years ago, but nevertheless it is heartening to see a bounce-back. The big story though is the return of economics PGCE from a modest base this year to 55 in 2014/15 with the Institute of Education (London) offering 20 economics places, Staffordshire University 18 economics & business and Worcester University six economics with business. Anecdotally, I can report a huge shortage of economics teachers so I hope economics ITE provision continues to grow so that we are able to supply the economics teachers our schools desperately need.

Final thoughts

All children deserve good teachers and it follows that all students of business or economics deserve good business studies teachers and good economics teachers. The steer from government is for schools to play a more proactive role in initial teacher preparation and while many school may wish to 'grow their own' I am not convinced of schools' appetite to take on the responsibility of ITT wholesale. From an HEI perspective, the uncertainties of allocation policy and changes to funding have created uncertainty with some universities pulling out of ITE altogether. The rapid growth of School Direct seems to be speeding up process of destabilising existing programmes of ITE and this process may undermine a university's ability to provide master's courses and other CPD. I see the need for a strong enquiry-based element in teaching and strong Partnership between schools and university.

References

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Dr Jacek Brant is currently Head of Department of Curriculum Pedagogy and Assessment at the Institute of Education, University of London. From September 2014 he resumes a teaching role and will be subject leader of the new Economics PGCE