CSN POLICY BRIEFING

Newly Qualified Teachers - survey on the quality of initial training

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Summary
This briefing is on the NCTL research report, Newly Qualified Teachers: annual survey 2014. This annual survey was created to understand and monitor NQTs' views on the quality of their initial teacher training and their induction into teaching. The findings are used to shape policy and are shared in aggregated form with universities, colleges and schools involved in ITT. This survey builds on the similar surveys of 2013 and 2012. A copy of the survey questions is included in Appendix A of the research report.

This briefing will be of interest to those elected members and senior officers with responsibility for education as well as those in schools, colleges and Higher Education Institutions involved in ITT provision.

Overview
From February - May 2014, the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) surveyed newly qualified teachers who had successfully completed their initial training in 2012/13 and had been through over six months of their first teaching year. The NQTs were invited to complete an online questionnaire and asked them to:

- assess the quality of their initial teacher training in a number of areas
- tell the NCTL about their induction experience.

This included postgraduates from the 2012/13 cohort and undergraduates who had generally, started their training in the 2010/11 academic year. A total of 5,706 responses were received overall, a response rate of 18%. The annual survey of NQTs has been conducted since 2003.

The survey introduction states that there are over 450,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers in England, 96.5% of whom have qualified teacher status (QTS). Every year, about 40,000 new teachers join the school workforce, the majority of whom have been trained in the previous academic year. In 2012/13, out of the 35,380 people who began an ITT course, the majority were training in university higher education institutions (HEIs) or school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) providers and 14% were training in employment-based initial teacher training (EBITT). This was also the first year of School Direct, courses designed by groups of schools, with a university or a SCITT, based on the skills that they are looking for in a newly qualified teacher. The schools recruit the individual trainees onto their School Direct course and there is a government expectation that the trainee will get a job offer in one of the School Direct partnership’s schools when they qualify. 349 individuals completed their training through this route in 2012/13.

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was the final year of the Graduate Teacher programme (GTP), prior to the introduction of the School Direct programme.

The effectiveness of individual ITT providers is assessed by Ofsted through inspection visits to providers. The Ofsted Initial teacher education inspection handbook (June 2014) states Ofsted provides information to the Secretary of State and to Parliament about the work of ITE partnerships and the extent to which an acceptable standard of teacher training is being provided.

Each NQT completes a statutory induction, overseen by an appropriate body after gaining qualified teacher status, combining a personalised programme of development, support and professional dialogue with monitoring and an assessment of performance against the relevant teaching standards.

Briefing in full

Survey methodology and overview

The invitation to take part in the NQT survey was issued on 10 February to a total of 27,894 individuals out of 31,017 trainees who had received QTS. In total, e-mail address details were not available for a total of 4,192 NQTs. In order to boost the survey response rate, NCTL sent e-mail reminders to NQTs who had not responded between March and May 2014, wrote to providers who were showing a low response rate in May 2014 and enable NQTs who did not receive the invitation to access the survey form online. The overall response rate was 18%.

Out of the 5,706 responses, over half were primary trained (55%, 3118 NQTs) and the remaining were secondary or middle school-trained (45%, 2588 NQTs). For the purposes of the survey report, the secondary sector includes the responses of 35 individuals trained in specific middle school provision. 87% of respondents (4,937 NQTs) had been postgraduate trainees and the remaining 13% (269 NQTs) had been undergraduate trainees. Seven out of every ten respondents had trained with HEIs, either on a provider-led or School Direct pilot course. 20% had trained with EBITT providers, including trainees on the GTP and 35 Teach First trainees. The remaining 10% had trained with SCITT providers, again either on a provider-led or School Direct pilot course. Overall, 1% of the sample had undertaken a School Direct pilot course. Within both primary and secondary respondent groups, the most frequent training route was based in HEIs (Primary undergraduate/post graduate: 679/2439 trainees respectively; Secondary undergraduate/postgraduate: 679/2439 trainees respectively.

Almost half of all respondents were under 25 years old, and this group mostly consisted of those who chose to go into teaching straight from university either as undergraduates or post graduates. A further 35% of respondents were under 35, and the remaining 20% were in the 35-44 and 45 and above groups. On equality and diversity issues overall, it was found that:

- 8% of respondents had any declared disability;
- 11% of respondents reported an ethnicity other than White or White British;
- 75% of respondents were female (83% primary and 68% secondary). The remaining respondents were male.

The route to teaching taken by the sample was compared to the route taken by the whole population of final year trainees in 2012/13. There was a 5 percentage point difference between
the sample and population in the proportion of trainees who had taken a provider-led route (HEI or SCITT provider) and the proportion who had trained with a EBITT provider. Trainees from EBITT providers were slightly over-represented as the report explains, as these providers may have been motivated to encourage responses, as providers with fewer than 11 responses do not have their provider level survey results published on a year on year basis.

Apart from the questions in the survey, the NQTs were asked to give open feedback about their training for reading, for the establishment and maintenance of a good standard of behaviour in the classroom and general feedback about their training and induction. The survey generated 8,137 comments from 3,435 individual NQTs as a result. As a result of consultation with stakeholders, this year's survey has been realigned to allow teachers to assess the extent to which their training has prepared them to meet the teachers' standards, asking new questions in areas such as assessment and in providing feedback to pupils to support their progress. However, many questions in the survey remain unchanged from previous years.

The drop in response rate is attributed to the change from a paper survey to one which was delivered online since 2013. Since then the number of responses has been under half the number achieved previously. The rate achieved in 2013 was 20% compared to 36% and 39% in 2011. The two main implications of the reduction in sample size are that the smaller number of NQTs in each of the sample sub-groups result in the statistically significant differences between the smaller groups and the wider population are less likely to be observed and overall, ratings are more prone to fluctuation. In response to the reduction in responses, the NCTL researchers have included draft responses (those where NQTs have not reached the end of the survey) in all outputs.

Main survey findings

Overall quality of teacher training

The quality of ITT is seen as at least good by 89% of primary trained respondents and 92% of secondary trained respondents. 44% of primary trained respondents and 55% of secondary trained respondents rated their training as 'very good'. Overall the perceived quality of ITT in the primary and secondary sectors in England has been very stable over the past nine years. There has been a small increase in the perceived quality of secondary training, while the primary sector has seen only small variations in the overall rating of quality. Over the same period, the proportion of respondents who thought that the quality of their training was very good has risen by 17 percentage points in both primary and secondary sectors. Undergraduate and postgraduate respondents in both sectors rated their training very highly. Within both the primary and secondary sectors, HEIs, SCITTs and EBITTs have similar ratings for the overall quality of training.

Preparedness for specific aspects of teaching

The proportion of respondents who thought their training was good or very good in preparing them for specific aspects of teacher training varied considerably. In the primary sector the NQTs' assessment of the different elements of the primary standards varied considerably from 91% of trainees rating the training as good or very good in preparing them for the safeguarding of pupils to just 54% of trainees rating the training as good or very good in preparing them to use pupil data to support their teaching. In the secondary sector, the assessment of these aspects also varied with 94% of trainees rating their training as good or very good in preparing them for the safeguarding of pupils to just 50% good to very good in preparing
them to teach reading, including phonics and comprehension. The reading finding was in contrast to primary where 79% thought training was good or very good in this area. Analysis of qualitative data on the issues attributes this gap to the trainee and/or provider considering that reading is irrelevant to trainee secondary teachers. In general, the ranking of specific aspects within each sector was similar with safeguarding and having a range of teaching methods at the top, and communicating with parents, teaching EAL, SEN and ethnic minority pupils at the lower end of the scale.

Key headlines from the primary sector analysis were:

- On the national curriculum, 75% of primary NQTs rated their training good (45%) or very good (30%) which was a decrease from the 82% from the 2013 survey. NQTs were responding about five months after the new national curriculum was published, though this had not been implemented in schools. Though the majority were positive about the way that their provider addressed the changes in the training, others were less positive in the open text responses.
- On teaching specialist subjects, 70% of respondents rated their training as good (40%) or very good (30%) and undergraduate trainees rated this aspect of training more highly than postgraduate trainees (75% compared to 68%). In the open comment section, some trainees clarified that they did not have a specialism as a trainee primary teacher though others clearly disagreed.
- On pupil assessment, 66% of primary respondents rated their training on how to assess pupils’ progress as good (42%) and very good (24%) and this was one of the lower rated aspects of initial training for primary trainees. EBITT and SCITT trainees were more likely to rate their training as good or very good (73% and 81% respectively) compared to HEI respondents (61%). In the open comment section, there was a focus on what had been missing in their training such as more support on recording assessments and tracking progress.
- On pupil behaviour, 84% of primary respondents thought that their training was good (44%) or very good (40%) in preparing them to establish and maintain a good standard of behaviour in the classroom. This continued a strong positive trend since 2010 and this is now one of the areas of teaching for which respondents feel best prepared.
- On teaching SEN pupils, 64% of primary-trained NQTs rated this part of their training as good (40%) and very good (24%) compared to 68% in the 2013 survey. This was one of the lowest rated aspects for primary trainees. 61% of HEI trainees were more likely to say that their training as very good or good compared with 70% and 75% of SCITT trainees. Relevant comments made related to the lack of time given by the provider to SEN training and the lack of necessary experience in placement schools.

Key headlines from the secondary sector analysis were:

- On the national curriculum, 83% of secondary trainees rated their preparation to understand the national curriculum as good (39%) and very good (44%), a small drop from the 86% from 2013,. SCITT and HEIs were more likely to be positive than those trained by EBITT providers (84% compared to 77%). It was also clear from the comments section that secondary trainees rated their curriculum training including the provider response to national curriculum changes.
On teaching specialist subjects, 88% of secondary respondents rated their training as good (31%) and very good (56%), broadly in line with 2013 findings. Over the longer term, there has been a clear positive trend in secondary responses to this question.

On pupil assessment, 85% of secondary respondents rated their training to assess pupil progress as good (41%) or very good (44%). The HEI response was 84% compared to 91% for SCITTs. These were higher ratings than the primary sector respondents.

On pupil behaviour, 83% rated their training as good (40%) and very good (43%). There has been a statistically significant increase in the proportion of respondents who rated this aspect of their training as very good.

On teaching SEN pupils, 74% rated their training as good (41%) and very good (35%) compared to 73% in 2013. In spite of the improvement in the perception of this aspect of training, this is still amongst the least positively rated aspects. In HEIs 75% of respondents rated their training as good or very good compared to SCITT providers with an equivalent rating of 82%.

Differences between undergraduate and postgraduate training

Differences between undergraduate and postgraduate training related to specific aspects of teaching, rather than to the overall quality of the training. Where there were differences between undergraduate and postgraduate training, these were generally small. The largest differences within the primary sector were that postgraduate trained respondents were more likely to say that their training had prepared them well for recording and reporting pupil outcomes, and undergraduate respondents were more likely to say that their training had prepared them well to understand the national curriculum.

Differences between provider types

Differences between provider types related to specific aspects of teaching rather than to the overall quality of training. Within the primary sector, a greater proportion of both SCITT trained and EBITT trained respondents reported that their training had been good or very good in preparing them for 18 out of 25 specific aspects of teaching. the difference between the ratings given by SCITT respondents and HEI trained respondents was greatest in relation to making accurate and productive use of pupil assessment. This includes assessing pupil progress, reporting and recording pupil outcomes, using pupil data to support teaching and providing feedback to pupils. The report warns that the underlying characteristics of trainees prior to training have not been analysed and therefore the differences observed between provider types 'do not demonstrate a causative relationship between being trained by a SCITT provider and feeling more prepared to teach'.

Within the secondary sector, the differences between provider types are not as straightforward as primary. SCITT, EBITT and HEI trainee respondents were each more likely than the others to rate specific aspects of their initial training as good or very good. SCITT and EBITT respondents rated their training more highly than HEIs in some of the more practical aspects of training such as using pupil data to support teaching, and communicating with parents and carers, but the differences were not as large as in the primary sector. Also with secondary, HEIs were rated more highly than SCITT or EBITT providers in the questions relating to access to educational research, assessing the robustness of educational research and using its findings which was not the case in relation to primary trained respondents.
In this first year of the School Direct route to teaching, there was no difference between the perceived quality of the School Direct training and the perceived quality of university or SCITT provider led training. Trainees who completed a School Direct route in its first year of operation were invited to respond to the annual NQT survey. Sixty-three of these trainees responded (17 primary and 46 secondary) and this represented a 22% response rate, slightly higher than for the survey in general. Due to the small numbers involved, the primary and secondary sector cannot be reviewed separately.

The School Direct trainees were all postgraduate students and the majority, 52 out of 63, had trained with a School Direct partnership linked to an HEI rather than a SCITT provider. The proportion of these trainees rating the quality of their training as good or very good was 90%. This was not significantly different to the proportion of the 4,510 provider-led trainees who rated their training as good or very good which was also 90%. The remaining questions concerned the extent to which trainees felt their training had prepared them to encounter aspects of the training standards. In these responses, there was no significant difference in the proportion of School Direct trainees who rated their training as good or very good compared to provider-led trainees. In 17 of the 25 specific aspects of teaching covered, 70% or more respondents rated their training as good or very good.

Generally positive comments reflected that School Direct had enabled respondents to build practical skills by experiencing teaching in the classroom, balancing against theoretical knowledge learnt in university. Negative comments concerned individuals and their schools or providers and were focused on problems such as lack of organisation, lack of support, lost time gaining theoretical knowledge and a lack of aspiration for the success of the individual trainee.

Due to the small number of responses and differences in underlying characteristics between the School Direct and provider-led trainees, the report advises caution in drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of the School Direct providers in this first year.

Induction

As in previous years, NQTs were asked about the quality of their induction. These questions were fewer in number than in other sections and were mostly yes and no answers, and the responses were similar to those in previous years. NQTs were asked how helpful the induction had been in improving the quality of their training, and 63% of primary trained respondents found it very helpful, a further 31% felt it was somewhat helpful, and 5% felt that it had not been helpful at all. Of the secondary trained respondents, 59% found it very helpful, 35% somewhat helpful and 5% not helpful at all.

The majority of respondents (87% primary and 79% secondary) found the length of their induction period about right. In both sectors, 97% reported that they had been provided with the support of an induction tutor. The majority of respondents reported having been provided with observations followed by reviews with their induction tutor. This was true of 97% of primary and 96% of secondary respondents. The majority (96% primary and 95% secondary) also reported being provided with 10% time in addition to planning, preparation and assessment time. A slightly smaller majority (86% primary and 82% secondary) reported having been provided with a personalised programme of planned professional development.
Report Conclusion

Across the schools and university sector, where training is perceived as very good, it is characterised by respondents as being relevant, developmental and engaging. Trainees report that they are supported by committed, knowledgeable and interested tutors, teachers, mentors and lecturers. Where training is seen as less good, this often related to specific areas of learning that NQTs would have valued extra time to absorb, or variation in the quality of their interactions with tutors and lecturers or between school placements and their taught courses. It is also important to learn from the small number of NQTs who rated their training as poor. They characterised their providers and schools across all provider types as:

‘poorly organised, uninspiring, out-dated and unsupportive, with the extreme examples feeling completely let down by their training provider or placement school’, concerns that the report claims will be ‘addressed through robust quality assurance’.

It is apparent through the findings in the report that trainees varied widely in their prior experience and expectations of their training.

Comment

The views of NQTs on their initial training make interesting reading in the detail included and in the trends developed over time, resulting from this annually conducted survey. Though there is much common ground with previous surveys, there is something to be learnt from the NQT comments in the report on the best and worst aspects of their experience. The decreasing response rate is disappointing, however, and NCTL could consider supplementing the survey with NQT phone and/or face- to- face interviews, particularly with the need to focus on the implications of School Direct as it continues to develop.

Over time, there has been a politicised debate about the balance of ITT time between school and higher education provision in this country, and the so called split between theoretical and practical elements of training. Any conclusions about differences in provider type and the relationship between more school centred training and trainees being more prepared to teach, are clearly discouraged by the researchers here, since there has been no analysis of trainee characteristics prior to training. In the partnership context that will be further developed by School Direct in the future, it is hoped that the broad spectrum of trainee needs will be better integrated by the sharing of all aspects of teaching, including the use of research, across school and HE settings.

It is also hoped that with School Direct and continued partnership across the school landscape, ITT will increasingly become less divorced from induction and continued professional development provision. Partnerships should be able to be more responsive to the needs of trainees at the time, and be able to give them additional support in the areas that the individual feels are missing. If the trainee is then employed by a partnership school, the NQT should be able to access more personalised induction provision and continued professional development as they progress into the early years of teaching. This could help to provide a more coherent basis for professional and career structures for teachers than is currently the case, and a better future national research base.

It should though not be forgotten that there is a looming problem of teacher supply. HMCI’s annual report highlights the rising calibre of recruits into teaching, and that standards of initial teacher training continue to rise, the number of entrants into teacher training has fallen 17% since 2009-
10, and was 7% below the number of places needed in 2014-15. There are significant areas of the country with limited access to high quality initial teacher training, and it is suggested that good and outstanding schools are able to picking the best trainees.

External Links

Newly Qualified Teachers: annual survey 2014
Ofsted Initial teacher education inspection handbook

Related Briefings

Ofsted Annual Report 2013-14 (December 2014)
Teaching School Alliances - Update (November 2014)

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