

Teach First, Ask Questions Later:

A summary of research on TF's alternative vision of teaching and teachers

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This paper provides a brief summary of the research on Teach First (TF). It also draws on research about TF's sister organisations (e.g. Teach for America, Teach for Australia) and parent organisation (Teach for All). Also included is research on Schools Direct. (A short description of TF and its activities are provided in Appendix A.) The links between these organisations are both explicit (acknowledged on TF/TFA websites) and implicit: for example, the founder and Chief Executive of Teach First, Brett Wigdortz, previously worked for McKinsey & Company, a major financial supporter of Teach for America.

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Appendix A: What is Teach First?

Overview

Teach First (TF) is a graduate recruiter that provides an alternative pathway to a teaching degree to those who may not have otherwise considered teacher. TF is a registered charity and social philanthropic organisation established in 2002 by entrepreneur Brett Wigdortz. It has an annual income to August 2015 of £60.6m, and employs 490 staff with almost 1,100 volunteers (Charity Commission 2016). TF's stated mission is to reduce educational inequality in particular addressing achievement gaps between schools of high and low socioeconomic background. It has a focus on both primary and secondary schooling as well as post-school employment and training, and university graduation rates. TF outlines 5 broad aspirations³:

1. Narrow the gap in literacy and numeracy at primary school
2. Narrow the gap in GCSE attainment at secondary school
3. Ensure young people develop key strengths, including resilience and wellbeing, to support high aspirations
4. Narrow the gap in the proportion of young people taking part in further education or employment-based training after finishing their GCSEs
5. Narrow the gap in university graduation, including from the 25% most selective universities, by 8%

What training is offered by Teach First?

Training of TF participants consists of a two-year Leadership Development Programme (LDP) which is comprised of:

- *An initial Summer Institute* – an intensive 6-week period of immersion into the theory and practice of teaching, as well as curriculum knowledge and classroom management. This is provided by partner universities that have teacher training. The summer intensive also involves spending time with local schools (teachers and pupils) and communities to come to grips with local contexts and to observe classroom teaching. All participants are allocated a mentor. The Summer Institute is touted as providing participants with the skills needed to enter classrooms as beginning teachers.⁴
- *A School Placement* at a school in 'challenging circumstances'. This occurs after the completion of the Summer Institute. Schools are in partnership with TF and located all across England and Wales.⁵ Participants are monitored and supported by their school, the Regional Training Provider and Teach First. Participants begin as unqualified teachers attaining Qualified Teacher Status by year's end.⁶ In the second year, participants are qualified teachers with a PGCE and/or working towards a Masters Degree. While on placement, participants have an 80% teachers load while studying towards their teaching qualification on a part-time basis. They are employed teachers and paid accordingly.⁷
- *A teaching qualification*, normally a *Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE)* – this is attained after the end of the first year. Participants are given written assignments and are required to complete a weekly journal of written reflections. There is a final external assessment that, along with a file of evidence of achievement, progress and reflection made up of assignments, count

³ <https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/why-we-exist/what-were-calling>

⁴ <https://graduates.teachfirst.org.uk/leadership-development-programme/training/summer-institute>

⁵ <https://graduates.teachfirst.org.uk/leadership-development-programme/where-you-could-work>

⁶ <https://graduates.teachfirst.org.uk/leadership-development-programme/training/teaching-qualification>

⁷ <https://graduates.teachfirst.org.uk/faqs>

towards the PGCE.⁸ Participants also have the option of doing further study and completing a *Masters in Education, Educational Leadership, or Educational Practice*. Five universities across England currently offer these degrees which are identified by the suffix 'Teach First' or 'Teach First Leadership'. Masters degrees are an additional two years of study, and begin in the second year of the TF programme.⁹

- *Leadership Development* – the Teach First programme as a whole is branded as a Leadership Development Programme. In the second year of TF, participants are instructed in how to develop their leadership skills in the classroom and beyond. Leadership in this context means inspiring, motivating and engaging students, and helping them to 'raise' their aspirations, achievement and expand their opportunities. These are skills that TF see as part and parcel of quality teaching. Leadership skills are also promoted by TF as being crucial to participants' careers after they complete their 2 years of TF.¹⁰ Leadership skills and experience are the central goal here with teaching in disadvantaged schools being one of the vehicles to foster skills among participants with a view to employing them in other sectors later on.

All participants of TF become Teach First Ambassadors when they finish their two year commitment. Many stay in teaching, but close to half of TF alumni go onto other ventures, sometimes attaining leadership positions within teaching, while others go onto social entrepreneurial projects. TF boasts about their large and growing network of Ambassadors who are well positioned to achieve social change.

⁸ <https://graduates.teachfirst.org.uk/leadership-development-programme/training/teaching-qualification>,
<https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/what-we-do/developing-leaders-schools-0/training-and-supporting-new-teachers>

⁹ <https://graduates.teachfirst.org.uk/leadership-development-programme/training/masters>

¹⁰ <https://graduates.teachfirst.org.uk/leadership-development-programme/training/leadership-development> and
<https://graduates.teachfirst.org.uk/faqs>

Appendix B: Detailed statistics

Table B1: Number of TF teachers who entered and left teaching by year and subject area

	2010/11		2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15	
	Entered	Left	Entered	Left	Entered	Left	Entered	Left	Entered	Left
Art	3	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1
Business Studies	24	10	21	9	12	7	14	14	14	7
Citizenship	25	18	9	9	6	16	10	11	0	8
Design and Technology	3	1	10	4	5	3	6	6	8	3
English	160	49	194	69	222	99	255	103	302	120
Geography	19	9	15	8	26	14	44	13	46	13
History	23	12	33	16	39	13	47	20	53	22
ICT	12	8	15	7	18	8	15	10	10	9
Maths	125	40	172	66	187	88	262	115	217	107
MFL	33	14	45	12	76	22	81	32	86	43
Music	7	8	14	3	13	4	13	8	12	4
Primary	18	5	81	28	170	26	226	67	344	94
Primary EYFS	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	39	3
RE	14	9	18	12	15	14	18	5	18	9
Science	84	40	127	64	187	84	194	84	221	87
Unknown	0	4	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	0
Total	550	229	754	312	976	401	1201	488	1370	530
Left as % of entered	41.6%		41.4%		41.1%		40.6%		38.7%	

Source: Parliament UK (2015)

Table B2: TF Cymru teacher destinations, 2013-14 academic year intake

	Number	%
Participants who achieved QTS	25	100%
Participants who completed Year 2 of the programme	22	88%
Participants teaching in Wales in September 2015	8	32%
Participants in teaching posts outside Wales in September 2015	10	40%
Participants seeking teaching posts in September 2015	<5	-
Participants in employment other than teaching in September 2015	<5	-

Source: Estyn 2016, p. 9

Table B3: Retention Rates of Teach for America Teachers in their Schools and in Teaching

Year	Continued teaching in initial school	Continued teaching in initial school or any other public school
2	90.1%	94.8%
3	43.6%	60.5%
4	22.5%	44.6%
5	14.8%	35.5%
6	8.6%	27.8%
7	5.2%	23.9%

Source: Donaldson & Johnson 2011, p. 49

Table B4: Facilitators and barriers to TF effectiveness (% of coding of interviews with TF teachers)

Facilitators	%	Barriers	%
Critical mass of Teach First teachers in school	25.7	Adaptation period	21.8
In-school support	16.5	Lack of in-school support	21.4
Support from Teach First	9.8	Challenging circumstances of school	18.6
Clear and consistent school policies	9.0	Pupils' social background	10.3
Freedom to take initiatives	8.3	Poor pupil behaviour	9.5
Two-year term	7.6		
Good relationships in school	6.6		

Source: Muijs et al. 2012, p. 63