


ENGAGEMENT TITLE – CABINET SECRETARY’S MEETING WITH BRETT WIGDORTZ, CEO OF “TEACH FIRST”

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| <i>Date and Time of Engagement</i> | Thursday 30 January 9.00am – 10.00am |
| <i>Where</i> | T3.21, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh |
| <i>Key Message</i> | Application rates to BEd and PGDE courses of initial teacher education have always been sufficiently buoyant that it has not been necessary to offer other routes into teaching. There are currently no school-based routes into teaching in Scotland. Teach First is, ostensibly, an English solution to an English problem, but they have been advised that if they can devise an approach that addresses Scotland’s teacher recruitment challenges (eg rurality and some priority subjects), and that satisfies GTCS accreditation arrangements, we will <u>consider</u> funding a pilot. |
| <i>Who</i> | Brett Wigdortz, CEO Teach First James Westhead, Executive Director of External Relations |
| <i>Why</i> | MACCS case 2013/0018983 refers. Brett Wigdortz wrote to Mr Russell on 19 July 2013 requesting this meeting. He was writing following a meeting between First Minister and Teach First’s patron, HRH The Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay. He was keen to follow up the First Minister’s meeting to discuss with Mr Russell if there is a role for Teach First to recruit and place teachers in schools serving low income communities in Scotland. |
| <i>Official Support Required</i> | Fiona Robertson, Director of Learning Ian Mitchell, Deputy Director, People and Infrastructure Rachel Sunderland, Head of People and Leadership Unit |

Briefing Contents

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| Annex A | Biographies of Brett Wigdortz, CEO and James Westhead, Executive Director of External Relations |
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| Annex C | "Universities are still best place to train teachers, report says" (Guardian 14 January 2014) www.theguardian.com/education/2014/jan/14/universities-best-place-to-train-teachers-report-says |
| Annex D | "What if Finland's great teachers taught in U.S. schools?" (Washington Post 15 May 2013)  What if Finland's great teache... |

NB: The articles at Annex C and Annex D are not, primarily, commentaries on Teach First, in particular but nonetheless relevant to the discussion.

Annex C cites a report that is critical of the Coalition Government's policy of shifting teacher training from universities into schools - the School Direct initiative has led to a number of long established teacher training universities pulling out of the sector - and there are reports that schools have not been able to recruit to the levels that the Government had set.

Annex D carries an article by Pasi Sahlberg, Finland's education expert, in which he upholds the benefits of a single, academically rigorous teacher-preparation programme (as in Singapore and Finland) and questions that US situation where there are more than 1,500 teacher preparation programmes.

1. Background to Teach First

1.1. Teach First is an independent educational charity founded in 2002 and its stated vision is that no child's educational success should be limited by his or her socio-economic background. Teach First recruits graduates (2.1 degree or above), who are then known as 'participants', to teach full-time in low-performing schools in the most impoverished communities. The programme consists of participants undertaking a two-year Leadership Development Programme (LDP) within which they achieve a PGCE with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) (at the end of the first year) and wider skills in leadership.

1.2. The major focus of the programme is on developing the leadership potential and abilities of its graduates with the intention of making them stand out in their future careers; whether that career is in teaching or in management and/or other roles in business and/or the community. Graduates receive the major amount of tutoring in learning to praise, leading with authority and gaining respect from a wide variety of individuals with the intention of being able to utilise these skills both in the classroom and in business.

1.3. When a graduate is recruited, they are asked to commit to working towards and gaining a PGCE (in the first year) and then the wider requirements of the LDP for the following and subsequent years. Following completion of the two-year LDP, participants are referred to as ambassadors and may choose to remain in teaching (often going onto leadership positions) or to go on to tackle similar problems in the wider education system, the government or the third sector. The ethos of the ambassador's network is to lead change across the education system, whether that is inside or outside the classroom.

1.4. Around two-thirds of participants stay in teaching for a third year, and over half have remained in teaching for the long term since 2003. Across all nine cohorts who have completed the LDP, 70% of the total number of ambassadors have remained working in education; with 54% of the total number still teaching in UK classrooms; 71% of which are at Teach First eligible schools; and there are 36 ambassador-led social enterprises.

1.5. After the two-year LDP, an optional two-year commitment is on offer to participants who have successfully completed their first two years, to work towards a 180-credit masters programme. Teach First currently has partnerships with the following universities in the fields of education and leadership to deliver the masters qualification.

| University | Region | Title |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Institute of Education | London | Masters in Leadership (Teach First) |
| University of Manchester | North West & Yorkshire | Masters in Education (Teach First Leadership) |
| University of Warwick | West Midlands & North East | Masters in Educational Leadership (Teach First) |
| Canterbury Christ Church University | South East | Masters of Arts, Transformational Leadership (Teach First) |

2. Current routes into teaching in Scotland

2.1 There have traditionally been two main routes into teaching in Scotland: the four-year undergraduate degree for primary teaching and some secondary subjects; and the one-year postgraduate diploma (PGDE). This is in contrast with England and some other countries where there have been significant problems with teacher recruitment, whereas Scotland has not seen the need for employment-based, school-based or assessment only routes. We are not complacent, however. Since the publication of *Teaching Scotland's Future* a significant amount of work has gone into ensuring that those coming into the teaching profession have all the necessary skills and attributes - for example in relation to on-line diagnostic numeracy and literacy tools.

3. Challenges in teacher recruitment in Scotland and potential role for Teach First

3.1 Teach First was established to address the specific problem of recruitment of teachers to schools in inner-city areas of deprivation in England and they have achieved this. We therefore do not have issue with Teach First having the ability to develop a model of teacher education, however the challenges that we face in Scotland are different. The challenges are mainly recruitment in rural areas and to a few priority subject areas with Physics, Maths, Home Economics, Technological Education, Business Education and Chemistry probably the most difficult

How we are tackling these challenges

3.2 Following the recommendations of the Teacher Workforce Planning Working Group in December 2013 we have issued more prescriptive guidance to the Scottish Funding Council regarding the numbers of student teachers that universities should recruit in each secondary subject, and we will be working with the relevant universities to better monitor recruitment with view to achieving higher targets in the 'hard to fill' subjects.

3.3 The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) had delivered ITE in partnership with the University of Strathclyde but Strathclyde ended that relationship three years ago. UHI expressed an interest in 2012 in becoming an ITE provider in their own right. They were allocated 20 places in 2013/14 and this has been increased to 40 places for 2014/15. This will go some way to easing the recruitment challenge faced by, for example, Highland Council.

3.4 We are also supporting the University of Aberdeen in an initiative to offer ITE by part-time distance learning to existing education staff, such as classroom assistants, in Aberdeenshire and Highland in 2013. It is envisaged that this will be rolled out to a third local authority in 2014/15. Subject to the success of this initiative it has the potential to be rolled out more widely in the future.

3.5 We have also allocated 10 places to the University of Edinburgh to allow them to launch both a four-year and a five-year route into Gaelic primary teaching.

3.6 We have sent a clear signal to the sector encouraging greater innovation to overcome the challenges faced in Scotland.

3.7 All the universities that offer ITE courses have undertaken to increase the number of students pursuing dual-qualification. Dual-qualification and dual-registration are consistent with the objectives of Curriculum for Excellence and teachers that are so qualified allow far more flexibility as far as timetabling is concerned, particularly in small secondary schools.

3.8 We will also be exploring, during the course of this year, the efficacy of financial incentives in terms of both recruitment to and retention in teaching. In parallel with that we will be reviewing the work that the Scottish Government and the universities put into advertising and promoting teaching as a career choice.

3.9 The final element of the Working Group's remit for 2014 is to seek to establish whether we have the right geographic distribution of ITE provision in Scotland - or whether the shares of student places should be adjusted to better suit the demands of local authorities across Scotland.

4. Is there a role for Teach First in Scotland?

4.1 At our last meeting with Teach First, we indicated our interest in discussing the potential for an innovative model based on Scottish needs. We are always open to fresh approaches. However, there are a number of challenges that would need to be addressed first. Those challenges include:

- The most significant is that the GTCS accredits all programmes of teacher education and the Teach First programme, as delivered in England, does not seem to meet their accreditation requirements. The GTCS seem to be of the view that school-based routes into teaching do not include sufficient academic rigour strained.
- Whether Teach First becoming the first non-university provider of initial teacher education in Scotland open the floodgates for other providers to

approach the GTCS to consider their programmes. (Note - This may not necessarily follow in a model which *included* the Universities)

- Teach First was developed to address, in particular, the problem of recruiting teachers to schools in deprived, inner-city schools. We do not experience the same difficulty in recruiting to inner city schools.
- England has pay scales and terms and conditions for unqualified teachers (which Teach First teachers are until gaining a PGCE qualification at the end of their first year). In effect, their students are receiving a salary whilst studying towards a PGCE qualification. Similar arrangements would be extremely difficult to be applied in Scotland as our pay scales and terms and conditions apply to fully qualified teachers. This could lead to an anomaly in our system as PGDE students do not receive payment whilst studying.
- Cost/additionality – would a Teach First model be better than current routes? If Teach First do succeed in devising a model that addresses Scottish circumstances then there is the question of affordability in an extremely tight financial climate but crucially the value for money and retention in terms of teacher effectiveness.
- Relations across the sector – in addition to the reference, above, to the GTCS, there is likely to be entrenched resistance to Teach First from the teacher unions (Teach First participants would be paid a salary while other ITE students would not) and the universities (who would see Teach First as a competitor ITE provider). The introduction of Teach First would be perceived by many as a move away from an integrated partnership approach which has served us well in Scotland and continues to be a feature of our approach towards CfE and Teacher Education and Leadership.

5. SG Learning Directorate and Teach First

5.1. We have been following the work of Teach First for some time and our investigations into how Teach First indicate that it is an expensive programme, with costs in the region of £38k per candidate (2010 statistics). This compares with £9,000 (approx) for a PGDE course, and £7,000 (approx.) for the induction scheme to cover the non-teaching part of a probationer's week and the cost of his/her mentoring.

5.2. Graham Donaldson's report, *Teaching Scotland's Future* included a recommendation that, "The suitability for Scottish education of a Teach First/Teach Now model of placing students predominantly in a school for their initial teacher education should be investigated". Following the publication of his report, Education Scotland made an investigatory visit to Teach First in August 2011. The report commends a number of aspects but also identifies a number of barriers to its introduction in Scotland. The report, which was released in 2012 following an FOI request from TESS, is at Annex A.

5.3. Teach First has made a number of approaches to both Ministers and officials to seek support for the model, and officials last met with them on 16 May 2012. It was explained to Teach First that recruitment to deprived inner city schools was not a significant problem in Scotland but that recruitment in rural areas and in certain secondary subjects were greater problems. Teach First indicated that they would develop a proposal that was tailored to the specific requirements that we have in Scotland and that would be acceptable for accreditation by the GTCS. We know that they have been in further dialogue with the GTCS since we last met them, and Teach First know that the onus lies with them to develop a programme that is suitable for accreditation. The GTCS report that despite the offer of help, no such programme has been submitted for accreditation.

5.4. GTCS have also reported that Teach First have met separately with East Ayrshire and Glasgow City Councils to explain the model. However, it appears that the Councils were not aware that the GTCS would need to accredit the programme before they could adopt it. It is also understood that at least Glasgow Council would look to Teach First as wholly additional provision for teachers and would look towards Government to fund. A meeting has been set up between GTCS, Teach First and both of these Councils on 25 February to explore in more depth. Ian Mitchell has also been invited to this meeting.

5.5. We are aware that a Teach First pilot is currently underway in Wales to meet their policy priorities which include the Welsh language requirements that Teach First must consider. We contacted Welsh officials about the pilot which began in September 2013 and they have told us that they are monitoring the programme closely and have already put in place arrangements for the Welsh Inspectorate of Education to inspect provision and undertake an evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme. However, this is unlikely to take place until they have the second cohort data.

6. Conclusion and Lines

- Always open to dialogue on new ideas and approaches.
- As previously stated, anything we would support must be rooted in the needs and values pertaining in Scotland. Aware that there are exploratory discussions with Councils and with GTCS. Not aware of any solid proposals.
- Worth re-stating the role of Councils as Education Authorities and the status of GTCS as an independent body in Scotland (unlike other parts of UK)
- Application rates to traditional BEd and PGDE courses have been sufficiently buoyant and continue to be so. We currently have no wholly school-based routes into teaching and we would require convincing that this was a direction that suited our needs in Scotland. However, even our traditional models evolve over time and there are interesting developments being explored in a number of the partnerships that are being established - most notably, perhaps, the 'hub model' that you first saw at Irvine Royal Academy in February 2012.
- We do not consider that the challenges outlined at section 4 above are insurmountable but they would need to be addressed and would encourage Teach First to engage with GTCS in the first instance.

Helen Reid
People and Leadership Unit
27 January 2014

Biographies

Brett Wigdortz

Brett Wigdortz, OBE has led Teach First as its CEO since its launch in July 2002. Teach First is currently the 3rd most prestigious graduate recruiter in the United Kingdom and is working to close the achievement gap in England and Wales between children from low-income backgrounds and their wealthier peers. Brett wrote the original business plan for the charity while working as a management consultant at McKinsey & Company and then took what was originally planned as a six-month leave of absence in February 2002 to develop and build support for the idea. Previously he has worked as a consultant, a journalist and researcher. He is originally from New Jersey and has an Honors Bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Richmond and a Masters degree in Economics from the University of Hawai'i. He currently serves as a trustee of Future Leaders. He is also the co-founder, trustee and strategy adviser to Teach For All. In 2007 Brett was named the UK Ernst & Young Social Entrepreneur of the Year and was awarded the 2010 CASE European Leadership Award. In 2012 Brett won the Charity Times Charity principal of the Year and the Institute of Directors London and the South East Director of the year in the Public/Third Sector. Brett is proud and humbled to have been awarded an OBE in the 2013 Queens New Year's Honours list for Services to Education Brett's book "Success Against The Odds", a candid account of the first 10 years of Teach First, was published in September 2012.

James Westhead

As Executive Director of External Relations, James is responsible for building public understanding of Teach First and its vision of ending educational inequality as well as securing the funding needed to achieve it. He oversees the Communications department which manages press and public affairs for Teach First, the charity's digital and brand communications and also the Development department which builds fundraising support from corporates, trusts and foundations and individual supporters. Before joining Teach First in October 2009, James worked for BBC News as its education correspondent. During an 18-year career in broadcasting, James appeared regularly on flagship TV & radio programmes including the Six & Ten O'clock News and the Today programme. As well as helping launch News 24 in 1997, James has held a number of senior posts covering health and social affairs issues and spent two years abroad as one of the BBC's Washington correspondents. He is also a trustee of several education charities including Jamie's Farm.

This is a report of the findings of an information-gathering visit by HMIE to Teach First in London. It is not intended to be an evaluation by HMIE or Education Scotland of the work of Teach First.

Teach First is an independent educational charity founded in 2002. Its mission is to address educational disadvantage by transforming exceptional graduates into effective, inspirational teachers and leaders in all fields. Teach First targets graduates who would not normally consider a career in teaching and places them in what it considers challenging schools across England. These schools typically experience difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers.

A Teach First participant is expected to work at his or her placement school for two years and is paid a salary ab initio. A parallel programme enables participants to develop their leadership skills to a high level. On completion of the Leadership Development Programme, participants graduate to become Teach First Ambassadors, and are encouraged to continue to address educational disadvantage through teaching or leadership positions in other fields. Retention rates are improving, but many Teach First graduates still opt to leave teaching and work in other areas. Successful completion and the award of Ambassador status requires the participant to gain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) as part of a postgraduate / professional graduate certificate in education (PGCE award). *Note: QTS does not meet the nationally agreed standard for teaching in Scotland. Holders of QTS would need to complete further work to meet the minimum standard agreed by GTC Scotland. Teach First is currently in discussion with GTCS and Glasgow University to see how this might be addressed.*

Many aspects of the Teach First programme echo the recommendations contained in *Teaching Scotland's Future*¹, including:

- Fortnightly tutorial visits to look at theory and relate it to practice. Over the 13 months, trainees can gain 60 credits at Master's level. These refer to: Learning, Organising and managing and Managing people.
- Highly professional approach to recruitment aimed at seeking out and nurturing high achieving candidates and enthusing them with a sense of mission. The image of a youthful, vibrant profession with a clear mission to effect social change is successfully transmitted.
- Teach First's Assessment Centre approach, based on that of the Civil Service, is very thorough and effective in selecting the 'right' people. Candidates undergo a full day of activities designed to select those who demonstrate the skills deemed necessary for successful teaching (starting with *humility*).
- Rigorous monitoring of participants' progress and immediate, effective intervention to support those who need it.

¹ *Teaching Scotland's Future: report of a review of teacher education in Scotland. January 2011*
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2011>

- Focus on outcomes for learners as a measure of participants' success in teaching
- Teach First's support for mentors, including its Mentor Recognition Scheme for which graduates can gain 20 credit points towards a Master's degree.
- Participants can gain 60 credits at Master's level over their 13 months in training.
- Emphasis on subject specific pedagogical training (six days).

Since its inception, regular evaluations of the Teach First programme have been carried out, culminating in the OfSTED report on Teach First of June 2011² which evaluated Teach First's provision as 'Outstanding' in all 44 indicators of quality. It is worth stressing that this is a truly exceptional report from OfSTED.

Key messages for Scotland:

1. Teach First graduates constitute a very enthusiastic, able group of young people³, committed to improving through education the life chances of young people from deprived backgrounds. Scotland would welcome this high quality of recruit into the teaching profession.
2. Teach First's centralised 'Assessment Centre' approach to recruitment is very successful in recruiting high quality applicants. In considering how this might be replicated, Scottish stakeholders in teacher education might wish to consider comprehensive way in which Teach First applicants are assessed against the principles of the organisation and the key requirements to be a teacher.
3. The strong focus on developing participants' leadership skills from the beginning of their training is to be commended.
4. The professional way in which Teach First actively promotes a positive image of teaching as a first choice for highly achieving graduates offers a challenge to Scottish teacher education providers, employers and all stakeholders.
5. The highly effective way in which Teach First regularly monitors the progress of participants and improves its provision in response to rigorous self-evaluation is exemplary. Scottish providers could benefit from reflecting on this.
6. Teach First was established to address the need to staff schools in deprived areas where it was proving exceptionally difficult to recruit and retain staff. Staffing schools, except for a few 'shortage' subjects, is not a major issue in Scotland, and EAs do not need to offer incentives to recruit staff to teach in deprived areas.
7. Scotland's teaching standards are regulated by the General Teaching Council of Scotland. No teacher can be registered to teach in Scottish state schools without demonstrating achievement of a nationally agreed standard. Teach First uses a model in which participants teach classes alone, with fortnightly tutorial visits, following their six week summer training. This would not meet the standard of teacher qualification agreed in Scotland and hence the requirements of the GTCS. This would present a serious barrier to the introduction to Teach First in Scotland.

² OfSTED inspection report on Teach First: June 2011

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/70270>

³ The average age of Teach First teachers and Ambassadors is 29.

8. It is difficult to see how a model in which, essentially, a student teacher is paid a salary, would sit with Scotland's current model in which student teachers are placed, unpaid, in all types of schools as part of their PGDE course. This might engender a perceived two tier system which favours 'outstanding' candidates, and be viewed as unfair. This presents the opportunity for division in the profession.
9. Teach First participants who graduated prior to 2009 were awarded QTS status. This does not meet the Scottish nationally agreed standard, and hence the requirements of the GTCS. No teacher with QTS alone can teach in Scottish publicly funded schools. This barrier is being overcome by most Teach First graduates now opting to work towards the more challenging PGCE qualification during their first year of Teach First work in England.

Universities are still best place to train teachers, report says

A new report backs up academics' fears about the coalition policy of shifting more teacher training into schools

Joy Carter, vice-chancellor of Winchester University, says: 'If the quality of teaching plummets any further, we are in trouble as a country'. Photograph: Graham Turner for the Guardian

For months, university leaders have been moaning about the increasing transfer of control of teacher-training programmes in England from universities to schools.

While most have insisted their concerns are for the future of English education, their objections have also carried a strong whiff of self-interest: the changes introduced by the government involve increasing the number of training places available in schools through the School Direct programme and cutting those funded through universities, leaving them at the mercy of schools' desires rather than their own strategic planning.

But now vice-chancellors have evidence to back up their case, with the publication on Monday of an interim report by the British Educational Research Association (Bera) and Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce on the role of research in teacher education.

While the policy implications of the findings will only be spelled out in the full report, due out in March, it highlights the fact that in other countries there has been a shift away from school-based training and towards university-based teacher education in institutions with relatively high entrance standards and status. It suggests that the education systems that perform best and have improved most, such as in Finland and Singapore, put particular emphasis on research training for teachers.

John Furlong, professor of education at Oxford University and chair of the steering group behind the report, says: "There is strong evidence that research is important in the best-quality teacher education programmes around the world in at least four different ways: it underpins the knowledge communicated to teachers; teachers need preliminary research skills in order to be able to start thinking about their own work; it helps explain how people develop professionally; and, built into programmes, it monitors what programmes are doing, making sure they are staying up to date with the latest developments about how professionals learn."

Chris Husbands, director of the Institute of Education, says the decision to transfer responsibility for teacher training in England away from universities to schools flies in the face of findings on best practice internationally. "In Singapore, the government is clear: the improvements in teacher training since a low point of low morale and shortages in the 1980s have been driven by improving teacher training through the National Institute of Education," he says. "I was in Singapore working for the government a few weeks ago and no one could believe what we are doing in terms of de-regulation."

Joy Carter, vice-chancellor of the University of Winchester, where 12% of entry for 2013-14 was for initial teacher training, says the potential effect of the changes on teacher quality is particularly worrying given the relatively poor performance of British schoolchildren shown in figures published last month by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, comparing standards in maths, reading and science. "If the quality of teaching plummets any further we are in trouble as a country," she says.

A spokesman for Universities UK, which represents 132 higher education institutions, more than half of which are involved in teacher training, says it is raising concerns "at the highest levels" about implementation of the School Direct scheme introduced two years ago, and will discuss the implications of the Bera report with its members.

Analysis by UUK for 2014/15 shows that allocations for postgraduate training in HE institutions have been reduced by more than 18% to 16,342, while School Direct allocations have increased by nearly 60% to 15,254. This means 37% of all initial teacher-training places are now allocated to School Direct, up from 25% last year.

Drawing on a survey of universities involved in teacher training, the analysis highlights concerns about a potential shortage of trained teachers in some subjects and particular parts of the country. Maths, modern foreign languages, physics and design and technology are way below their recruitment targets this year. But many universities have also expressed concerns about a possible future shortage of English teachers, in which allocations for training places have been slashed. UUK understands that only 14 English trainees have been allocated to the whole of Sheffield. It also reports worries about reduced allocations for primary-school training places at postgraduate level.

James Noble-Rogers, executive director of the University Council for the Education of Teachers (Ucet), says this is a worry because of increased pupil numbers in primary schools. This bubble will soon hit secondary schools, he warns, while at the same time, fewer people are likely to turn to teaching because of more opportunities in other sectors. "It is a bit reckless for the government to introduce such a huge change when demographics are coming up and we are coming out of recession," he says.

While Ucet is not opposed to the principle of School Direct, he says, "the problem we are having is that it has been expanded far too quickly".

Both the Open University and Bath University have recently decided to close their PGCE courses, citing uncertainty caused by the changes as a factor. The concern is that others will follow suit.

Bob Burgess, vice-chancellor of the University of Leicester and chair of the UUK/Guild HE Teacher Education Advisory Group, says that even if universities do not immediately stop teacher training, they may be forced to cut down in particular subject areas or in training teachers for particular age groups and that could eventually "nibble away" at the whole system of teacher training in universities. "The model clearly assumes that universities will be there so that schools can draw on their expertise," he says. "But you need to have enough money fuelling that."

Carter says all universities with any form of teacher training are worried about the changes because they make it much harder to plan for future demand. Already, she says, applications

to university teacher training are substantially down this year for the first time in decades, which, she suggests, could be the result of over-marketing of School Direct places at the expense of higher education-based courses, combined with applicants being wary of new basic skills tests for trainee teachers.

An added worry is that the School Direct scheme was less successful than universities in filling the places allocated to it last year.

"We cannot afford for that to happen again this year," says John Howson, managing director of the research company Data for Education and a former government adviser on teacher supply. "If this is going to be a credible training route for large numbers of teachers then schools have to play their part in filling those places."

Since there has as yet been no evaluation of the School Direct scheme and little data on its effect on teacher-training numbers, he suggests it is being expanded too rapidly.

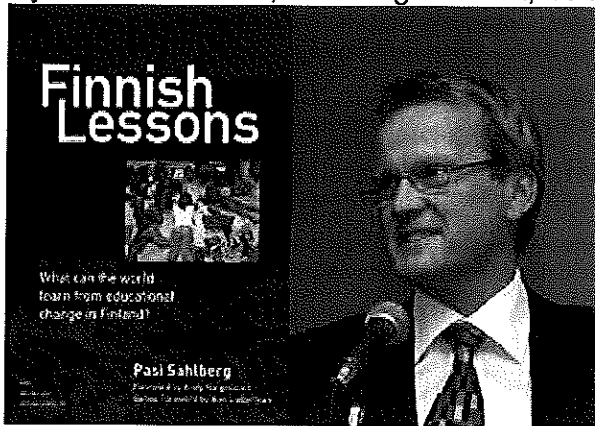
This means, says Burgess, "there is a risk to the future training of teachers, there is a risk in terms of schools having a supply of appropriately trained teachers, and I also think there is a risk to the way teachers are trained. There needs to be a place for universities in that training because universities bestow, in any qualification, a concept of professionalism".

But an education department spokesperson says: "School Direct is a response to what schools had said they want – a greater role in selecting and recruiting trainees with the potential to be outstanding teachers. The programme is only in its second full year of operating and it is already proving very popular, allowing heads to pick and choose the very brightest graduates and actually raise teaching standards."

He says that last year, three candidates applied for every School Direct place, compared with 1.8 applicants per place in universities; requests from schools for School Direct places have gone up from 9,600 to 17,700 in the past year and 99% of the overall target for postgraduate places through schools and universities were filled.

What if Finland's great teachers taught in U.S. schools?

By Valerie Strauss, Washington Post, 15 May 2013



Finland's education expert Pasi Sahlberg

Finland's Pasi Sahlberg is one of the world's leading experts on school reform and the author of the best-selling "Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn About Educational Change in Finland?" In this piece he writes about whether the emphasis that American school reformers put on "teacher effectiveness" is really the best approach to improving student achievement.

He is director general of Finland's Centre for International Mobility and Cooperation and has served the Finnish government in various positions and worked for the World Bank in Washington D.C. He has also been an adviser for numerous governments internationally about education policies and reforms, and is an adjunct professor of education at the University of Helsinki and University of Oulu. He can be reached at pasi.sahlberg@cimo.fi.

By Pasi Sahlberg

Many governments are under political and economic pressure to turn around their school systems for higher rankings in the international league tables. Education reforms often promise quick fixes within one political term. Canada, South Korea, Singapore and Finland are commonly used models for the nations that hope to improve teaching and learning in their schools. In search of a silver bullet, reformers now turn their eyes on teachers, believing that if only they could attract "the best and the brightest" into the teaching profession, the quality of education would improve.

"Teacher effectiveness" is a commonly used term that refers to how much student performance on standardized tests is determined by the teacher. This concept hence applies only to those teachers who teach subjects on which students are tested. Teacher effectiveness plays a particular role in education policies of nations where alternative pathways exist to the teaching profession.

In the United States, for example, there are more than 1,500 different teacher-preparation programs. The range in quality is wide. In Singapore and Finland only one academically rigorous teacher education program is available for those who desire to become teachers. Likewise, neither Canada nor South Korea has fast-track options into teaching, such as Teach

for America or Teach First in Europe. Teacher quality in high-performing countries is a result of careful quality control at entry into teaching rather than measuring teacher effectiveness in service.

In recent years the “no excuses” argument has been particularly persistent in the education debate. There are those who argue that poverty is only an excuse not to insist that all schools should reach higher standards. Solution: better teachers. Then there are those who claim that schools and teachers alone cannot overcome the negative impact that poverty causes in many children’s learning in school. Solution: Elevate children out of poverty by other public policies.

For me the latter is right. In the United States today, 23 percent of children live in poor homes. In Finland, the same way to calculate child poverty would show that figure to be almost five times smaller. The United States ranked in the bottom four in the recent United Nations review on child well-being. Among 29 wealthy countries, the United States landed second from the last in child poverty and held a similarly poor position in “child life satisfaction.” Teachers alone, regardless of how effective they are, will not be able to overcome the challenges that poor children bring with them to schools everyday.

Finland is not a fan of standardization in education. However, teacher education in Finland is carefully standardized. All teachers must earn a master’s degree at one of the country’s research universities. Competition to get into these teacher education programs is tough; only “the best and the brightest” are accepted. As a consequence, teaching is regarded as an esteemed profession, on par with medicine, law or engineering. There is another “teacher quality” checkpoint at graduation from School of Education in Finland. Students are not allowed to earn degrees to teach unless they demonstrate that they possess knowledge, skills and morals necessary to be a successful teacher.

But education policies in Finland concentrate more on school effectiveness than on teacher effectiveness. This indicates that what schools are expected to do is an effort of everyone in a school, working together, rather than teachers working individually.

In many under-performing nations, I notice, three fallacies of teacher effectiveness prevail.

The first belief is that *“the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.”* This statement became known in education policies through the influential McKinsey & Company report titled “How the world’s best performing school systems come out on top”. Although the report takes a broader view on enhancing the status of teachers by better pay and careful recruitment this statement implies that the quality of an education system is defined by its teachers. By doing this, the report assumes that teachers work independently from one another. But teachers in most schools today, in the United States and elsewhere, work as teams when the end result of their work is their joint effort.

The role of an individual teacher in a school is like a player on a football team: all teachers are vital, but the culture of the school is even more important for the quality of the school. Team sports offer numerous examples of teams that have performed beyond expectations because of leadership, commitment and spirit. Take the U.S. ice hockey team in the 1980 Winter Olympics, when a team of college kids beat both Soviets and Finland in the final round and won the gold medal. The quality of Team USA certainly exceeded the quality of its players. So can an education system.

The second fallacy is that *“the most important single factor in improving quality of education is teachers.”* This is the driving principle of former D.C. schools chancellor Michele Rhee and many other “reformers” today. This false belief is central to the “no excuses” school of thought. If a teacher was the most important single factor in improving quality of education, then the power of a school would indeed be stronger than children’s family background or peer influences in explaining student achievement in school.

Research on what explains students’ measured performance in school remains mixed. A commonly used conclusion is that 10% to 20% of the variance in measured student achievement belongs to the classroom, i.e., teachers and teaching, and a similar amount is attributable to schools, i.e., school climate, facilities and leadership. In other words, up to two-thirds of what explains student achievement is beyond the control of schools, i.e., family background and motivation to learn.

Over thirty years of systematic research on school effectiveness and school improvement reveals a number of characteristics that are typical of more effective schools. Most scholars agree that effective leadership is among the most important characteristics of effective schools, equally important to effective teaching. Effective leadership includes leader qualities, such as being firm and purposeful, having shared vision and goals, promoting teamwork and collegiality and frequent personal monitoring and feedback. Several other characteristics of more effective schools include features that are also linked to the culture of the school and leadership: Maintaining focus on learning, producing a positive school climate, setting high expectations for all, developing staff skills, and involving parents. In other words, school leadership matters as much as teacher quality.

The third fallacy is that *“If any children had three or four great teachers in a row, they would soar academically, regardless of their racial or economic background, while those who have a sequence of weak teachers will fall further and further behind”.* This theoretical assumption is included in influential policy recommendations, for instance in “Essential Elements of Teacher Policy in ESEA: Effectiveness, Fairness and Evaluation” by the Center for American Progress to the U.S. Congress. Teaching is measured by the growth of student test scores on standardized exams.

This assumption presents a view that education reform alone could overcome the powerful influence of family and social environment mentioned earlier. It insists that schools should get rid of low-performing teachers and then only hire great ones. This fallacy has the most practical difficulties. The first one is about what it means to be a great teacher. Even if this were clear, it would be difficult to know exactly who is a great teacher at the time of recruitment. The second one is, that becoming a great teacher normally takes five to ten years of systematic practice. And determining the reliability of ‘effectiveness’ of any teacher would require at least five years of reliable data. This would be practically impossible.

Everybody agrees that the quality of teaching in contributing to learning outcomes is beyond question. It is therefore understandable that teacher quality is often cited as the most important in-school variable influencing student achievement. But just having better teachers in schools will not automatically improve students’ learning outcomes.

Lessons from high-performing school systems, including Finland, suggest that we must reconsider how we think about teaching as a profession and what is the role of the school in our society.

First, standardization should focus more on teacher education and less on teaching and learning in schools. Singapore, Canada and Finland all set high standards for their teacher-preparation programs in academic universities. There is no Teach for Finland or other alternative pathways into teaching that wouldn't include thoroughly studying theories of pedagogy and undergo clinical practice. These countries set the priority to have strict quality control before anybody will be allowed to teach – or even study teaching! This is why in these countries teacher effectiveness and teacher evaluation are not such controversial topics as they are in the U.S. today.

Second, the toxic use of accountability for schools should be abandoned. Current practices in many countries that judge the quality of teachers by counting their students' measured achievement only is in many ways inaccurate and unfair. It is inaccurate because most schools' goals are broader than good performance in a few academic subjects. It is unfair because most of the variation of student achievement in standardized tests can be explained by out-of-school factors. Most teachers understand that what students learn in school is because the whole school has made an effort, not just some individual teachers. In the education systems that are high in international rankings, teachers feel that they are empowered by their leaders and their fellow teachers. In Finland, half of surveyed teachers responded that they would consider leaving their job if their performance would be determined by their student's standardized test results.

Third, other school policies must be changed before teaching becomes attractive to more young talents. In many countries where teachers fight for their rights, their main demand is not more money but better working conditions in schools. Again, experiences from those countries that do well in international rankings suggest that teachers should have autonomy in planning their work, freedom to run their lessons the way that leads to best results, and authority to influence the assessment of the outcomes of their work. Schools should also be trusted in these key areas of the teaching profession.

To finish up, let's do one theoretical experiment. We transport highly trained Finnish teachers to work in, say, Indiana in the United States (and Indiana teachers would go to Finland). After five years—assuming that the Finnish teachers showed up fluent in English and that education policies in Indiana would continue as planned—we would check whether these teachers have been able to improve test scores in state-mandated student assessments.

I argue that if there were any gains in student achievement they would be marginal. Why? Education policies in Indiana and many other states in the United States create a context for teaching that limits (Finnish) teachers to use their skills, wisdom and shared knowledge for the good of their students' learning. Actually, I have met some experienced Finnish-trained teachers in the United States who confirm this hypothesis. Based on what I have heard from them, it is also probable that many of those transported Finnish teachers would be already doing something else than teach by the end of their fifth year – quite like their American peers.

Conversely, the teachers from Indiana working in Finland—assuming they showed up fluent in Finnish—stand to flourish on account of the freedom to teach without the constraints of standardized curricula and the pressure of standardized testing; strong leadership from principals who know the classroom from years of experience as teachers; a professional culture of collaboration; and support from homes unchallenged by poverty.

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