Department for Education

Analytical associate pool

Summary of recent small-scale research projects

March 2021

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Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) uses high quality evidence and analysis to inform policy development and delivery to achieve our vision - to achieve a highly educated society in which opportunity is equal for young person no matter what their background or family circumstances.

Within the DfE there is an analytical community which comprises statisticians, economists, social and operational researchers. These specialists feed in analysis and research to strategy, policy development and delivery.

While much analysis is undertaken in-house and substantial projects are commissioned to external organisations, there is often a need to quickly commission small-scale projects.

We have therefore created a pool of Analytical Associates who can bring specific specialist expertise, knowledge and skills into the department to supplement and develop our internal analytical capability.

In June 2014 we invited applications from individuals to join the pool. We received an overwhelming response and, after evaluating the expertise of everyone who applied, we established the Analytical Associate Pool.

Over 200 independent academics and researchers are in the pool, and they can be commissioned to carry out small-scale data analysis, rapid literature reviews and peer review. They also provide training, quality assurance and expert advice on an ad-hoc basis. Most projects cost less than £15,000, and more than 180 projects have been commissioned since the pool opened in September 2014.

Summary of projects

At DfE we aim to make analysis publicly available and we follow the Government Social Research (GSR) protocol for publishing research. Much of the analysis undertaken through the Associate Pool is only small in nature and we are publishing a summary of findings here to ensure that they are shared. More substantial work is published in stand-alone reports throughout the year. See page 7 for details and links to projects already published.

Alternative Provision Workforce Project

Peter Dickinson (Warwick Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick)

March 2020

The research

The DfE is committed to ensuring that every child, no matter their background, needs, or where they live, receives an excellent education and the opportunity to fulfil their potential. For some children, reasons such as exclusion, mental or physical illness, or other reasons mean they are not able to attend a mainstream or special school and are educated in Alternative Provision (AP).

The Warwick Institute for Employment Research (IER) was commissioned by the DfE to undertake a brief non-systematic literature review and qualitative semi-structured interviews to explore what constitutes a high-quality workforce in AP and the challenges to achieving this. Interviews were conducted with headteachers (or equivalent) in a cross-section of 20 Academies, AP Free Schools and Pupil Referral Units

The literature review identified 32 documents directly relevant to this project[1]. This covered Government policy and strategy documents, Government research reports, results of consultations, academic research, and research commissioned by sub-regional government, Third Sector and other organisations.

Providers were sampled purposively across a broad range of selection criteria including urban/rural location, academy trusts and pupil age range and included hospital schools serving pupils with mental and physical health needs. The sample initially focused on four English regions; North West, Outer London, South East and West Midlands. Due to the

[1] International (English language) literature searched since 2010.

small number of certain types of provider within these four regions, however, it was decided to broaden this to include the North East and East Midlands.

Key findings

What Constitutes a High-Quality Workforce?

Although there is limited research in this area, most studies identify workforce skills and the relationship between staff and pupils to be key in successful and high-quality provision.

The AP sector is diverse. Setting types, age groups, pupil education support and health needs and relationships with other bodies vary, posing workforce challenges. Despite this variability and headteachers feeling that they were working at capacity, headteachers tended to be satisfied with both the size and composition of their workforce. This was due to the effort they had put into: developing flexible staffing through recruitment; development and support of staff; and recruiting the 'right' person in the first place.

Headteachers reported that the ideal AP teacher, senior leader and teaching assistant (TA) would possess a "magical combination" of experience, qualifications and personal attributes. As this is rare to find in any one person, headteachers emphasised the importance of recruiting staff who demonstrated desirable personal attributes, skills or qualifications allied with a comprehensive Continuous Personal Development (CPD) and training package so that once recruited any skills or experience that may be lacking could be developed. Headteachers' opinions on what constituted the 'right combination of qualifications, experience and skills' for teachers, senior leaders and TAs varied from headteacher to headteacher. For example, whilst some insisted on teachers holding QTS qualifications, others accepted non-QTS teachers because skills and experience were considered more important.

Flexibility and the ability to multi-task and "muck in" were considered important, especially where:

- Providers were working at capacity
- Where there were relatively high levels of staff vacancies and absenteeism; and
- Where there was uncertainty and variation around pupil numbers, support and education needs.

Within the AP schools, the role of the TA was considered to be particularly important as they could be developed to perform higher level roles, as well as filling in for other staff gaps that may arise (e.g. teacher absences).

Relationship building was also considered an essential skill for all staff, but especially amongst senior leaders and teachers. This was due to AP's position at the intersection of several sectors (education, health, care and welfare), in addition to the need to work

strategically and operationally with a number of local education providers, stakeholders such as pupils and their parents, mainstream schools and external partners.

What are the key challenges in recruiting a high-quality workforce?

The AP workforce must provide for a diversity of education and support needs within the same class, which can manifest themselves at different times and with varying intensities. This made work planning difficult because headteachers cannot be sure what specific assistance pupils may need. For example, some pupils may require 1-2-1 support which is more intensive to deliver, or deliver to a wide range of abilities in the same class.

Some headteachers felt funding was not responsive to fluctuations in the numbers of pupils and their support needs and this presented a major challenge to the AP workforce. Headteachers felt increases in the number of exclusions were not always reflected in budgets, with time lags between numbers and funding rising. The base rate paid by local authorities was reported to vary due to councils having to manage their own funding. Headteachers also believed that top-up rates (which relate to a pupil's support needs) do not always reflect the level of assistance required. Moreover, reductions in external welfare and care agency funding (such as CAMHS) has meant headteachers have felt it necessary to expand the skills base of staff to cover shortages in external services (such as mental health support).

Recruitment was identified as one of the key workforce challenges by headteachers and this is evidenced by vacancy levels generally being higher in AP than mainstream schools. Recruiting teachers was felt to be more difficult than other staff roles, in particular appointing subject specialists in science, English, art and maths. The absence of these specialist teachers meant that some subjects had to either be taken off the curriculum, or taught by stand-in teachers (potentially affecting quality) or agency staff (an expensive option). Whilst headteachers felt that recruitment problems in some way reflected teacher recruitment problems more generally, they felt recruitment in AP was hampered additionally by:

- Negative perceptions of the challenging nature of the work and lack of progression opportunities in the AP sector;
- The lack of pipeline from Initial Teacher Training (ITT);
- The costs of recruitment were perceived to be high; and
- The geographical location of settings.

Some headteachers were responding to these challenges through:

- Promoting staff internally to help assure them that they would have the desired personal skills, attitudes and behaviours;
- Utilising agency teaching staff as an alternative to probation;
- Setting up secondments of teachers from mainstream schools they had links with;

- Making use of their flexible workforce to cover gaps (although this created staffing pressures and could result in increased stress, sickness absence and more staffing gaps); and
- Exploring alternative advertising platforms such as free newspapers and job boards.

Staff retention was generally considered high in the AP sector across all grades of staff and headteachers felt this was because CPD and training served as a key retention tool. Some headteachers found that TAs tended to have lower retention rates but this was because the amount of training and work experience they received meant that they became qualified and experienced and were able to move into higher level career roles or roles outside of the AP should they want to.

What are the key challenges for CPD and Training?

Whilst headteachers did not feel that training was difficult to access, they found releasing staff (and thus backfilling in their absence) and paying for training was costly. To address these challenges much training was delivered in-house. Training individual staff and then having them disseminate their learning to colleagues was favoured as it was more cost effective. This also addressed challenges in accessing CPD that is both high quality and relevant to the AP setting. Headteachers believed that a lot of training was targeted at mainstream schools, so delivering training in-house enabled it to be made more relevant to them. Training targeted towards meeting pupils' support needs, such as mental health awareness and behaviour management training, was considered a priority. Headteachers wanted more technical and subject teacher training. This was partly due to the lack of opportunity for staff networking on specific subjects within small providers but also because of a lack of wider teacher networking opportunities. Some headteachers did mention, however, that mainstream schools had invited AP teachers to network with their staff, undergo lesson observations and share other practice, for example lesson planning and this served to develop relationships between AP and mainstream schools.

Senior leadership training was particularly important so that schools were well managed from a pupil, staff and organisational perspective. This included formal training through the range of National Professional Qualifications (NPQ), but also senior leader networking opportunities (for example through local Head and Deputy headteacher meetings) and coaching.

Headteachers had prioritised training in adversity and trauma, and Children in Need, but felt that ongoing development, experience and application in these areas was important. Staff support was also important; for example, some headteachers prioritised supporting staff's mental health and wellbeing because of the challenging nature of the work.

What are the key challenges to Partnership working?

Headteachers reported a lot of partnership working with mainstream schools. Whilst local authority districts (LADs) and multi-academy trusts (MATs) were important in developing and brokering formal and informal relationships, some providers developed these links themselves due to existing, functional relationships for example where schools share pupils. Sharing expertise and costs was also a major driver for, and benefit of, partnership working as settings could share understanding, ideas, expertise, good practice and resources. Training and support was reciprocal; headteachers felt their staff benefitted from sharing mainstream expertise in teacher and subject CPD (to develop AP teaching skills), and that mainstream schools benefitted from the pupil support, welfare and health skills their AP staff possessed (to develop mainstream school pupil support skills).

Some headteachers said that AP is not seen as integral to the continuum of support for challenging pupils but as distinct provision outside of mainstream. They felt, therefore, that there was scope for closer working, and effort needed to be put into developing a mutual understanding in the local education system of the AP setting and mainstream schools.

All headteachers said they would like to increase partnership working. Providers felt that closer relationships with mainstream providers could support pupils earlier and more responsively as their needs arise during their mainstream education, reducing the number of pupils needing to go to AP. Releasing staff to develop these relationships, however, was a challenge. Relationships were also felt to be unequal as AP providers felt that they made greater effort to develop relationships than mainstream settings.

Both the interviews and literature review show that developing a high-quality workforce cannot be achieved in isolation; it needs to be done within the context of the wider education, health, care and welfare system. This system requires strategic overview, planning and coordination, and provision that is regularly reviewed to identify gaps and foster partnership working.

Review of international requirements to become a teacher: literature review

Associates: Sue Tate and Professor David Greatbatch

The research

An evidence review was commissioned to improve understanding of how other countries' teacher training and induction requirements compare to England's, to feed into decisions around teacher recruitment from overseas. The primary aims of the review were to:

1. Identify the methods that have previously been used in international comparative studies on teacher training;

2. Identify which aspects of particular countries' teacher training systems are broadly comparable to England; and

3. Explore the extent to which it is possible to establish equivalence between teacher training and induction processes between England and elsewhere in the world.

To meet the first aim of the research, a review was conducted of the international comparative studies of initial teacher training published in 2015 onwards. To meet the second and third aims, the teacher training, induction and professional development requirements for 38 countries (comprising all countries in the EEA, plus Switzerland and an additional seven countries[2]) were compared with requirements in England, primarily using Government/agency websites or other published sources where this was not available. The review used only Anglophone literature and evidence, and was conducted in September to November 2020.

Key findings

Comparability studies. Most studies compared initial teacher education (ITE) systems in two or more countries based on literature reviews and document analysis. There was considerable variation in the levels of detail that authors provided about the procedures they used to locate, screen and synthesise literature. There was, generally, little or no consideration to the ways in which different countries' teacher education systems have been shaped by diverse cultural, historical and geographical factors, which often make it difficult to compare them. The paucity of primary research studies was unsurprising given the methodological challenges associated with cross-national comparative studies.

Admission requirements. These vary in countries between primary and secondary and, in some instances, between lower and upper secondary[3]. Twenty of the countries in the review (including England) require primary teachers to have at least a bachelor's degree; for 13 of those, the degree is required to be in primary education. Fifteen countries require primary teachers to have a master's degree. In four countries (Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and China) it is possible for recognised teachers to hold sub-degree qualifications.

[2] These were: China, Hong Kong, Jamaica, Japan, The Republic of Korea, Singapore, and South Africa.
[3] Upper secondary refers to the final stage of secondary education, whereby instruction is often more organised along subject-matter lines than at the previous stage, and teachers typically need to have a higher level, or more subject-specific qualifications (see: OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms - Upper secondary education (ISCED 3) Definition). Where "upper" or "lower" secondary were used in the literature, the researchers accepted these classifications.

In 18 of the countries, including England, a bachelor's degree is the minimum requirement for secondary teaching (although in Japan, this is only for upper secondary). In 16 countries, a master's is required for secondary teaching and, for a further three countries (Belgium, Denmark and Romania), for teaching in upper secondary. Three countries (Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore) recognise teachers without degrees.

In many countries, entry requirements comprise upper secondary leaving certificates for undergraduate programmes and a first degree for master's level training. However, sixteen of the countries in the review operate formal processes for determining which candidates to accept on to teacher training courses, the most common of which are admissions tests (seven countries), interviews (six countries) and aptitude tests (five countries).

Length of training. *O*nly five countries in the study offer a three-year option for a degree in primary education. It generally takes trainee primary school teachers in England between one and three years less to qualify than trainee primary school teachers in those countries in which a master's degree is needed to qualify. Like England, 18 of the countries in the review provide routes into secondary school teaching through three-year or four-year programmes (or similar) at bachelor's level.

Curriculum and outcomes. Nine of the countries in the review adopt a similar approach to England by both prescribing some aspects of ITE curricula and setting out the competencies that are needed in order to acquire a teacher's qualification. Sixteen of the countries in the review establish core content for initial teacher training (ITT) programmes along similar lines to England but do not specify output-based areas of competence. Nine countries establish competency frameworks similar to the Teachers' Standards in England but do not prescribe any elements of the curriculum.

Placements. School placement requirements vary considerably across the countries included in the review, and the requirements in England vary depending on the route and course undertaken. England's four-year bachelor's programme – which is largely used as a route to secondary education – requires longer periods of school-based practice (160 days) than any of the other reviewed countries' bachelor programmes. England's three-year bachelor's programme – which is largely used as a route to primary school teaching – stipulates longer school placement periods (120 days) than the other countries' bachelor's programmes, with the exception of Spain and Bulgaria. When comparing these requirements with countries where a master's degree is required to qualify as a teacher at primary and/or secondary level, only Finland's programmes require longer school placements than the required minimum of 120 days in England.

Induction. Twelve of the countries in this review have no formal induction period, although many schools will provide additional support to new teachers. For those countries which do have a formal induction period (including England), this differs in length from a few months to three years. Practices also vary as to if and how the

induction period is assessed. For some countries, a successful probationary period leads to formal appointment by school leaders; in others, an additional externally assessed phase is required for full teacher certification. In some countries, the induction phase is not assessed but new teachers are provided with additional, mandated support.

CPD. Teachers are obligated to take part in a specified amount of continuous professional development (CPD) in 27 of the countries in the review, unlike England where there is not a legally specified amount of CPD. These statutory requirements vary considerably from one country to another. Whereas some countries set annual requirements, others refer to longer periods of time ranging from two years to seven years.

Published full project reports

In addition to these summaries, some Associate Pool projects have been published as a full report on the DfE Internet site or on Associate's own websites. See below for more information on these publications.

Table 1 Associate Pool Published Reports since November 2020

Date	Title	Description
10 November 2020	International progression report: good practice in technical education	This report investigates other countries' technical and vocational education for young people. It investigates how other countries support progression to more advanced levels.
26 November 2020	Exploring the relationship between teacher workload and target setting	The Department for Education commissioned CooperGibson research to undertake a study comprising 60 qualitative semi-structured telephone interviews with a range of school staff to explore: • Roles and responsibilities of different levels of school staff in relation to target setting and data management • Time spent in schools on work related to target setting and its impact on teacher workload • Perceived value of targets and target setting activities and how these could be improved in the future These findings are from 2019, prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
11 January 2021	Children's social care cost pressures and variation in unit costs	This study examines and seeks to categorise reasons for variation in the costs of providing children's social care services and highlights reported cost pressures.

Further information

If you would like any further information about the Associate Pool or the projects included in this summary please email us on: associate.pool@education.gov.uk

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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.

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