
Evaluation of impact of DfE investment in initiatives designed to improve teacher workforce skills in relation to SEN and disabilities

Geoff Lindsay¹, Mairi Ann Cullen¹, Stephen Cullen¹, Julie Dockrell², Steve Strand¹, Elisabeth Arweck¹, Seamus Hegarty¹ and Susan Goodlad³

¹CEDAR, University of Warwick,

²Psychology and Human Development, Institute of Education, University of London,

³Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick,

Introduction

This is the Final Report of a study to evaluate the impact of investment by the Department for Education (DfE) in a number of initiatives, addressing both initial teacher training and the continuing professional development of teachers, designed to improve teacher workforce skills in relation to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The evaluation was conducted over the period January 2009 to March 2011.

Key findings

- Taken together, these initiatives represent a possibly unique comprehensive approach to improving the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviour, and confidence of the teacher workforce in relation to special educational needs and disability.
- The materials to support trainee teachers and those in practice have been welcomed and found to be effective.
- The dissemination methods have been effective and have produced a substantial platform for further dissemination.
- Taken as a whole, our evidence provides support for the proposed initiatives to develop teacher training and continuing professional development set out in the recent Green Paper.

Background

The two main developments examined in our evaluation were the SEND Training Toolkit developed by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) for students in initial teacher training and the Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) developed by the National Strategies for teachers in practice. Each comprised the development of materials and had a planned national dissemination strategy with phased implementation. The TDA Toolkit was made available to providers of primary undergraduate courses in initial teacher training (ITT) in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Phase 1 (2008-09), followed by materials in 2009-10 for providers of secondary undergraduate courses and for providers of the PGCE primary/secondary in 2010-11. Phase 1 of the IDP (2008-09) comprised two sets of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) materials focusing on speech, language and communication needs and on dyslexia respectively. Materials for supporting pupils on the

autism spectrum (2009-10) and with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (2010-11) then followed and were disseminated in Phases 2 and 3.

There were further initiatives within the programme designed ultimately to improve the achievement and well-being of pupils with SEND, including the Stammering Information Programme, extended placements for trainee teachers in special schools or specialist provision in mainstream schools, and the funding of experienced teachers to undertake a mandatory qualification for specialist teachers of pupils with sensory impairment. In addition, the government introduced regulations to require SENCOs to be qualified teachers and to undertake mandatory training. The TDA developed a national framework for this training, approved training providers to offer it and funded SENCOs new to the role to undertake the training from 2009; evaluation of these initiatives has been arranged separately by the TDA.

Together these initiatives add up to an innovative and challenging programme of work which represents a comprehensive attempt to enhance the knowledge, skills, and confidence of the teacher workforce nationally, through both initial teacher training and CPD. The strategy of developing the IDP as both a SEND and school improvement issue had the potential to avoid its marginalization as 'only' about pupils with SEND, to bring school leaders into the initiative and also to embed SEND as central to whole school development.

The end of our evaluation coincides with the publication of the Green Paper¹. We therefore report our findings and make recommendations relative to this indication of future government policy.

Methods

This was a multi-faceted initiative examining the take up and impact of a number of developments in initial teacher training (ITT) and post-qualification continuing professional development (CPD). These were designed to improve teachers' knowledge, skills and confidence in order to support children with SEN and disability. The ITT developments and those concerning the Inclusion Development Programme for CPD comprised data collection in each of the three years of the project. These drew upon independent samples for the questionnaires but repeated interviews wherever possible, plus additional interviews with interviewees new to the initiative as it progressed. The Stammering Information Programme (SIP) and Mandatory Qualification (MQ) studies took place in the final year of the study.

The evaluation findings are based on analysis of data from a total of 429 interviews, 8321 respondents to surveys, plus data on 3617 teachers attending IDP training.

Initial Teacher Training

- 104 Interviews were held with providers of primary undergraduate initial teacher training (ITT) over the three years; 10 with secondary undergraduate providers over years 2 and 3; and 22 with postgraduate providers in year 3. Online surveys with ITT students provided data from 1255 undergraduate trainees over the three years, plus 352 postgraduate trainees in 2011.

Local authorities and schools

- A sample of 30 LAs was selected to reflect a cross section of all LAs. Interviews were held with key staff over the three years of the study to investigate the development of the IDP implementation.

¹ DfE (2011). *Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability*. A Consultation. Cm8027. Norwich: The Stationery Office.

- 80 interviews were held with IDP leads in each LA, with most leads being interviewed during each of the three years.
- 184 interviews were held with school staff from 28 schools drawn from these LAs over the three years: 58 SENCOs, 40 head teachers or senior staff leaders, 45 experienced teachers, and 41 newly qualified teachers (NQTs).
- 29 parents of children with SEND were interviewed.
- Online surveys of NQTs provided data from a total of 2832 NQTs over the three years.
- In addition, data from 2174 teachers were provided through the autumn 2010 Teacher Voice survey of a national panel of teachers.
- Pre- and post IDP training self assessments were provided by LAs through the National Strategies for 3617 teachers.

Stammering Information Programme (SIP)

- 565 professionals who had received training with the SIP responded to an online survey. Most (415) were speech and language therapists with the other respondents working in education, mainly teachers but also tutors in Higher Education Institutions.
- Four international experts provided assessment of the SIP

Mandatory Qualifications for specialist teachers of pupils with sensory impairment

- 9 of the 10 course leaders were interviewed during 2010-11 with additional information from a survey of 50 teachers enrolled on the courses.

Detailed findings

Initial teacher training

The Training Toolkit on SEND

- ITT tutors have incorporated material from the Toolkit into their teaching materials for SEND and found it a very valuable and flexible resource.
 - Over 9 out of 10 found it 'effective' or 'very effective' in enhancing a range of trainees' knowledge, skills and understanding around SEND.
- Trainees rated the teaching on SEND they had received as significantly more effective and felt more prepared to teach pupils with SEND if their course had incorporated the Toolkit.

The extended placements in specialist settings

- Extended placements in special schools and specialist settings were highly popular and valued by trainees, tutors and schools.
- 9 out of 10 trainees from cohorts of trainees that had undertaken a placement rated the effectiveness of different elements 'effective' or 'very effective' in each of the three years.
- Trainees who had undertaken a placement:
 - were more likely to consider a career in a special school or mainstream school with a specialist unit or resource base.
 - rated the teaching of SEND on their course more highly and felt better prepared to teach pupils with SEND than those who had not had a placement.

Cluster groups

- The cluster groups were highly valued by tutors as a means of supporting the development of SEND across the sector.

The Inclusion Development Programme

National leadership and support

- The tiered support at national, regional and local level was a key factor in the successful roll out of the IDP.
- The role of the National Strategies in leading the IDP dissemination was effective in supporting the alignment of SEND and school improvement work at LA level and added 'clout' to the initiative in terms of engaging schools.
- Teething problems with the early versions of the dyslexia and SLCN materials were addressed and 'refreshed' versions were launched in early 2011. The autism spectrum materials were particularly well regarded.

Role of the SEN regional hubs

- The hub IDP strand meetings were a strength of the national dissemination model.
- The key benefits of the IDP strand regional hub meetings were the impetus they gave to the initiative, the opportunity to focus on the IDP, for LA leads to meet with others from outside their own LA, to share resources and ideas (including via hub websites), to share experiences and ways of disseminating the materials to schools, and to provide a forum for educational professionals to learn from each other.

Role of IDP lead in each LA

- Each LA having a lead person responsible for the delivery of the IDP facilitated dissemination.
- The Interim Report² identified different models of dissemination and that LAs varied in options selected. LAs learned from their dissemination approaches as the roll out proceeded.
- The degree of alignment between SEND/inclusion and school improvement varied at strategic planning level and in operational delivery to schools.

Impact

- Evidence for the early impact of the IDP was presented in the Interim Report.
- Awareness of and engagement with the IDP continued to increase over the project: by November 2010 six out of 10 teachers nationally were aware of the IDP: 66% of primary and 49% of secondary teachers.
- Three quarters of SENCOs had attended LA training on the IDP.
- Between 70% (dyslexia) and 84% (autism spectrum) judged training to be effective.
- SENCOs reported that the IDP CPD had promoted discussion of pupils' teaching and learning needs (96% SENCOs), improved teachers' knowledge (94%), improved teachers' empathy with pupils' having barriers to learning (90%), and benefited the learning of targeted pupils (89%).
- Between two thirds and three quarters of teachers judged that the IDP materials had improved their knowledge, understanding and confidence to teach pupils with dyslexia, SLCN, AS and BESD.
- 9 out of 10 SENCOs reported that IDP training had led to improvements in pupils' learning.
- Newly qualified teachers were more confident to support pupils with SEND if they had received IDP training.

² Lindsay, G., Cullen, M.A., Cullen, S., Dockrell, J.E., Goodlad, S., & Arweck, E. (2010). *Evaluation of impact of DfE investment in initiatives designed to improve teacher workforce skills in relation to SEN and disabilities 1st Interim Report*. London: DfE.

<http://publications.education.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RR058.pdf>

Sustainability

- The majority of LA leads have devised strategies to sustain and develop the gains made by the IDP.
- Keeping the materials under review, with revisions as appropriate, was a key factor in ensuring that the benefits to date were maintained and developed.

Mandatory qualification funding scheme

- The scheme was designed to address a shortage of specialist teachers of pupils with sensory impairment and the problems of an aging demographic, indicating greater shortages in the future.
- The scheme provided for 188 places at 10 courses training specialist teachers of hearing impaired, visually impaired or multisensory impaired pupils.
- Without the scheme, two thirds of the students would not have trained.
- The scheme was successful in attracting 'new blood' and maintaining standards of entry.
- It ran efficiently and was very positively rated by students.
 - 98% judged their course effective or very effective
 - Practical activities and academic level were positively rated by 92% and 94% respectively.

Stammering Information Programme (SIP)

- The Michael Palin Centre successfully developed a DVD and materials to raise awareness of stammering among the teaching workforce.
- 97% of speech and language therapists (SLTs) who had used the DVD considered that the SIP had changed teachers' understanding of children who stammer.
- Almost all the teachers (98%) and SLTs (97%) rated the SIP well presented, readily accessible, informative about children who stammer and relevant to classroom practice.
- Independent international experts were unanimous in endorsing its value.

Special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs)

- 99% of schools have a SENCO
- The SENCO is a qualified teacher in 98% of primary schools but in only 87 – 94% of secondary schools (7% of secondary teachers reported 'no' but 7% 'don't know').
- The SENCO is a member of the senior management/leadership team in 76% of primary schools but only 29% of secondary schools.

Implications for policy

We consider the implications of our evaluation of this programme of initiatives for future government policy, indicated by the recent Green Paper³.

Increasing support for all ITT trainees

- Our evidence shows that the TDA Toolkit on SEND is an effective resource to support the initial training of teachers. It can, and is being embedded within providers' programmes.
- The Toolkit should be maintained and reviewed/revised periodically as necessary to ensure it is kept up to date.
- Tutors value cluster meetings to facilitate collaborative developments and enhance their own development. These should continue, organised locally.

³ DfE (2011). *Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability*. A Consultation. Cm8027. Norwich: The Stationery Office.

Increasing trainee teachers' awareness of special schools

- Our evidence supports the Green Paper proposal (para 3.11) to provide additional funding for ITT providers to secure a greater number of placements in special school settings for trainee teachers.
- This should also be available for placements in specialist settings within mainstream schools to reflect the range of provision available.

Increasing continuing professional development for teachers

- Our evidence supports the Green Paper proposal (para 3.13) for continued availability of the materials for pupils with dyslexia, speech language and communication needs, behavioural emotional and social difficulties, and those on the autism spectrum.
- The proposal to commission online training materials for teachers about profound, multiple learning disabilities, severe learning disabilities, and complex learning difficulties and disabilities extends the current resource. We recommend that the new materials be piloted before dissemination.
- The Stammering Information Programme dissemination has also been very successful and this should continue to be made available; an online version should be considered.
- Our evidence also indicates the importance of effective dissemination: without this, high quality resources cannot be used effectively. We recommend the successful strategy used for the IDP dissemination: national, regional and local leadership and coordination. In the absence of previous organisations, schools and LAs will need to construct local systems to meet their own circumstances, needs and priorities.

Higher level specialist qualifications

- Our evidence supports the funding of training of specialist teachers (para 3.14). The current scheme for teachers of pupils with sensory impairment is successful; extension to pupils with other SEND is also justified:
 - Our evidence suggests that without funding to support the training, most teachers will not apply.

Teacher network and Training Schools

- Our research shows the importance of effective systems to support training and CPD. Networks and leadership within SEND are crucial to create self-supporting partnerships between schools, meeting local needs by voluntary collegial engagement.

SEND and leadership

- Our evidence shows the importance of SEND being regarded as central to a school's development. The Green Paper proposals (para 3.20-22) regarding a network of Teaching Schools, appropriate coverage of SEND issues in the National Professional Qualification for Headship, and the development of National and Local Leaders of Education are all appropriate developments in tune with our findings.

Special educational needs coordinators

- Our research has shown that not all SENCOs are qualified teachers.
- Furthermore, SENCOs are part of the senior management/leadership teams in only 76% of primary and 29% of secondary schools.
- Action has been taken to address the former issue and also to require all newly appointed SENCOs to undertake nationally approved training for SEN coordination (paras 3.24-24). These requirements should help to raise the expertise and status of SENCOs and, as a consequence, make it more likely that they are actively engaged in schools at a senior level.

Teaching assistants

- Our evidence shows that head teachers value highly their TAs' knowledge of SEND. The Green Paper proposal (para 3.27) for a fund to support further training in SEND will build upon this.

Pupil attainment

- Improved teacher training (initial and CPD) is a prerequisite to improving pupil outcomes, both their attainment and well-being. Our evidence indicates that the DfE initiatives were having a positive effect and so supports the investment in the Green Paper proposals.

Conclusions

This multi-faceted government initiative is possibly unique. It provided a comprehensive programme of support to improve the attitudes, knowledge, skills, confidence and behaviour of teachers with the aim of improving outcomes for pupils with SEND. There are, of course, other factors including appropriate curricula and facilities, parental confidence and support; but teachers are fundamental to improving pupil outcomes. Our research has provided extensive evidence that the initiative has been successful.

The Green Paper sets out the government's direction of travel. It presents a comprehensive statement of intended policy developments together with specific proposals. As the Green Paper notes, the life chances of children and young people in England who are identified as having special educational needs or are disabled are disproportionately poor. The importance of effective initial teacher training and continuing professional development are fundamental to the delivery of optimal education to improve the attainment and well-being of pupils with SEND. Our research provides substantial evidence to support these proposals and also indicates how they might best be implemented.

Additional Information

The full report can be accessed at <http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/>

Further information about this research can be obtained from

Phil Snell, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT

Phil.SNELL@education.gsi.gov.uk

This research report was commissioned before the new UK Government took office on 11 May 2010. As a result the content may not reflect current Government policy and may make reference to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) which has now been replaced by the Department for Education (DFE).

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