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How does the partnership between the University the Training School enhance the quality of the Secondary Graduate Teacher Programme

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Abstract

The Graduate Teacher Programme is a partnership course between schools and the university. The purpose of the Graduate Teacher Programme is to enable trainee teachers to gain qualified teacher status (QTS).

The University and Training School have worked together since 2003.

The partnership has gone from strength to strength and in 2010 Ofsted graded the programme as grade 1 – outstanding.

Findings from this study will demonstrate how the partnership between the University and the Training School enhanced the quality of the Graduate Teacher Training Programme. It will also show how the partnership can be expected to increase further the quality of training provided for training teachers on the Graduate Teacher Programme and to increase the number employed at the end of training, especially in partnership schools. It will also show how it has influenced other Initial Teacher Education provision at the University.

Introduction

Graduate Teacher Programme

The Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) is an employment-based route into teaching and was introduced in October 1997, replacing the Licensed Teacher and Articled Teacher schemes. It was designed to widen access to teaching.

Training for the GTP can be for one term (13 weeks), two terms or one year, as it is designed to match individual needs and circumstances.

The programme was introduced as being

“... designed to offer a high-quality and cost-effective route into the teaching profession for suitable graduates who do not want to follow a traditional pre-service route, such as the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE), but would prefer a tailor-made training route coupled with employment as a teacher. It is also seen as meeting the needs of schools who wish to be directly involved in the training of their own teachers but do not want to develop a School-centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) scheme.” (DfEE, 1996, p. 1)

The Graduate Teacher Programme enables schools to employ people who are not yet qualified to teach and to work in partnership with the University to train them through an Individual Training Plan leading to Qualified Teacher Status. The benefit for the trainee is that they can qualify as a teacher while they work. The programme suits mature, well qualified people who can quickly begin to take on teaching responsibilities and who need to earn a living while they train. Many already have relevant experience in other sectors or in a support role in a school. An increasing number are career changers who want to move into teaching. The Graduate Teacher Programme involves one year of postgraduate training. Training will largely take place in a 'base' school but they will also spend time in at least one other school.

Training Schools

Training schools are schools which focus on initial teacher training (ITT) and continuing professional development . The establishment of Training Schools, to develop and disseminate good practice in initial teacher training (ITT), train mentors and undertake relevant research, was proposed in the 1998 Green Paper, *Teachers - meeting the challenge of change*. In December 1999, the then Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) invited schools to submit bids to become Training Schools. The first 54 Training Schools were accredited from September 2000, each school receiving up to £100,000 a year for an initial period of three years. A further group of 28 Training Schools were accredited a year later, with funding to run for two years. All of these schools were invited to apply for reaccreditation from September 2003. At the same time, additional schools were able to bid to become Training Schools. All the schools had specific objectives relating to ITT, often formulated fairly broadly, for example 'to provide a programme of ITT which complements and extends that provided by the HEI ITT provider' Ofsted (2003:5)

Training Schools work with a number of partners including ITT providers and partner schools to develop and disseminate good practice in ITT. Training schools are expected to offer training experiences which go beyond those expected from a well managed institution which include assisting in securing school workforce supply. One of the areas of work for Training Schools is with the Graduate Teacher Programme. Ofsted claim that "the Training School programme represents good value for money" and that "the programme has had a very positive effect on ITT" Ofsted (2003:4)

Background

The University Graduate Teacher Programme was set up in 2003 to train both primary and secondary teachers and to address the recruitment issues in local schools. For September 2003 it was allocated 20 GTP places by the TDA.

The Graduate Teacher Programme is a partnership course between schools and the university. The purpose of the GTP is to enable trainee teachers to gain qualified teacher status (QTS).

The Training School in Milton Keynes has been a key partner in the University DRB since its inception. The school gained specialist status in science in 2003 and became a designated training school in the same year.

The partnership has gone from strength to strength and has expanded the partnership to include all local schools.

As a result of the strengthening partnership, professional studies training for GTPs has been delivered at the training school. The programme is co-ordinated by the Training School Manager, is designed to meet the pedagogical and practical needs of any one cohort of GTPs and is delivered by staff working in the schools in the partnership and at the University.

All trainees spend one day a week in the university where they attend the PGCE subject sessions in their specialist subjects for secondary and in the three core subjects for primary. Secondary trainees attend the Training School one afternoon each week where they have professional studies sessions delivered by both school and university staff with expertise in specific areas. The programme of professional studies workshops is planned at the beginning of an academic year and covers a range of topics designed to build the foundations of a good teacher.

Secondary subjects include English, Maths, Science, PE, Business, ICT and Design Technology

Methodology

For the purpose of this study questionnaires were given to trainees at the end of their training. A questionnaire was also given to past trainees to see how prepared they felt they were for teaching on completing the programme. Mentors were also given a questionnaire on how well prepared the trainees were.

The questionnaires were analysed and data collected. The perceptions of the trainees and mentors were compared.

Questions were centred on recruitment, selection, the interview process, placement schools, mentoring and support, the professional studies sessions and subject sessions and well prepared the trainees were for the teaching profession.

The anonymity of trainees, current and past, and mentors was maintained.

The Study

The programme is advertised in local newspapers in the in October. Potential applicants are invited to an open evening at the Training School in November. At the open evening the programme is explained by the programme manager from the University and the Training School Manager. The closing date for applicants is in December and it is at this stage that selection process starts and selection criteria is put in place. All applicants must have a degree in their teaching subject or related to their teaching subject. They must have GCSE grade C or above in English and Mathematics. Applicants must have some experience working with young people. Short listed candidates are invited for interview at the Training School. Not only are candidates invited for interview but also those schools who would like to be involved in the Graduate Teacher Programme. The interview day starts with a talk given by the GTP Manager and Training School Manager. All candidates are given a task to undertake with a group of 5 or 6 pupils. This is observed by senior school staff from those from partner schools who would like to have a GTP trainee. The candidates then take a written test which is a requirement of all interviews for trainee teachers. Individual interviews are conducted by a representative from the university and schools. All stages of the interview process are graded. Once all interviews are completed the university and school staff discuss all applicants and who the schools would like to employ and support their training.

The trainees are supported by a number of different people and different elements of the programme.

The Graduate Teacher Programme Manager

The GTP Manager has overall responsibility for the day to day running of the programme. They liaise with the TDA, Ofsted and external assessors as well as the university subject tutors. They also support the link tutor in their work.

Training School Manager

The Training School Manager works in partnership with the Graduate Teacher Programme Manager in all aspects of the programme and in particular the General Professional Studies.

The Link Tutor

There are 5 secondary link tutors who are experienced and have been involved in this programme for a number of years. The Link Tutor will be the link between the students, mentor, school and university. They will visit the students each half term and more often if necessary. They will observe the trainee teach and support them in meeting their targets in achieving Qualified Teacher Status.

The Mentor

The mentor will have day to day responsibility for the trainee. The role is structural, educative and concerned with assessment. They will meet with the trainee on a weekly basis to discuss progress.

The Professional Tutor

Partner schools have a professional tutor responsible for staff development. The role often includes general responsibility for trainee teachers

University Subject Tutor

University staff from the subject areas will have responsibility, together with the subject mentors, for preparing trainee teachers to teach their subject specialism. They will help trainee teachers to develop their abilities to reflect on their own practice and to make appropriate use of recent research and theory in the interpretation of that practice.

Subject based Sessions

Subject sessions are based at the university where the GTP trainees join PGCE trainees. Subject tutors introduce trainee teachers to a range of subject specific knowledge and skills that will assist them in their teaching of that subject in schools. Sessions also make explicit the links between theory and practice;

General Professional Studies

The aim of this element of the programme is to encourage trainees to consider broad issues in education within both a theoretical framework and a practical context. Practical issues concerning classroom process and teaching methodologies will also be considered. Trainees will be encouraged to develop their own philosophy and theories of education and to become reflective practitioners.

The trainees will be set a range of programme work tasks and will be expected to lead seminars and make presentations. In school, trainees will undertake observations, enquiries and an investigation. Appropriate reading will be set for the General Professional Studies element of the programme.

In their work on the Professional Studies aspect of the programme key issues will be raised and discussed. School-based tasks may be set which require trainees to observe the principles translated into practice in the context of their placement school. Trainees will need to revisit aspects of the programme repeatedly through the programme.

Individual Training Plans

Individual Training Plans (ITPs) are developed jointly by the school partner and the university. The Individual Training Plan will be drawn up in July and then will be amended as the course progresses. The ITP will be amended as a result of the half termly review meeting between trainee, mentor and link tutor and audits. The ITP will be a living document, updated when needs arise and when opportunities for professional development present themselves. Subject knowledge is also audited at the start of the course and will inform the ITP.

Findings

a) Current Trainees

Trainees were asked how they found out about the programme. The current trainees found out about the programme from the range of sources available: the University website, the newspaper advertisement and through contact with the Training School. There was an even spread across all mediums.

In response to the question “Do you feel that your selection onto the programme was supported by the Training School and University?” 75% of the trainees who responded stated that they felt supported by the Training School during the selection process. This support was through visits to the school, email and phone calls. 50% of the trainees also felt supported by the University during the selection process through phone calls and email. The fact that the Training School appears to have offered support to more trainees could reflect the fact that the interview process is undertaken at the Training School.

When asked “Did you feel it was beneficial to have representatives of the University and placement schools involved in the interview process?” an overwhelming majority of trainees felt that it was beneficial to have representatives of the University and placement schools involved in the interview process.

Next the trainees were asked about their experience at their base school and guest school. “How well suited to meeting your needs was your base placement school?” and “Did your second placement school provide a suitable contrast?” An overwhelming majority, 80%, felt their base school was well suited to meeting their needs and 90% felt that their second schools provided a suitable contrast.

The trainees were also asked about the support they received from their school mentor and link tutor. “How supportive was your mentor?” and “How supportive was your link tutor?” 70% of trainees felt that their mentors were ‘very good’ and 80% felt that the support provided by the Link Tutor from the University was ‘very good’ and no trainee felt the support was less than good.

In response to the questions and their taught sessions “How relevant were the professional studies sessions to your teaching?” “How relevant were the subject application sessions to your teaching?” and “Were session leaders aware of the different needs of GTP trainees to PGCE trainees?” 60% of the trainees felt that the Professional Studies sessions run at the Training School were very relevant to their teaching, with only 20% feeling they were ‘satisfactory’. Again only 20% felt the subject application sessions were ‘satisfactory’; all other responses were ‘good’ or ‘very good’. 60% of the trainees felt that the subject leaders were aware of the different needs of PGCE and GTP trainees.

The final question was “How do you feel that, having experience of university and school, staff supported your training needs?” 100% of trainees felt that it was either ‘good’ or ‘very good’ to have the experience of University and Training School staff involved in their training.

b) Current Mentors

When questioned about how they know about how schools are involved in the Graduate Teacher Programme mentors from the participating schools were most likely to have found out about the programme from the Training School. However, the University plays an increased role in keeping participating mentors up-to-date about the programme, although, the Training School is still seen to be the major contact.

Mentors were then asked about how important they felt having both representatives from school and the university at the interview was in selecting suitable trainees and in placing them in suitable schools. 100% of mentors felt that the interview and selection process based at the Training School was effective; unanimously mentors felt that it was beneficial to have representatives of the University and placement schools involved in the interview process. 100% of the mentors also felt that trainees were allocated to suitable base schools.

The mentors were asked how supported they felt. All participating mentors feel that the University and Training School prepare mentors effectively and 71% feel that preparation is 'good' or 'very good'. They also feel that the Link Tutor provides effective ongoing support for placement schools, mentors and trainees and that this is also true of the support provided by the GTP Co-ordinator at the University and the Training School.

This support for placement schools, mentors and trainees was provided equally by the Training School, the University GTP Co-ordinator and the Link Tutor and the support is provided through visits, emails and phone calls.

Mentors work with both trainees who are with them as their base school and those who work with them as their second school. 90% of participating schools believed that the guest placement schools provided a suitable contrast.

Finally mentors were also asked how relevant they felt the professional studies and subject sessions were to the trainee's classroom practice. They believed that the Professional Studies sessions at the Training School were relevant to the development of the trainees. The subject application sessions were seen to be even more relevant to the development of the trainees with 100% of participating believing them to be 'good' or better.

c) Past Trainees

All past trainees found employment in schools at the end of the programme. Many of trainees took up posts in the schools where they trained, and most of them in partnership schools.

The Programme aims to produce newly qualified teachers who are:

- able to understand and uphold the professional code of the General Teaching Council for England

- able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding as they work towards the achievement of the standards for QTS
- reflective practitioners in all aspects of their work;
- able to debate issues in education and formulate and justify their views;
- effective classroom managers, sensitive and responsive to the needs of pupils and able to promote learning;
- effective, confident, imaginative and flexible curriculum planners;
- knowledgeable subject specialists, particularly in relation to the breadth of work in the National Curriculum;
- astute, fair, self-critical assessors and evaluators of pupils' work and of their own teaching;
- well informed professionals in terms of the organisation of schools as institutions and the place of schools in society;
- committed professional teachers, able to set themselves and their pupils high standards;
- able to recognise the value of continued professional development

The questionnaire was given to newly qualified teachers and teachers who had recently qualified to see how well prepared they felt they were to entry the teaching profession. The following questions were asked.

“How well suited to meeting your needs was your base placement school?”

“Did your second placement school provide a suitable contrast?”

“How supportive was your mentor?”

“How supportive was your link tutor?”

“How relevant were the professional studies sessions to your teaching?”

“How do you feel that, having experience of university and school, staff supported your training needs?”

All the trainees questioned felt that both their base school suited their training need and the second school offered a contrasting experience.

All the trainees felt that they were well supported by their school based mentor but only 80% felt they were supported by their link tutor.

All the trainees felt that the subject and professional studies sessions were good or very good and that they had been relevant to their teaching needs.

When asked how they felt that having both schools and university staff supporting their training the response was 100% as very good.

Conclusion

The research shows that the partnership between the university and training school plays an important part of the recruitment, selection and training of those on the Graduate Teacher Programme.

Since 2006 all trainees completing the programme entered the teaching profession. In 2007 of the 16 trainees completing the programme 14 obtained full time employment in partnership schools and of those 11 stayed in the school that supported their training. In 2008 of the 17 completing the programme 9 are based in partnership schools and of those, 5 were employed at schools were they trained. In 2009 16 completed the programme, 10 are based in partnership schools and of those 7 stayed in the school were they trained. In 2010 14 completed the programme and 5 were employed in their training schools. In 2011 14 completed the programme and 10 of these were employed in partnership schools and of those 8 were employed in their placements school. Since 2006 16 trainees have been employed by the Training School.

The University has recognised the success of the partnership and in particular the professional studies provision and is now working with partnership schools on how these sessions can be delivered by training schools and managed by cluster mangers.

Ofsted inspected this provision in May 2010 and graded the programme as a 1. The report commented on the partnership between the schools and the University. "The success of the programme is very much because of an equal partnership with mutual respect between schools, the university and trainees". The report also commented on how other provision at the University can benefit from the experience of the Graduate Teacher Programme "The partnership between schools and higher education is driving innovation and the university is establishing further partnerships to build on the existing strong provision"

References

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