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PRIMARY REVIEW  
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## PRIMARY TEACHERS: INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION, CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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This briefing draws on Primary Review Research Report 6/3 *Primary Teachers: initial teacher education, continuing professional development and school leadership development*, by Olwen McNamara, Mark Brundrett and Rosemary Webb. The report presents an overview of the professional learning landscape and has been structured into four sections: initial teacher education (ITE), continuing professional development (CPD), the training of education leaders, and common themes. **The full report, including details of all sources consulted, may be downloaded at [www.primaryreview.org.uk](http://www.primaryreview.org.uk).**

### Initial teacher education

The last 25 years have seen a period of sustained and increasingly radical reforms to ITE as successive governments have progressively increased prescription and control through the regulation of courses, curriculum content and the assessment of standards. The resulting changes to training provision have been both practical and ideological and have aligned primary ITE with wider education reform agendas. The result of these fundamental and comprehensive changes, and the rigorous inspection regime which has been mobilised to ensure compliance with them, has been to:

- improve standards in ITE and increase the quality and preparedness of newly qualified teachers, as measured by the Ofsted inspection framework;
- increase the level of intensification of primary programmes, refocusing them to engage with subject and pedagogic knowledge as it is situated in primary classrooms and target course content on the core curriculum, particularly English and mathematics; but leave little time for previously key aspects of curricular and professional learning such as non-core subjects, especially on postgraduate routes;
- embed partnership as a core principle of provision but cause, as a result, short-term acute concern over the capacity in the system to deliver quality school based training and continuing chronic capacity problems in Key Stage 1 in certain geographic areas; and
- render peripheral many fundamentally important debates about ITE because of the sheer weight and intrusiveness of policy requirements, bureaucracy and accountability.

The impact of education reforms and other contextual factors on the sector as a whole has been to:

- reduce the undergraduate sector of the market from 53 per cent to 37 per cent overall (1998 – 2005), increase the proportion of undergraduates taking shortened three year degrees (with QTS) to 40 per cent, and expand the diversity of postgraduate provision to school-centred and employment-based routes;
- increase primary training numbers by 30 per cent, and attract a somewhat more diverse population in terms of age and ethnicity, although not in terms of gender, the proportion of primary male trainees remaining a consistently low 14 per cent (with marked variation across routes and Government Office Regions);
- create staffing problems in university/college education departments as a result of age demographics and the difficulty of attracting new recruits with QTS from senior management positions in primary schools; the latter resulting from relative pay differentials and the perceived challenge of making the transition between cultures and acquiring the necessary range of knowledge and skills, particularly in respect of research and scholarly activity;

- create a schism between research active staff and teacher educators which, exacerbated by the drive for increased research selectivity particularly in research intensive universities, has meant that most teachers are trained in departments with no core research funding; and
- fail to capitalise upon the significant contribution ITE can make to teacher development and school improvement, despite increasing emphasis on mentoring as a vehicle for professional learning. Analysis of all primary Ofsted reports (1999-2005), for example, reveals that fewer than 6 per cent made any reference to schools' involvement in ITE.

### **Continuing professional development**

Following the Education Reform Act in 1988, the emphasis of CPD shifted from the development of individual teachers by attendance at external courses to school-based training towards priorities increasingly determined by government requirements. At the same time the capacity of local authorities to deliver in-service training was substantially reduced by the delegation of budgets to schools. Changes in the funding, competition from courses leading to vocational qualifications, and more lucrative overseas markets also led to higher education institutions greatly reducing their CPD provision. Increasingly, professional associations, consultants and other commercial agencies entered the market.

In the 'new professionalism' promoted by New Labour participation in CPD is recognised as important, albeit with the predominant purpose of equipping teachers to implement government reforms and tightly circumscribed within progression through specified standards and competences. The centralisation of CPD carried forward under New Labour was manifest particularly in the training of primary teachers to implement the National Numeracy, Literacy and Primary Strategies.

Structural developments at national level include:

- the establishment of the General Teaching Council (GTC) in September 2000 with a specific remit to promote teachers' professional development;
- the introduction of the government's CPD strategy in 2001 together with the GTC's *Teachers' Professional Learning Framework* setting out teachers' CPD entitlement and responsibilities; and
- the Training and Development Agency assuming responsibility from 2005 for the national coordination of CPD for all school staff.

Research shows teachers' access to CPD is constrained by:

- lack of time, heavy workload, financial cost and distance from training opportunities;
- overemphasis on meeting system needs to the detriment of the learning and career development needs of individual teachers; and
- inadequate evaluation particularly in relation to value for money of school CPD policies, pupil effects and teacher morale.

The current climate of central control, managerialism and performativity makes it exceedingly difficult for teachers to engage in a range of activities that lead to personal development, improvements in pupil learning, achievement of the broader aims of the Every Child Matters agenda and the confidence and willingness to engage in debate on primary education at local and national level.

### **Leadership development**

The most significant change in the field of leadership development in England over the last two decades has been the increasing intervention of national government agencies in the preparation and subsequent development of school leaders before and after appointment to headship. Leadership development activity has moved through phases of ad-hoc provision under the aegis of Local Education Authorities during the 1980s and early 1990s; the development of national programmes for head teachers and those aspiring to headship under the remit of the Teacher Training Agency and DfES during the mid 1990s; and the formation of a National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in 2000 which led to the creation of an extensive portfolio of leadership development programmes.

This has been a significant achievement but has raised concerns that:

- the leadership development framework has too great an emphasis on standards-based approaches;
- the structure is too detailed, prescriptive and bureaucratic and is subject to manipulation by central government;
- the ensuing decline of university and other higher-education accredited provision may lead to inadequate attention to the theoretical and conceptual bases of leadership learning; and
- the leadership college model is susceptible to political change.

In addition, it is important to note that the national programmes have developed as cross-phase initiatives and little specific provision has been developed for primary school leaders. The question remains as to whether primary leadership has developed a robust conceptual base in its own right. Nonetheless, the development of such a wide-ranging framework has meant that England has moved quickly towards coherent provision of leadership programmes in the period of a decade.

## **Conclusions**

- Many examples of significant and innovative developments in practice can be identified in England over the last two decades, including: partnership in ITE, education leadership training, and the accrediting of teachers' professional learning by the Teacher Learning Academy, M Level qualifications and professional doctorates grounded in work-based learning.
  - An increasing level of centralisation over the last decade has raised the quality of provision within a common framework of professional expectations. The degree of regulation, bureaucratisation and accountability, and the linking of performance indicators to resourcing, have, however, engendered a 'technical rationalist' approach to education outcomes and processes that has tended to restrict the nature of professional engagement and create a 'culture of compliance' in both students and staff.
  - England has moved rapidly towards creating systematic portfolios of programmes and standards for teacher and leadership development, a highly significant achievement in a decade. The developments have been subject to contradictory ideological forces, however, and there is evidence of a lack of coherence and consistency in the educational principles and values, and at times the regulation and accountability, underpinning some of them. This is particularly problematic when it results in a disarticulation between professional and academic qualifications, with implications in terms of both the status of professional qualifications and the transferability of credentials.
  - Capacity building in university education departments is an increasingly significant issue causing a reduced capability in research and teaching in ITE, teacher development and education leadership and management.
  - The politicisation of education and professional learning has led to a welcome investment of energy and resources but has left the sector subject to short-termism and the vagaries of political whim and ideology resulting in instability and vulnerability of organisations and programmes.
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## FURTHER INFORMATION

The report on which this briefing is based: McNamara, O., Brundrett, M. and Webb, R. (2008) *Primary Teachers: initial teacher education, continuing professional development and school leadership development* (Primary Review Research Survey 6/3), Cambridge: University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. ISBN 978-1-906478-26-1

The report is available at [www.primaryreview.org.uk](http://www.primaryreview.org.uk) and is one of 32 Primary Review interim reports. Two of these deal with the opinion-gathering strands of the Review's evidence base. The remainder report on the thirty surveys of published research which the Review has commissioned from its 70 academic consultants. The reports are being published now both to increase public understanding of primary education and to stimulate debate during the period leading up to the publication of the Review's final report in late 2008.

The Primary Review was launched in October 2006 as a wide-ranging independent enquiry into the condition and future of primary education in England. It is supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and based at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. The Review is directed by Professor Robin Alexander.

The Review has ten themes and four strands of evidence (submissions, community and national soundings, surveys of published research, and searches of official data). The report summarised in this briefing relates to the **Research Survey** strand and the theme **Settings and Professionals**.

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