



Recruiting and Retaining Teachers: Findings from Recent Studies

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Abstract

Shortages of teachers, especially in particular areas of the country and in particular subjects, continue to be a major issue for the UK education system. Sir Stewart Sutherland (1997), in the Dearing report into Higher Education, called for ‘an assessment of the effectiveness of the current arrangements for recruitment and the desirability of introducing a wider range of incentive measures to improve recruitment in priority subject areas’. He also suggested that ‘further work should be undertaken to establish more accurately the reasons for, and responses to, wastage.’ This paper provides an overview of recent findings on the issues of teacher recruitment and retention. The study recognises the previous work by Spear, Gould and Lee (2000) in their review of literature up until 1999, and therefore mainly examines published papers from 1999 onwards. A provisional examination of recent findings has led us to categorise the relevant issues into three areas: (i) Reasons for wanting to enter teaching, (ii) Reasons for not wanting to enter teaching and (iii) Reasons for wanting to leave teaching. The difference between the first two areas appears to us to be important, because it is perhaps all too easy to consider recruitment initiatives in terms of the first area only. Breaking down the relevant issues in this way, and using the finding of recent research, we provide suggestions for the kind of questions we should be asking when examining the success of teacher recruitment and retention schemes.

1. Introduction

In his examination of teacher training systems in England, Sir Stewart Sutherland (1997), in the Dearing Report on Higher Education, called for ‘an assessment of the effectiveness of the current arrangements for recruitment and the desirability of introducing a wider range of incentive measures to improve recruitment in priority subject areas’. He also suggested that ‘further work should be undertaken to establish more accurately the reasons for, and responses to, wastage.’ This was prompted by long-standing concerns over teacher numbers. For example, Grace (1991) described the concerns of the Select Committee for Education in 1990 with regards to this. The difficulty of filling posts in ‘mathematics, physics, design and technology and modern languages, and also in religious education, early years education and business studies’ was highlighted. Also, ‘regional problems in teacher supply were also apparent and “the seriousness of the current situation on London” was noted’.

In this study, we examined the available literature on teacher recruitment and retention, the majority of which looked at the situation in England, but some which looked at Wales and Scotland. Our intention was to identify the reasons put forward for difficulties with recruitment and retention. By drawing together the recent findings on these topics, it was hoped that we could identify the areas that we needed to focus on in any subsequent studies.

2. Background Data

Looking at the recent situation concerning teacher recruitment and retention, the study by See *et al.* (2004) called into question the long-standing view, highlighted above, of problems concerning teacher supply or demand. They concluded that vacancy rates for teachers were lower than in the past in Wales and England, with increasing numbers of teachers and decreasing numbers of pupils.

Elsewhere however, particular areas of concern regarding recruitment and retention have been expressed. From Menter (2002),

“The vacancies and shortages are not evenly spread. Particular geographical regions experience exaggerated shortages (e.g. London), while others may have almost a full complement (e.g. the Yorkshire and Humberside region had a vacancy rate of 0.3 compared with a London rate of 3.3 in 1999/2000). There are also shortages in particular subjects, maths, modern foreign languages, design and technology, science and recently English have all been designated ‘shortage subjects’ by the TTA.”

Tables 1 and 2 below provide the detailed breakdown of teacher vacancy rates over government regions in England and Wales for maintained schools (compiled from DfES, 2003, DfES, 2004 and National Assembly of Wales, 2004).

Table 1: Vacancy rates¹ in maintained nursery and primary schools by Government Office region

Region	Vacancies as a percentage of teachers in post							
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
North East	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.3
North West	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.3
Yorkshire and the Humber	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.8	0.3	0.3
East Midlands	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.3
West Midlands	0.2	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.5	0.4
East of England	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.7	1.6	0.8	0.6
London	1.7	2.5	2.3	2.0	3.3	2.4	1.7	1.0
South East	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.0	1.6	1.1	0.8	0.4
South West	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.3
England	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.2	1.0	0.6	0.5
Wales	0.5	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3

Table 2: Vacancy rates in maintained secondary schools by Government Office region

Region	Vacancies as a percentage of teachers in post							
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
North East	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.4	1.0	0.7	0.9	1.0
North West	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7
Yorkshire and the Humber	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.3	0.6	1.0	0.9	0.7
East Midlands	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.6	1.1	0.6	0.6
West Midlands	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.5	1.1	1.4	1.0	1.0
East of England	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.8	1.7	1.8	1.4	1.0
London	1.0	1.3	1.4	1.8	3.8	2.9	2.2	1.6
South East	0.5	0.6	0.7	1.0	2.1	1.6	1.6	1.0
South West	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.4
England	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.7	1.4	1.3	1.1	0.9
Wales	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.5

¹ Advertised vacancies for full-time permanent positions (or appointments of at least one term’s duration), including vacancies being filled on a temporary basis.

We see in these tables the steady decline in vacancy rates in England since 2001, with the higher vacancy rates in London compared to other regions. Examining the vacancy rates in different secondary subjects (from DfES, 2003),

Table 3: Vacancy rates in maintained secondary schools by subject in England and Wales

Subject	Vacancies as a percentage of teachers in post						
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Mathematics	0.4	0.7	0.8	1.2	2.1	1.9	1.5
Information Technology	0.4	0.7	0.9	1.3	2.8	1.4	1.6
All Sciences	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	1.6	1.4	1.2
Languages	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.7	1.5	1.3	1.1
English	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.7	1.8	1.5	1.3
Drama	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.7	1.7	1.5	1.1
History	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.5	0.5
Social Sciences	0.2	-	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.7	0.3
Geography	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.3	0.6	0.9	0.6
Religious Education	0.4	0.8	0.5	0.7	1.8	1.4	1.4
Design and Technology	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.7	1.3	1.3	1.0
Commercial/Business Studies	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.5	1.3	1.0	1.4
Art, Craft or Design	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.7	0.8	0.6
Music	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	1.8	1.7	1.3
Physical Education	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.8	0.8	0.6
Careers	1.0	1.8	0.9	1.4	4.3	2.5	-
Other main and combined subjects	0.7	0.7	0.8	1.2	1.7	2.2	1.8

As of 2003, I.T., Mathematics, R.E. and Commercial/Business Studies were the subjects with the highest rates of teacher vacancies.

We can examine the issue of teacher supply in another way by looking at the actual numbers of teachers entering and leaving the profession. Turning once again to recent figures from the DfES (DfES, 2003),

Table 4: Numbers entering the teaching profession and the ‘wastage’ of teachers (in England only)

Year	Total Entrants to full-time teaching ²	Total Movement away from full-time teaching ³	Balance (Entrants – Wastage)
1991-92	24,720	26,540	-1,820
1996-97	27,730	27,330	400
1997-98	29,080	29,470	-390
1998-99	27,550	24,260	3,290
1999-00	29,400	25,230	4,170
2000-01	31,010	25,850	5,160
2001-02	33,220	27,870	5,350

² These figures include Newly Qualified entrants, those new to the maintained sector and those returning to the maintained sector.

³ This includes those who had retired, and also out of service teachers who were no longer in the maintained sector and who were not receiving a pension

As we would expect from the vacancy rates, we find that the numbers entering the profession (within maintained schools) have exceeded the numbers leaving the profession over recent years. However, these figures highlight the wasteful nature of teacher supply. In order recently to gain around 5,000 teachers in each year, 30,000 teachers per year needed to enter the profession. Also, the rate of wastage of teachers has increased over recent years. Past statements made by those associated with the UK Government have indicated serious concerns about teacher retention, in particular about those leaving the profession during the early stages of their career:

'The proportion of new teachers leaving within three years has remained fairly constant at around 23% over the last 5 years'. - Parliamentary statement from Estelle Morris (Slater, 2001)

'Most recently attention has focused on the retention of teachers in the early stages of their careers, with Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, Mike Tomlinson, suggesting that 40% of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) have left teaching within three years.' (Menter, 2002)

This situation may be more serious when we take into account those that do not even make it into the classroom in the first place. Smithers and Robinson (2001) estimated that 12% of those admitted onto teacher training courses did not successfully complete, that 40% of those on the final year of courses did not make it into the classroom and a further 18% left during the first three years of teaching. Recent figures from the DfES (DfES, 2003) showed that of those completing initial teacher training courses in 2001 in England and Wales, 21% of those were not in service by March 2002.

Therefore, although the situation for teacher supply has seen an improvement over recent years, the available data highlights the fact that London and particular subjects face more of a problem. The area of teacher retention, particularly in the early years of teaching, seems also have faced recent problems. Bearing these particular issues in mind, we now go on to examine the recent literature on teacher recruitment and retention.

3. The Literature Review

Looking at relevant studies that have been carried out in the particular areas of teacher recruitment and retention, we first of all describe how this particular literature review was carried out.

This review of literature was carried out in January 2004. The method used for the search was based on the one employed by Spear, Gould and Lee (2000) in their review of factors motivating and demotivating teachers. The search was carried out using the electronic database of the British Education Index, using the search terms 'teacher recruitment', 'teacher retention', 'teacher attrition', 'teacher motivation', 'job satisfaction' and 'teacher morale'. As in the search carried out by Spear, Gould and Lee, those studies that were not carried out wholly or partly in the UK were not

considered in this search. In addition, in order not to duplicate the findings of the previous search, those citations that were published before 1999 were also not included (the review by Spear, Gould and Lee covered citations up to 1999).

The numbers of citations generated by each of the search terms and identified as being of interest to the review were as follows:

Teacher recruitment	45
Teacher retention	2
Teacher attrition	2
Teacher motivation	23
Job satisfaction	12
Teacher morale	21

There was of course some overlap between the various search terms. Therefore, the total number of citations obtained using this method was 72. Having obtained the citations, a search was carried out for the studies, both in electronic and paper form. During this search, some of the references could not be found. In addition, reading through obtained papers, other studies not originally identified in the database search were highlighted as important from the references in these papers. These included papers published prior to 1999 that provided background information on teacher recruitment and retention. Other papers obtained from the original sweep were subsequently found to be not relevant to the search. From the 72 citations identified above therefore, the literature search evolved to encompass 41 sources of information.

In the following sections therefore, we present the findings from this literature review, drawing on some of these references, and presented under the headings of teacher recruitment and teacher retention.

4. Findings on Teacher Recruitment

From the studies on teacher recruitment, we found that these findings could be categorised under three broad areas; reasons why people took up teaching as a career, reasons why people have been deterred from entering teaching and suggestions for improving recruitment into teaching. Looking firstly at the reasons for entering teaching, Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) further categorised these reasons as

- (1) *altruistic reasons: these reasons deal with seeing teaching as a socially worthwhile and important job, a desire to help children succeed, and a desire to help society improve;*
- (2) *intrinsic reasons: these reasons cover aspects of the job activity itself, such as the activity of teaching children, and an interest in using their subject matter knowledge and expertise; and*
- (3) *extrinsic reasons: these reasons cover aspects of the job which are not inherent in the work itself, such as long holidays, level of pay, and status.'*

The analysis of relevant literature by Moran *et al.* (2001) concluded that ‘the reasons for choosing the teaching profession as a career have been predominantly altruistic and intrinsic’. Carrington and Tomlin (2000), in their survey of 289 PGCE students from ethnic minority backgrounds, also stated that the ‘trainees tended to stress the importance of intrinsic (rather than extrinsic) considerations when describing their reasons for wanting to teach or, alternatively, emphasised the social dimensions of teaching (e.g. likes working with people, including children)’. Indeed, looking at individual reasons for wanting to teach from recent studies, intrinsic or altruistic reasons were most frequently given by teachers, for example wanting to work with children (Johnston, McKeown and McEwen, 1999a, Moran *et al.*, 2001, Smithers and Robinson, 2001, Thornton and Reid, 2001, Thornton, Bricheno and Reid, 2002), perceived job satisfaction (Johnston, McKeown and McEwen, 1999b, Thornton and Reid, 2001, Thornton, Bricheno and Reid, 2002), enjoyment of subject (Kyriacou and Benmansour, 1999) and positive experiences of teaching in the past (Hammond, 2002). The only extrinsic reason that emerged from any of the studies as the most cited reason to enter into teaching was ‘long holidays’ (Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000, Rawlinson *et al.*, 2003).

Financial considerations such as salary were only ranked within the top few reasons for going into teaching in two studies (Johnston, McKeown and McEwen, 1999b, Rawlinson *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, when considering the reasons why people entered into teaching, we could conclude that financial considerations, and indeed extrinsic reasons in general, did not play an important part. However, this is only half the story. If we instead look at reasons why people did not choose to go into teaching, we see that external considerations play a more important role. In their interviews of 148 prospective primary teachers, Thornton, Bricheno and Reid (2002) found that pay was the thing that could most discourage people from becoming teachers, followed by workload and then the image and status of teaching. Likewise, Carrington and Tomlin (2000) found that PGCE students ‘perceive the job as involving considerable stress, long hours, excessive paperwork and relatively low remuneration.’ Undergraduate students in geography, in the study by Rawlinson *et al.* (2003), identified pay, student behaviour, stress, government attitude, low morale and long hours as deterrents to enter into teaching. Another study of undergraduates, this time at York University by Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000), identified dealing with disruptive pupils, the amount of bureaucratic tasks, school funding, OFSTED inspections, the government’s commitment towards education and the media image of teachers as factors that discouraged people from teaching. When considering the recruitment of teachers into the profession therefore, it is important to consider this tension between largely intrinsic or altruistic factors which are attracting people into teaching, and what appear to be largely extrinsic reasons that dissuade people from entering the profession.

That we have witnessed problems in teacher recruitment may be an indication that these ‘dissuading’ factors are having more of an impact for people at the moment than the ‘persuading’ factors to enter into teaching. We see this in the study by Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) where undergraduates rated the factors ‘a job that I will find enjoyable’, ‘colleagues that I can get along with’ and ‘pleasant working environment’ as the most important factors for a job, although they perceived that these were fairly low down the order when it came to rating whether teaching offered particular factors. Likewise, Kimbell and Miller (2000) in their study of the attitude of potential Design

and Technology teachers found that the students' views of teaching - when contrasted with their ideal job - was that it lacked variety, professional freedom and creativity. It was also poorly paid and lacked career fast tracks.'

What recommendations did the literature therefore provide for tackling the problem of teacher recruitment? It would seem sensible that any recommendations would tackle the largely extrinsic issues that dissuade people from entering teaching, and this is what we found in the literature. Improving teachers' pay was a frequently made recommendation in recent studies (Kimbell and Miller, 2000, Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000, Thornton and Reid, 2001, Thornton, Bricheno and Reid, 2002, Rawlinson *et al.*, 2003), as was improving the image of teaching and tackling workload/paperwork (Kimbell and Miller, 2000, Thornton and Reid, 2001, Thornton, Bricheno and Reid, 2002). Better resources for teaching and improvements in the working environment were also suggested (Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000), as well as increased autonomy and more creativity for teachers (Kimbell and Miller, 2000).

5. Teacher Retention

Looking now at the reasons put forward in recent studies for leaving teaching, workload, government initiatives and stress were the three most important reasons highlighted by Smithers and Robinson (2003). In the study of mature students entering teaching by Whitehead, Preece and Maughan (1999), heavy workload, classroom management and insecurity due to possible redundancy were highlighted as issues of concern. Hutchins *et al.* (2000) looked specifically at the situation in London. The reasons given in their study of teachers leaving the profession were issues with school management, hours worked and pupil behaviour, followed by lack of promotion prospects, school resources, too many responsibilities and pay.

In addition to looking at specific reasons why people are choosing to leave the teaching profession, we also considered the related areas of job satisfaction, morale and motivation amongst teachers. The review by Spear, Gould and Lee (2000) devoted specific chapters on the areas of job satisfaction and teacher morale.

Evans (2001) found 'morale, job satisfaction and motivation to be influenced much less by externally initiated factors such as salary, educational policy and reforms and conditions of service, than by factors emanating from the more immediate context within which teachers work: school-specific or, more precisely, job-specific factors. As a result, leadership emerged as a key attitudes-influencing factor. Underpinning this, three factors were highlighted as being influential upon morale, job satisfaction and motivation: realistic expectations, realistic perspective and professionalism orientation.' The expectations that a teacher has, the perspective that they come from and the particular knowledge, skills and procedures that define the professionalism of a teacher was used to explain why morale, satisfaction and the motivation of teachers could vary such a lot from case to case (Evans, 2000). For example, issues that could bring about a resignation for one teacher could be minor issues for another teacher. Within this diversity of responses, it was identified that 'institutional leadership and management can do much to foster positive job-related attitudes by helping to create and sustain work contexts that are conducive to high morale, job satisfaction and motivation' (Evans, 2001).

Hood (2001) also identified that ‘leadership, through staff empowerment and human resource development, is the means of encouraging the formation of the necessary collaborative cultures which will facilitate the motivation of staff’. Jones (2002) identified ‘paperwork, over-regulation, planning and testing’ as negative issues impacting on teacher morale, while the survey of the quality of working life amongst teachers by NFER (Sturman, 2002) identified the dissatisfaction with salaries for teachers and that job commitment was affected by the levels of job satisfaction and stress amongst teachers.

What suggestions then does the literature have for tackling the problems associated with teacher retention? As one would expect, the suggestions made in the literature were associated with the reasons given above for leaving the profession or bringing about problems with job satisfaction, morale or motivation. Smithers and Robinson (2001), in their interviews with 102 teachers that had resigned from the profession, found that reduced workload, improved pupil behaviour and better salary were most likely to tempt the teachers back into the profession. These inducements were once again identified in a later study by Smithers and Robinson (2003), although the way the school is run was also identified as a possible suggestion. Davies and Owen also found in their survey of FE staff (Davies and Owen, 2001 and Owen and Davies, 2003) that management/management style and communication/consultation/involvement were the two most important factors that ‘would improve the culture of the college’. In their study of the situation in London, as well as identifying better pay as the most important inducement to return to teaching, Hutchings *et al.* (2000) identified availability of appropriate work nearer to home, availability of part-time work, possibility of job share, more effective child care and assistance with housing as other inducements to return to teaching.

6. Discussion

Having described the recent studies on teacher recruitment and retention, we now highlight the emerging issues that appear to us to be important. Based on these, we put forward areas that we need to focus on in subsequent studies of teacher recruitment and retention.

First and foremost, we identified in the literature two different ways of examining the situation on teacher recruitment. Firstly, we could ask teachers why they were going into teaching. Secondly, we could examine the possible reasons why teachers, or rather prospective teachers, might not enter the profession. The two questions examine the issue of recruitment in totally different ways, the first being likely to elicit intrinsic or altruistic motivations to go into teaching, whereas the second is likely to highlight extrinsic reasons for being put off the profession.

Whether we use one or both of these approaches would depend on the focus of our study. If we want to examine the type of person that the teaching profession attracts then the first question may be more relevant. For example, some of the studies in the literature search (e.g. Moran *et al.*, 2001, Johnston *et al.*, 1999) compared difference in the importance of motivating factors between male and female teachers. Both these studies concluded that if there were a difference, extrinsic factors (e.g. salary) would

be more important for male teachers whereas intrinsic/altruistic factors (e.g. working with children) would be more important for female teachers. If however we want to find out how to improve teacher recruitment generally then the second question may be important, in order to find out what issues are dissuading teachers. The areas of suggested by the literature as possibly dissuading teachers were

- Pay
- Image of teaching
- Workload/paperwork
- Resources
- Improving working environment
- Increased autonomy and creativity for teachers

If we want to gain a general picture of what is happening with teacher recruitment, then it is important for us to consider both these approaches to examine recruitment. It may in fact be possible to compare the relative importance of persuading and dissuading factors for prospective teachers. For example, Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) examined the extent to which the same factors encouraged or discouraged undergraduates to enter teaching. 'Dealing with disruptive pupils' was more likely to dissuade these students than 'long holidays' or 'sharing knowledge with others' (the most positively rated factors) were likely to encourage.

If we wish to examine the issue of teacher retention, then the situation appears to be more straightforward. As for the issues that seem to be dissuading teachers from entering the profession, the issues impacting on retention seem to be external factors. The literature suggested that the important external factors affecting retention were

- Workload
- Government initiatives
- Stress
- Classroom management/pupil behaviour
- Job insecurity
- Promotion prospects
- Pay
- School Resources
- School management/leadership

Therefore, if we are to examine how to improve teacher retention then we can perhaps examine each of these areas to see which would have the most impact.

In examining both recruitment and retention, we have to also bear in mind that the situation for teacher supply is worse in London and also for particular subjects. Therefore, if we wish to find out what initiatives can have the most impact on teacher supply, then we either need to specifically focus on London and these subjects, or at least to examine differences between teachers from different areas and subjects. We may also need to consider London-specific factors in looking at issues that impact on recruitment and retention. For example, issues such as commuting, child-care and housing (as in Hutchins *et al.*, 2000, above) may need to be included in issues that may impact on retention.

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