

TEACHER EDUCATION IN A CLIMATE OF CHANGE

THE REVIEW OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN NI – CONTEXT AND UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

Introduction and Background

1. A major review of teacher education, and the provision necessary to ensure that the profession is best placed to cope with the changes facing the education sector in the coming years, was launched by the Departments of Education, and Employment and Learning jointly at Northern Ireland's first major teacher education conference in 30 years, in 2003 (*"Teacher Education in a Climate of Change"* - the TECC1 Conference).
2. The Review covers all aspects of teacher education throughout a teacher's career, from the intake of new student teachers and the structure and content of their courses, through their induction and early professional development and the continuing professional development they will need to be able to meet the challenges of educational change and further their professional skills, to leadership and management training for curriculum leaders and staff managers and professional qualifications for school heads and aspiring heads.

Areas for further study

3. As key to the Review, six areas were identified for further study to provide more detailed information on particular aspects and recommendations on the way ahead. These studies have covered:
 - The use made of the initial teacher education estate, the cost of training new teachers, and the effects on initial teacher education of the diversification of courses (the provision of other first degree courses in the University Colleges) [*this study was carried out by David Taylor and Rod Usher, ex-HMI – the Taylor Report*];
 - The implications of the new curriculum and the post-primary review [*this study was conducted by CCEA – the Walker Report*];
 - The current 'teacher competence' model of initial teacher education, and the balance of time spent in initial teacher education between HEI and teaching practice in schools [*conducted by the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI)*];

- Early professional development, including the induction year [*a report based on a survey carried out by the Education and Training Inspectorate*];
 - Continuing professional development [*carried out by GTCNI*]; and finally
 - The implications of ICT as a feature of teaching and learning, as set out in *emPowering Schools* – the ICT strategy for the education service in NI (this was not a study, but *emPowering Schools* was published during the lifetime of the Teacher Education Review and its implications are regarded as integral to the Review).
4. At the second (TECC2) Conference last year, those undertaking the studies reported on their progress, and the stakeholders had an opportunity to provide input into how the reports were shaping up and to consider the many challenges facing education, including the expansion in the use of technology, changing demographics, and the fundamental reviews of the curriculum and post-primary education.
5. The third Conference (TECC3), which takes place on 21 and 22 November 2005, gives stakeholders the opportunity to:
- identify and agree what changes need to be made to the current model of teacher education in order to achieve coherent and career-long professional progression (the report produced by the Education and Training Inspectorate on Induction and Early Professional Development provides a valuable synopsis of the current system of teacher education in Northern Ireland); and
 - consider and comment on propositions which have been based, not only on the five commissioned studies, but also on an overview report prepared by Douglas Osler, former Chief Inspector of Schools in Scotland. [*Douglas Osler was asked by the two Departments to review the studies and other relevant documentation, look for gaps, bring a wider perspective and take an informed outsider's view of the system and bring forward recommendations to the two Departments from which we could develop policy propositions. He was not asked to 'second-guess' any work which had already been undertaken, and he did not do so.*]

6. The studies and the Osler overview report are now all completed, and may be accessed through the following DEL and DE websites:

<http://www.delni.gov.uk/index.cfm/area/information/page/Study%20of%20Initial%20Teacher%20Education> (for Taylor/Usher report).

http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/teachers_pg/4-teachers-teachereducationreview_pg.htm (for all other reports).

In summary, they paint together a picture of a teacher education system in Northern Ireland which has many strong features, and some areas for improvement which the studies, from their various perspectives, point up.

7. As the TECC3 Conference will be focussed around the implications of the study reports, *emPowering Schools* and the Osler report, it is recommended that participants familiarise themselves with the contents of these reports in advance.

Underpinning Principles

8. On the basis of all the evidence presented in the above documentation, the Departments believe that the future of teacher education should be built around some very fundamental principles, as follows:

- What is best for individual teachers, to help them achieve their full potential as skilled, self-motivated, reflective professionals, should underpin and motivate all our considerations of policy, procedure and practice;
- initial, induction, early professional development and continuing professional development of teachers need to be brought more closely together; in particular, the induction year needs to have more consistent rigour, meaning and benefit for the new teacher;
- the revised teaching competences, once developed fully, should provide the basis for bringing continuity to teachers' career-long professional development;

- there should be a single source of support to meet teachers' and schools' needs for continuing professional development;
- we should aim for consistency in provision of all facets of teacher education, throughout a teacher's career –seamlessly coherent provision at all stages, with each agency and each professional clear about his/her role, the role of others, and how they fit together;
- in seeking to improve the quality and coherence of the teacher education continuum, we should exploit to the full the potential of ICT in creating wider learning communities and improving the quality of support available to every teacher throughout his or her career;
- we should also recognise that teachers themselves are not the only learners – there should be increased opportunities for interchange and collaborative professional working among teacher education staff in HEIs, CASS and schools, to the mutual benefit and professional growth of all.

9. Further, for these principles to have best effect, it is proposed that teachers' professional development needs to be centrally monitored, tracking stages of development, recording what has been completed and highlighting gaps in development across the competences. Such a formative/summative record should be maintained for all teachers, throughout their career. It is proposed that this function should be carried out by the General Teaching Council. This would also place the GTC in a position to provide a strategic oversight in respect of teacher education.

10. The Conference is invited to consider and agree these principles, the implications of which are developed in more detail in the workshop papers, as the basis for the development of formal policy proposals for the future of teacher education.