Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee Teacher Workforce Planning in Scotland’s Schools Inquiry: a submission from Teach First

Introduction
Teach First welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee’s inquiry into Teacher Workforce Planning in Scotland’s Schools. Teach First does not currently have a programme in Scotland, and taking account of the different character of education in Scotland, the focus of our submission will be on offering our experiences of the wider challenges in teacher recruitment and retention.

For the purposes of providing a succinct submission, as per the Committee’s request, we have briefly explored the key issues based on our experiences. However, we would welcome the opportunity to do so through oral evidence or further more detailed written evidence.

In our view, whilst there are a number of core strengths that make the teaching profession attractive to our most talented graduates, further effort is required across a number of areas to ensure it keeps pace with an increasingly competitive, flexible and innovative graduate market in a context where students are becoming increasingly more organised and savvy in relation to their career choices.

About Teach First
● Our mission to end educational inequality drives everything we do - all of our work involves partnerships with schools, universities, charities, businesses and individuals who share our vision that no child’s success is limited by their background.
● We train and support committed individuals to become inspirational classroom leaders in low-income communities across England and Wales, and across 40 other countries around the world through the Teach for All global network.
● Teach First and its university partners welcome a new group of participants each year. They undertake five weeks of intensive training prior to teaching in one of our partner schools for at least two years whilst completing our Leadership Development Programme and gaining both qualified teacher status and a Post Graduate Diploma in Education. Their training and passion for educational equality means that they are dedicated to raising the aspirations of the young people in their classrooms.
● More than half of those who successfully complete the two-year programme continue to teach. Those who do not have set up social enterprises, become school governors and others championed the importance of education within policy or business. But, no matter where they end up, they are all dedicated to supporting young people to achieve, not just in the classroom, but in life.

Our impact - attracting high calibre graduates into teaching
● Teach First is part of the Teach for All global network which operates in 40 countries around the world including Sweden, Germany and Denmark.
● Since placing our first cohort in London in 2003, we have recruited over 10,000 teachers and now partner with schools serving low-income communities in every region of England and in Wales.
● We are proud of the role they have played in helping to transform the perception of teaching. In 2003 our training programme entered the UK Times Top 100 Graduate Employers at number 62, moving to 19 in 2005. Now, more than ten years later, our programme which focuses teaching in low-income communities is the fourth (2016) most prestigious career choice for new graduates. But unfortunately teaching’s overall position amongst these top graduates has started to wane slightly. Teaching has now fallen out of the top three sectors graduates are interested in and applications to teaching are down 7%.
Teach First programmes are very popular and often oversubscribed, and applicants are required to undertake a rigorous assessment process to secure a place.

Our programme is popular among Scottish graduates and other graduates from Scottish universities. Since 2012, 392 of our participants had listed their first degree as having taken place in Scotland, with 193 of those participants listing Scotland as their current location.

General Observations
The most recent (2017) UK Graduate Careers Survey, with data from four Scottish Universities (Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Andrews and Strathclyde) and which includes a specific sector specific study on teaching, contains a number of important observations:

- Fewer than one in ten finalists were applying to the teaching profession - the 2017 survey shows that a total of 9.9 per cent of final year students from the ‘Class of 2017’ had applied or intended to apply for teaching positions. This continues a steep downward trend that started in 2012, when just over 15 per cent of those interviewed had the intention of becoming a teacher.
- More than two-thirds of the teaching job hunters were female.
- 69% of finalists wanted a job in teaching as they felt they could ‘make a real difference’.
- The average expected starting salary for the sector was £20,900.
- Scottish universities are among the highest in terms of sources of graduates entering teaching with St. Andrews and Glasgow featuring in the top 5 in the UK (of the Top 30 universities).

The main challenges in relation to teacher recruitment and retention
In our experience of the wider recruitment “market”, there are a number of external factors which need to be considered.

- Demographics - in our work in England and Wales, we have noticed that the current blip in terms of the number of 21 year olds and the increase in the numbers of school aged children has created a basic issue of supply and demand of teachers. Other organisations in Scotland are better placed to comment on Scottish trends and their potential impact.
- Competitive graduate recruitment market - there is increasing competition to recruit talented graduates, many of which have sharp progression opportunities both in terms of level and salary. In addition, more than 90% of the UK’s top graduate employers offer paid internships, and more than one in four offer such opportunities for graduates in their first year of university.
- Perceptions of the profession - according to the UK Graduate Recruitment Survey 2017, teaching was ranked 15th out of 22 in terms of perception scoring, losing out to professions such as a Doctor, Investment Banker, Army Officer, Research Assistant etc.

The factors that influence whether teaching is considered an attractive profession compared to other professions by those that might consider a career in teaching

- The career specific sector research from the UK Graduate Survey reveals a number of important factors when considering what makes the sector attractive. The top reasons cited for choosing teaching include:
  - Interested in the content of the work
  - Wanted a graduate role where you can make a real difference
  - Able to use your degree subject

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1 High Fliers Research (2017), Career Sector Research, Teaching - The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2017 is based on face-to-face interviews with 20,102 final year students from the ‘Class of 2017’ studying at thirty leading universities in the UK, carried out in February 2017. It is the largest independent survey of the country’s top finalists ever conducted, and the sample includes a fifth of students graduating from these universities in the summer of 2017.

2 Ibid, p. 9

3 Ibid, p. 9
Good long term career prospects
Quality of training and development

- Salaries - The teaching profession is lagging behind other sectors in its starting salary offer. Excellent starting salaries featured last on the list (15%) of reasons why graduates are attracted to the profession. The average expected starting salary for teaching is £20,900, with the overall expected starting salary average at £24,300.4
- Increasingly career savvy graduates - of those graduates considering teaching, the vast majority of them consider the career in their penultimate or final year at University, predominantly through websites and careers services. However, many (46%) cited exposure to work experience as more influential in their decision making. Other graduates considering other careers are, generally speaking, engaging with these pathways earlier and through more influential methods such as work experience and internships.

Key reasons why some trainee teachers do not complete courses, or do not choose to go into teaching having qualified
Having operated for nearly eighteen years, our experience has allowed us to gather a significant amount of insight into why participants may choose to leave a programme. The exit surveys from those graduates who leave our programmes show the following key reasons:
- Dissatisfaction of teaching subject / local area
- Dissatisfaction of school placement
- Concerns over workload or training
- Personal commitments (family / health / financial)
- Accepting alternative job (better salary / more suited to their aspirations or degree)
- Pursuing alternative routes into teaching
- Chosen to go travelling

Conclusion - important areas of focus
In conclusion, our experience of recruiting some of the UK’s most talented graduates to our programmes tells us that there are many fundamentally attractive qualities about the teaching profession which have not changed.

However, in addressing challenges in recruitment and retention, it is important to ensure that the profession modernises in terms of its efforts to attract talented graduates. The profession would benefit from the exploration of offering more innovative routes into teaching which provide greater responsibility and progression opportunities. In addition, earlier engagement with future graduates, focussing on opportunities (such as paid work experience), is likely to influence their decision making. Furthermore, the profession needs to recognise, and respond, to the current labour market - which is more fluid than ever before, with individuals wishing to leave and re-enter professions, and adapt to this.

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4 Ibid