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Convener
Education and Skills Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

Teacher workforce planning

I refer to Wednesday morning’s Committee session on teacher workforce planning, in which I participated as part of a panel. I am writing to provide further information on two points I mentioned in my evidence.

Evidence from other countries

The Committee might find it helpful to consider experience from other countries in its deliberations. Of course, care has to be taken in interpreting developments elsewhere, especially because of the importance of context. Nevertheless, many of the issues we face in Scotland are not unique and there is merit in examining what has happened in other countries – especially to reduce the risk of repeating mistakes previously made. I have therefore enclosed copies of Whither teacher education and training?, published by the Higher Education Policy Institute. This publication is also available online at http://www.hepi.ac.uk/2017/04/27/whither-teacher-education-training/.

‘Destinations’ of graduate teachers

Towards the end of the panel session I quoted some statistics on the destinations of graduates from teaching courses (in relation to a question about retention). Although I quoted data from 2013, we now have slightly more up-to-date information.

6 months after graduation for students graduating in 2014-15

- 98% of graduates were employed as teachers (with the majority being on full-time contracts in the state sector in Scotland)
• 1% were seeking work as a teacher

• 1% were not teaching and not seeking a teaching post.

In some ways this is not surprising given these graduates would be engaged in their probationary year in order to gain full registration.

3½ years after graduation (longitudinal survey of students who graduated in 2010-11)

• About 275 graduates who responded to the original (six-month) survey were followed up in this later longitudinal survey. This represents about 15% of the ITE graduates who responded to the original 6 month survey of the 2010-11 graduates.

• About 95% of these 275 graduates were originally reported as teaching 6 months after graduating, with about 3% looking for a teaching post

• Jumping ahead to 3½ years after graduation, about 92% of these same 275 students were teaching, with some of the others having moved into jobs in further and higher education. (Note that the percentage is calculated by excluding those who didn’t indicate the nature of their employment.)

It is important that care is taken with such longitudinal data. As already noted, it is based on a small sample size and the response rates are much lower. Further, it is likely that those who remained in the profession and in Scotland would have been much more likely to respond to the survey, which would tend to skew the data.

The foregoing is, of course, about the proportion of graduate teachers who are working as teachers shortly after graduation. The Scottish Funding Council does not have data on retention and turnover of teachers across the whole cycle from initial employment to eventual retirement.

Vacancy rates

Finally, I would like to comment on the discussion at the beginning of the session around ‘vacancy rates’. On reflection it occurred to me that there might have been a misunderstanding between:

• the over-arching work of the Teacher Workforce Planning Advisory Group (TWPAG) to project future requirements for teachers and therefore inform recruitment of undergraduate students on teacher education degrees; and
as part of that work, taking into account in-year shortfalls.

I think the panel was referring to the latter in its responses about ‘vacancy rates’, but that the impression might have been given that it was describing how the overall requirement for teachers is assessed (i.e. both short-term and long-term vacancies). With regard to the overall assessment, the best evidence available is used to project future requirements. In summary, the projections use information on:

- Population and pupil number projections
- Pupil census
  - Age and stage data for all publicly funded school pupils (and estimates of independent school pupils)
- Teacher census
  - Age profile of current teaching workforce
  - Teachers leaving/returning to the profession
- Pupil teacher ratios at school level
- A need for some flexibility in the size of the workforce to meet the need for short term cover staff
- Student retention rates e.g. not completing degree course/completing degree course and choosing alternative career path

And, as described to the Committee, the TWPAG also takes into account further local information, including in-year shortfalls.

I hope the foregoing and enclosed are of use to the Committee. If there is any other aspect of your work about which you think we might be able to assist, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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