

Significant gap between best and worst Maths Trainee Teachers in England

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A significant gap between the best and worst maths trainee teachers in England has been revealed in new research published today (22nd March 2011). This applies to both general Primary trainee teachers and to Secondary specialist trainee maths teachers.

The research shows that general Primary trainees in Japan are better [mathematicians](#) than our [Secondary School](#) specialist trainees. In the Primary sector England is significantly outperformed by Japan, Russia and China, where trainee teachers take the equivalent of A-Level mathematics before entering teacher maths training.

The international audit compared results from trainee teachers in England, China, Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Russia and Singapore. In the Secondary sector results show that amongst all the participating countries, in England trainee teachers have the greatest range of mathematical ability. This range shows we have teacher trainees who can attain the highest scoring results but equally we have those who achieve the lowest results.

The research study International Comparative Study in Mathematics Teacher Training, Recommendations for initial teacher training in England was sponsored and published by CfBT Education Trust and undertaken by a group of [academics](#) representing some of the world's most renowned universities in high performing countries. Trainee teachers were tested on their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts and applications.

Professor David Burghes, University of Plymouth, author of the report said: "We can be reassured that England is not disgraced here, although it could clearly do much better. One of the main issues for concern is the wide variation in standards across the profession; this could perhaps be explained by the relatively low entry requirements for teacher training and the lack of specialism at Primary level."

The report goes on to make the following recommendations:

- At Primary level entry requirements for teacher trainees to be raised to grade B in maths at GCSE in the short-term, then in the long-term the introduction of a dedicated AS-level on mathematical concepts and applications even for trainee Primary teachers.
- Strengthen the link between subject knowledge and teaching during the Secondary PGCE courses.
- Provision of support for secondary NQTs to complete modules for a Masters qualification, necessitating a reduced timetable for three years.
- The establishment of University Practice Schools (across all subjects).

Tony McAleavy, Education Director at CfBT Education Trust said: "Teaching needs to become a respected profession in this country, on a par with the law and medicine and then we will attract more able people to the profession. In line with government thinking, the establishment of University Practice Schools otherwise known as University Training Schools, is the most important decision that could be made for taking the profession forward. This would ensure less variation in standards and would ensure that there would be peer support for new teachers in their first practice; something that has currently been lacking. This additional support may also help to retain teachers in the profession for longer periods of time."

Respondents were also questioned on their attitudes and aspirations. When asked how long they expected to be in the profession 'working life' was by far the most popular choice which is at odds to the reality that the modal length of time is about three to four years in mathematics teaching.

The report 'International Comparative Study in Mathematics Teacher Training Recommendations for initial teacher training in England' will be available for download at www.cfbt.com from the 22nd March 2011.

Provided by University of Plymouth

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