



The National Association of
School-Based Teacher Trainers



What are the priorities for change in Initial Teacher Education and Training?

In March 2025, a set of Round Table discussions were convened by the *UCL IOE Centre for Teachers and Teaching Research* and the *National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers* to discuss **What next for Initial Teacher Education and Training?** The participants represented key stakeholders in Initial Teacher Education and Training (ITET), including leaders of national ITET organisations, leaders of schools and SCITTs, student/trainee/Early Career and experienced teachers, university providers and representatives from professional bodies. The discussions were prompted by a briefing paper that suggested the complex issues that need to be addressed in order to make teaching a sustainable career choice in our contemporary contexts. This means meeting new teachers' needs so that they can become the professionals that pupils need and deserve. Three core areas were discussed to examine the complexity of the issues for ITET: pupils' needs; new teachers' needs and the needs of schools and communities.

The most outstanding priorities for innovation focused on the experiences of new teachers in both ITET and Early Career Teacher (ECT) stages. These priorities emerged across discussions in all areas and indicated the importance of focusing on what happens to new teachers to enable them to experience the satisfaction of 'making a difference'. How they experience the reality of joining the profession and starting their careers is, quite simply, crucial to the prospects of securing a stable profession that can bring optimism and expertise to their work with young people.

All new teachers should be well-positioned to ask: 'Why am I teaching *this*, to *these* pupils in *this* way?'

What needs to change for new teachers

- **Listening to new teachers and acting on what they say is crucial to innovating ITET.** They are the future of the teaching profession and can tell us how they are directly affected by policy and implementation decisions related to ITET. Differences between stakeholders' and new teachers' perceptions of the experience of learning to teach needs to be appreciated and acted upon.

- **The identities of new teachers as developing professionals with values and pro-social motivations to teach should be nurtured and supported in explicit ways within ITET design.** Disillusionment is not inevitable. It needs to be taken seriously as a contributing factor to attrition. The reasons why people enter teaching matter. They want to make a positive difference to the lives of young people in ways that can be tangibly experienced more often on a day-to-day basis. There needs to be realistic time to learn well and to experience the role as manageable and fulfilling.
- **‘Novice’ status needs to be carefully managed to ensure positive use of previous experience, intellectual challenge and curiosity.** New teachers bring diverse experience and expertise to learning to teach. This includes career changers with expertise in leadership and innovation but *all* new teachers bring experiential perspectives to their training contexts. Current ITET design does not sufficiently acknowledge the insights they bring. This does not mean that some new entrants need less support – it means changing the design and culture of ITET so that they are more actively involved in genuine dialogue with providers and school staff about how to help pupils learn.
- Gen Z has grown up in a time of widespread debate around social division, racism and misogyny and **affirmative identity work is valued, both for new teachers and their pupils, and should be part of ITET provision.**
- Both new and experienced teachers were deeply surprised by the very widely differing experience of agency that teachers are afforded within different schools. They expressed this learning as ‘eye-opening’. They had not been aware of the differing impacts of schools on what it means to be a teacher. **New teachers can have widely varying exposure to models of teacher agency during ITET, as well as in the expectations of their own development of supported responsibility for teaching decisions. This is something that warrants further understanding to inform the aims of ITET to support an expert teaching profession.**
- New teachers experience extensive differences in school cultures, sometimes on the same ITET programme. These differences are impactful on motivation and on confidence in learning to teach (e.g. the contrast in opportunities for creativity between placement schools serving the most and least disadvantaged communities (based on FSM data)). **Autonomy for schools is a strength; however, teachers themselves can experience very little opportunity to experiment, be creative and take risks – this is an important consideration in fostering the potential to become expert professionals.**
- **Lessons need to be learned from the SEND sector regarding the need for pupils’ needs to be at the heart of learning to teach and enabling teacher and pupil agency.** This is not about providing an isolated SEND ‘placement’ during ITET. It is about embedding attention to differing needs, aptitudes and interests of pupils as the foundation for learning to teach all pupils.

- There was a strong desire for ITET to require a balance between schools providing supportive structures for teaching (lesson plans, schemes of work and resources) and helping new teachers to develop experience of planning to meet pupils' needs, using their knowledge and enthusiasms and developing creativity. **ITET should support new teachers to take gradual responsibility for planning stimulating lessons and to experience this as an important achievement.**
- **ITET should attend to cultivating teachers' motivations for teaching**, ensuring opportunities for learning about pupils and their needs (e.g. focused observations of pupils, carrying out case studies); and developing supported agency through co-lesson planning and co-teaching with experienced teachers.
- **Mentor training needs to incorporate the counselling role** to support the development of professional identity and self-efficacy in new teachers.
- **New teachers need appropriate timetables** that ensure time to critically reflect on their teaching, observe lessons, undertake co-teaching and undertake lesson preparation based on the information they collect about their pupils. This is a fundamental need.
- ITET needs to be more fully recognised and valued **as the first stage in a complex process of learning to teach well, which takes time**. Investment in the long-term effects of ITET on teacher motivation, recruitment to local communities and professional expertise is absolutely necessary.

There were extensive further recommendations regarding the design of programmes and relationships between ITET providers and schools and communities. These involve rightly ambitious goals for revision of policy and resource in the long-term. However, the above were the immediate priorities that were shared across the discussion strands and across the differing scales of provision. These were the outstanding issues that emerged on a basis of real-world experiential accounts, principles and stakeholder concerns (and optimism) and are supported by evidence that has been accumulating (e.g. the [Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders](#) longitudinal study 2022-27, DfE; the [Teaching Commission](#) 2024-25). Change is possible (and necessary) now.