



## Commission on School Reform: Call for Evidence

### Response from the General Teaching Council for Scotland

#### 1 Introduction

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland) is the independent professional body which maintains and enhances teaching standards and promotes and regulates the teaching profession in Scotland. We strive to be a world leader in professional education issues.

Although originally established in 1965, the Public Services Reform (General Teaching Council for Scotland) Order 2011 conferred independent status on GTC Scotland from 2 April 2012, with enhanced powers and greater flexibility of operation.

GTC Scotland ensures that children and young people in Scotland are taught by qualified, registered teachers.

The principal aims of the General Teaching Council for Scotland are to:

- Contribute to the development of a world class education system in Scotland.
- Maintain and enhance professional standards in schools and colleges in collaboration with partners.
- Be recognised as an advocate for the teaching profession.

#### 2 Response

##### (i) Strengths

It is very important to begin with a strong statement that education in Scotland is successful.

Both national evaluations and international assessments such as PISA show Scottish education performing well. The review must not begin from a position that Scottish education is a deficit model - but it is of course perfectly legitimate to look at ways in which Scotland can improve.

A significant strength of Scottish education is having had a strong, respected and profession-led Professional Statutory Regulatory Body since the mid 1960s involved in teacher education, teacher registration and teacher conduct: the General Teaching Council for Scotland. Stemming from this is the fact that within the state school education system Scotland has an all graduate profession with teachers registered appropriately (including for subjects within the Secondary sector). Indeed, having an all graduate profession is in line with European Commission expectations. (European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture (2007) *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications*)

Also in line with European policy is having initial teacher education based within the university system but delivered through partnership with the profession, schools and local authorities and having university input through programmes for teachers at other stages of their careers, reflecting the three cycles of Higher Education. (European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture (2007) *ibid*; Commission of the European Communities (2007) *Improving the Quality of Teacher Education*)

Another strength is having a framework of Teacher Education Standards developed and reviewed through a strong and inclusive partnership model which has led to consensus across the system with the Standards being broadly accepted by all parties; a framework which provides an increasingly coherent continuum for professional development across the stages of the teaching career. (It is also worth noting that the Scottish Teacher Education Standards are currently being reviewed.)

The Teacher Induction Scheme (TIS) which has been well developed and well resourced and has worked very supportively for new teachers entering the profession since 2002/03 is also a strength of Scottish education. The TIS has garnered much international interest and praise. For example the OECD commented on the huge step Scotland had taken from being 'little short of scandalous' in respect of support for beginning teachers to 'world class' following the introduction of TIS. (OECD (2007) *Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland*). The TIS also meets the European/...

European Commission's (2009) aims of induction schemes reducing teacher drop-out rates, improving teacher quality, supporting professionalism in schools, and providing feedback to ITE. (European Commission (2009) *Developing coherent and system-wide induction programmes for beginner teachers: a handbook for policy makers*)

Graham Donaldson has commented that 'The established strengths of the teaching profession in Scotland... [give] a secure platform upon which to build.' (Donaldson (2011) *Teaching Scotland's Future*)

In its submission to the Donaldson review the GTCS stated that it would accord with Darling-Hammond's concept that teachers have to be 'adaptive experts' (Darling-Hammond, Linda and Bransford, John (2005) *What Teachers Need to Know: Foundational Knowledge for Teacher Education*) and therefore the GTCS would argue that teacher education should prepare teachers who:

- have professional values,
- are reflective and innovative,
- are experts in pedagogy,
- are agents of change rather than recipients of it,
- are autonomous while recognising their place within systems,
- have commitment, resilience and high levels of self-efficacy,
- have appropriate subject content and pedagogic content knowledge,
- are accountable and consider the impact of their teaching on pupils and learners,
- know about research and scholarship and where appropriate actively practise research,
- are committed to their own ongoing professional development,
- are aware of education's links to other fields,
- are committed to working with other professionals within and beyond education.

This model of the teacher also reflects the European Commission's view that:

Teachers should be equipped to respond to the evolving challenges of the knowledge society, but also to participate actively in it and to prepare learners to be autonomous lifelong learners. They should, therefore, be able to reflect on the processes of learning and teaching through an ongoing engagement with subject knowledge, curriculum content, pedagogy, innovation, research, and the social and cultural dimensions of education. (European Commission: Directorate-General for Education and Culture (2005) *Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications*)

Teacher education therefore needs to provide space and support for all of these aspects to develop. The Scottish Teacher Education Standards of course give a supportive framework. They, at their various levels, identify key aspects and allow teachers to reflect about their own performance. This is also supported by teachers having a contractual obligation to complete an annual 35 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and there having been a gradual swing in attitude amongst teachers from seeing the 35 hours as an imposition to seeing them as an entitlement.

The teaching profession in Scotland has also begun to recognise that CPD, PRD (Professional Review and Development) and the Standards make a powerful interrelated triangle to improve teaching and pupil learning.

This move is reflected in the generally positive response the GTCS has had to consultations on its development of a scheme of Professional Update for all registered teachers in Scotland. The development of this scheme is undoubtedly challenging for the profession but there appears to be a general recognition and acceptance that having such a scheme will help individual teachers to maintain and enhance their contribution to the quality of Scottish education. Developing, supporting and sustaining teachers who are well qualified, well motivated and have high self-efficacy is the way to improve Scottish education. Indeed the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) project confirms that teachers with high self-efficacy are more effective teachers with higher job satisfaction who are more likely to have lower stress levels and be less prone to teacher burn-out. (OECD (2009) *Teaching and Learning International Survey*)

While/...

While the Chartered Teacher programme has (disappointingly) run into the sand, there is continuing support in Scotland for teachers to complete study at Masters level and this is constructive as the involvement of the universities in elements of CPD has positive effects. Research suggests that better qualified teachers actively seek out more CPD. (Scheerens (ed) (2010) *Teachers' Professional Development: Europe in international comparison An analysis of teachers' professional development based on the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)*)

Scheerens also suggests that sustained CPD through programmes (Local Authority or university) is of particular significance in having an impact on teachers and their pupils' learning. It is also reported that professional development activities that take place at regular intervals and involve teachers in a stable social, collaborative context (i.e. networks or mentoring) have a significantly stronger association with teaching practices than one-off workshops and courses. (Scheerens (ed) (2010) *ibid*; Desimone, L. M. (2009) "Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures." *Educational Researcher*, 38(3), 181-199)

The GTCS would therefore contend that CPD should have a growing focus on pedagogy and provide opportunities for teachers to work together - observing each other, taking forward joint initiatives, learning rounds, lesson study or action research.

The development of Curriculum for Excellence clearly gives a particular focus to professional development but it is also important that teachers have access to CPD which encourages reflection and critical analysis. CPD which encourages teachers to be professionally informed and critical and not just 'deliverers' of the contemporary orthodoxy is vital.

(ii) Areas for improvement

While suggesting various areas for improvement the General Teaching Council for Scotland would note the current financial scene which clearly is having an effect on what education can do and how it can develop. This backdrop needs to be fully and realistically recognised and trite, even condescending, saws such as 'doing more with less' need to be seen for what they are.

The GTCS would stress that the principal way of improving the quality of education in Scotland is by ensuring that all teachers are autonomous, reflective professionals who through a process of professional update maintain and enhance their performance relative to the relevant Standard.

The GTCS would also see a need for further development and clarity in the area of leadership. Good leadership has a significant impact on pupil learning: a school characterised by collegiality, in which opportunities for leadership are promoted and well-managed is likely to be an effective school.

- Initial Teacher Education

Within the field of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) the GTCS welcomes the work of the National Partnership Group but retains concerns about:

- ITE funding;
- the pendulum effect of changing ITE intake numbers;
- the commitment to ITE of some universities;
- the balance of commitment in some universities between research and teaching;
- the staffing levels in some universities;
- the recent, relevant experience of some university staff;
- a possible lack of initiative and flexibility within some of the universities;
- the strength of some ITE partnerships;
- a possible perceived disconnection between ITE and the profession;
- an over reliance on anecdote in terms of teacher, school and local authority attitudes to ITE.

- Teacher Induction/...

- Teacher Induction

Within the area of teacher induction the GTCS has concerns that the current financial situation risks undermining the quality of the Teacher Induction Scheme.

Until session 2011/2012 new teachers following the TIS had had a 0.7 maximum teaching timetable with the remaining 0.3 available for professional development. GTCS research (GTCS (2005) *Experiences of the teacher induction scheme: operation, support and cpd*) had suggested that there was strong support from new teachers for the 0.7/0.3 split but also recognised that many would like to increase the amount of teaching time as the year progressed and hence in its advice the GTCS had built in opportunities for such flexibility. However, last year because of a financial imperative but with absolutely no educational rationale for the move, the ratio was changed to 0.82/0.18. The GTCS had strong concerns about this and worked with the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers to ensure the compromise that new teachers would work a maximum of 0.8 until Easter which could then be increased to give a 0.82 average across the whole session.

At the time of writing there appear to have been no huge issues with this affecting the rate of new teacher success in the TIS but the real test will come at the end the current school session and hence the verdict is still out.

That said, the concern remains that this is the thin end of the wedge and that the fundamental principles of the TIS may be undermined, purely on financial grounds. It would be to Scotland's national shame if its 'world class' scheme, held up across Europe as a model (European Commission (2010) *Developing coherent and system-wide induction programmes for beginning teachers*) was allowed to fall into disrepair and disrepute.

- Continuing Professional Development

In the CPD area the GTCS has concerns about:

- A lack of a strategic approach to CPD at a national level.
- Inconsistency across the system and the country in some of the areas of strength listed above.
- Financial concerns with CPD seen as a soft target.
- Insularity with some schools simply reinforcing less than fully developed or effective practice.
- Inconsistent provision of CPD for supply teachers and those teachers not on full time, permanent contracts.
- Curriculum for Excellence becoming an overwhelming focus for professional development to the detriment of other areas.
- An insufficient focus on the pedagogy and principles to underpin CfE.
- CPD which is top-down and simply encourages a delivery model.
- CPD which is effectively Tips For Teachers.

As noted above CPD, PRD and the Standards make a powerful interrelated triangle funnelling into the system of Professional Update which is in development and leading ultimately to improvements in teaching and pupil learning.

- Masters Level Provision

Building on CPD is the move in Scottish teacher education towards building a Masters level teaching profession. While the Chartered Teacher programme has gone there is still a commitment towards Masters level study which is evident in the steps being taken within ITE to offer SCQF level 11 credit. This can then be built on through further study - which is increasingly being seen as attractive by many in the teaching profession. To recognise and further encourage this, the GTCS in its current review of the Teacher Education Standards is considering the development of a new Standard for Accomplished Teaching (which would replace that for the Chartered Teacher) and also address Donaldson's idea of a Standard for Active Registration.

- Leadership/...

- Leadership

In the field of leadership the GTCS continues to have concerns about the disparate nature of much leadership development across the country.

In order to address this issue, in its review of the Teacher Education Standards the GTCS is committed to increasing the emphasis on leadership across all the Standards, clarifying the expectation on all from student teachers to experienced practitioners. For those moving into specific leadership roles the GTCS is also exploring developing a Standard for Leadership which will set appropriate expectations for various levels of post and culminate in what is expected for those becoming Head Teachers, ie the Standard for Headship.

With its independence the GTCS has also expressed in its policies an intention to accredit all programmes which lead to Standards and hence current Flexible Routes to Headship will be brought into line with the Scottish Qualification for Headship. This will help to ensure that all programmes which lead to the award of the Standard for Headship have adequate quality assurance mechanisms built into them, appropriate and consistent delivery and that assessment processes will display the necessary level of validity and reliability that should be the norms for this level of programme. It will also give the positive perception of the programmes that comes from accreditation by the relevant Professional Statutory Regulatory Body.

- Equality of Access and Equality of Opportunity

It is important to state that teaching needs to reflect society and to that end the GTCS has been supportive of steps to open up teaching to as wide a range of people as possible.

Those in geographically remote areas have been mentioned above and developments such as part-time and distance ITE programmes have been supported by the GTCS to widen access to teaching.

The GTCS has also been supportive of wider access programmes to enable people without traditional qualifications to complete programmes which gain entry into initial teacher education. Such programmes have been very successful and have enabled many people to gain, or upgrade, qualifications, move into initial teacher education and ultimately become teachers by meeting the required Standard and gaining a teaching qualification. For many access students there are also considerable gains in self confidence and with that they become strong role models for pupils.

There are other groups which must also be encouraged into the teaching profession. The GTCS has endeavoured to encourage more men into teaching. The lack of male teachers is a common problem across most education systems and while there has been a recent small rise in Scotland this remains an issue. The GTCS is also keen that people representing the wide variety of ethnic diversity in Scotland should come into teaching and has been supportive of various initiatives including the Refugees into Teaching in Scotland project. GTCS has also worked with universities, local authorities and schools to encourage people with disabilities into teaching. The Standards are, in terms of the legal definition, competence standards but the GTCS has recently publish both research and develop advice (with the Scottish Social Services Council) on what might constitute reasonable adjustments to enable people to meet the Standards.

(GTCS (2011) Reflecting on experiences of people with disabilities participating in the Teacher Induction Scheme:

<http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/NewsgroupAttachments/learning-support-for-disabled-social-work-teaching-students-guide.pdf> )

3/...

### 3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the GTCS would make the following points:

The importance of teacher professionalism must be stressed and it is argued that a focus on pedagogy underpinned by meaningful self-reflection will be vital for quality learning. Developing a system of scholarship in which teachers are aware of and, where appropriate, engage in research into pedagogy is suggested as a positive move forward.

The GTCS notes comments made that the General Medical Council envisions doctors as being scientists, keeping up-to-date with and being actively involved in new research and developments in their field of medicine. The General Teaching Council for Scotland would therefore envision teachers as scholars keeping up-to-date with and being actively involved in new research and developments in their field of education and pedagogy.

Scientific prescriptions (particularly pseudo-scientific prescriptions) need to be debated and challenged with teachers being activist and critical professionals rather than technicians delivering prescribed lessons through a prescribed teaching approach.

Teachers' views of themselves as a profession need to be recognised and, where appropriate, challenged.

The expectation of the Primary teacher as a generalist covering all subjects needs debated and questioned, particularly for new teachers who have followed the one year PGDE (Primary) programme. (Indeed, having a one year programme might be questioned as an adequate preparation as the GTCS notes the move in Ireland to increase its already 18 month PG programme to two years.)

The coherence of initial teacher education, the teacher induction scheme and thereafter ongoing continuing professional development is an issue and questions must continue to be asked about whether there are adequate and consistent levels of support over these stages.

For Secondary teachers the importance of subject knowledge, pedagogic and subject pedagogic knowledge is stressed and the caution given that having too much flexibility might undermine the standard of teaching. Developments such as Curriculum for Excellence clearly presented a challenge to the GTCS in terms of its current registration categories and this will have to be considered in the relatively near future.

In what are quite clearly going to be financially straitened times the importance of different sectors of education learning from each other is stressed. Colleges, for example, have developed a learner centred approach and have systems of moderation from which schools can learn. However, while there is much talk of partnership in teacher education, real and successful partnerships are less evident across the system.

Schools as organisations will increasingly have to take responsibility for the development of staff and staff themselves will have to take responsibility for their own CPD, viewing it as an entitlement rather than as an imposition. Workforce motivation and how teachers are sustained over the length of their careers will have to be considered and various suggestions such as secondments, job swaps, working beyond the classroom and sabbaticals should be considered.

Teachers acting as researchers or being involved in research should be seen as positive developments.

Teachers being actively involved in both curricular and pedagogic development should be encouraged.

The possibility of teaching staff learning from their counterparts in other sectors is stressed as a potential strength – for example school teachers and college lecturers learning together and from each other.

Scotland needs to learn both positive and the negative lessons from other systems, but it should be recognised that systems are often culturally specific and while lessons might be learned from other countries, it is unwise to attempt to transplant them wholesale into other national systems.