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THE FURTHER EDUCATION WORKFORCE: WHAT DO WE KNOW AND WHAT IS NEXT?

A report from the joint seminar hosted by The Gatsby Foundation and
The Education and Training Foundation in October 2015

The
**Education
& Training
Foundation**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The further education sector has a vital role to play in the training and development of the future UK workforce. Teachers are crucial to provision of high-quality education and training, but limited data are available on the further education workforce as a whole. A joint seminar hosted by Gatsby and The Education and Training Foundation in October 2015 explored how to support a highly qualified further education workforce in the future, through better use and understanding of current workforce data, and discussion of what additional data may be required.



THE FURTHER EDUCATION WORKFORCE

The further education workforce is fundamental to a student's learning experience, how employers and stakeholders engage with a provider, and a provider's success overall. The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) produce annual reports that examine data from the Staff Individualised Record, as well as reports on ETF's workforce surveys for independent providers and local authorities. The ETF last year commissioned a specific summary report, bringing together all three sources of workforce data to give a holistic picture of staff working in further education (FE) in 2013/14¹.

There are estimated to be 326,000 staff across the total workforce. Of this, 250,000 work in FE colleges, 51,000 in independent training providers, and 25,000 in local authority and adult education providers. There are estimated to be 154,342 teaching staff across the sector (including assessors). Approximately half of the work-based learning (WBL) and FE college workforce are teachers, compared with 65% in adult and community learning (ACL) providers.

Staff in ACL providers work predominantly part time (92%), compared with 60% in colleges and 25% in WBL providers. Recruitment difficulties were reported across the sector – 72% of ACL providers and 34% of WBL providers reporting difficulties in recruiting maths/numeracy teachers.

The staff individualised record (SIR) is changing from next year to gather increasing amounts of data, particularly around qualifications of staff and including a range of providers. The ETF is developing data dashboards for each type of providers, in order to incentivise returns.

As well as providing general education and training post-16, the FE sector also has a vital role to play in the provision of technical education across science, engineering and technology (SET), and maths education. A research team, commissioned by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation and led by Professor Geoff Hayward (University of Cambridge) and Dr Matt Homer (University of Leeds), examined the capacity of both the FE SET and post-16 maths teaching workforce to deliver the increasing demand for high-level technical education².

Looking at the SET workforce, there is a roughly 50:50 male/female split in science teachers; however, the engineering and technology workforces show a marked skew towards males. The SET workforce has an aging profile – approximately 15% are aged 55 or above. Projections suggest that between 1,400 and 2,000 teachers will be required in the next decade to replace those retiring/leaving the profession. The SET workforce is highly qualified, although engineering teachers typically hold a lower level of qualification than technology and science teachers – 18% of engineers are qualified to Level 2 or 3.

The maths teaching workforce in FE colleges is significantly older than the workforce in sixth-form colleges (SFCs): an average age of 50-55 years in FE compared with 30-35 years in SFCs. Both maths teachers in FE colleges and SFCs hold high levels of qualifications but the profile of qualifications differs – a wider range of qualifications are held by teachers in FE colleges. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of maths teachers in SFCs teach on A/AS-level courses; in FE colleges there is a wider range of provision, including GCSE maths and Functional Skills.

¹ Workforce data across the Further Education sector, www.et-foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Workforce-data-summary-13.14-final-final.pdf; Further Education Colleges' workforce data for England, www.et-foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/RPT-SIR22-230415.pdf; Initial teacher education provision in FE and Skills, www.et-foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ITE-data-report-FINAL.pdf

² Profile of the science, engineering and technology teaching workforce in the college sector in England, www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/profile-of-the-set-teaching-workforce.pdf; Profile of the mathematics teaching workforce in the college sector in England, www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/profile-of-the-maths-teaching-workforce.pdf

SEMINAR FINDINGS

USING DATA TO SUPPORT A HIGHLY QUALIFIED WORKFORCE IN THE FUTURE

Roundtable discussions during the seminar tackled several key themes. Participants discussed the underpinning data required to make informed decisions about provision of support for the workforce and help for providers to deliver high-quality education and training.

THE STAFF INDIVIDUALISED RECORD

Mandatory completion of the SIR

One strong theme running through the discussions was whether the SIR, the annual data collection of the FE workforce administered by the Education and Training Foundation, should be made mandatory for all providers receiving public money. While some attendees agreed that this should be the case, others argued that the turbulent nature of FE and the frequently changing workforce meant that this would not be possible. The possibility of making it mandatory to complete a 'snapshot' of the workforce – the workforce on a particular day within an institution – was also discussed.

Improving SIR returns

Several options for improving returns from the SIR were also discussed:

- Linking the SIR to college funding was suggested as a way to encourage higher returns.
- Improving the understanding of why the SIR is not completed. It was suggested that colleges may not fully appreciate the purpose of completing the dataset and are therefore unmotivated to do so.
- The recently introduced college dashboards (an individual analysis of a college's data compared with the national picture – available to all colleges completing the SIR in 2015) were viewed as a good way to increase completions.
- The possibility of linking the SIR into current college IT systems was suggested as a way to facilitate completion and thereby encourage higher returns.
- Thinking from the perspective of the local area reviews of post-16 providers, it was suggested that local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) could be involved to encourage returns to the SIR and provide better granularity at a local level.

USES OF THE DATA COLLECTED IN THE SIR

Several attendees suggested that the data collected in the SIR should be linked to other education datasets. A personal identifier, such as National Insurance number, should be built into the SIR to allow matching of individuals working across more than one provider. This would also allow linking across schools' data and HMRC.

It was suggested that additional data should be collected, particularly around recruitment and retention of teachers, and continuing professional development needs. In order to ensure a well-qualified workforce in the future, further analysis of retention issues within FE, especially flows between FE and schools, is required. For example, what are the drivers behind these flows and how can we better understand what is affecting their movement?

INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

Qualifications data

Data to better understand the qualifications taken in initial teacher education (ITE) and the motivations behind taking, for example a Level 3 Award rather than a Level 5 Diploma, should be collected to build a better picture of the teacher workforce. The relevance of the Level 3 Award qualification was questioned – these are delivered in very high numbers each year but only give a taster of teaching. It is currently not clear what people go on to do when they complete an Award – it was questioned whether this qualification is appropriate for many who take it, and thus provide value for money. More data on progression from the Award would be helpful in this context.

Data on ITE providers

The data available on providers of ITE should be improved. Suggestions from the roundtable discussions included:

- Subject areas delivered and any specialisms should be provided.
- More detail on success rates of ITE providers would be helpful for trainees and their employers. Success rates would help providers in knowing where they stand against other providers according to national benchmark data.
- Further data on mentoring provision within courses should be provided.

Teacher educators

Better understanding of the backgrounds of teacher educators would be useful. Participants suggested the following:

- Are the backgrounds of teacher educators representative of the overall teaching workforce, for example subject specialisms?
- Ethnic group data for teacher educators should be collected.
- How are non-specialist teacher educators supported to deliver priority areas, such as maths and SEND?
- What are the CPD needs of teacher educators and how are these addressed?

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In order to ensure a highly qualified workforce in the future that can meet local and national needs, a representative and comprehensive dataset to understand the current workforce and future needs is required. The SIR is the vehicle for this, and measures should be taken to increase responses, with clear options around incentivising providers to complete the data return or making the return mandatory.
- Current data should be better linked with other datasets to allow tracking of individuals throughout their careers and improve understanding of flows in and out of the FE sector.
- Additional data should be collected on the ITE qualifications taken and the relevance of the Level 3 Award to teaching practice.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Thank you to all participants and speakers for attending and contributing to the seminar.

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The Education & Training Foundation

THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOUNDATION

The Education and Training Foundation works with teachers, leaders and businesses to help them deliver excellent Further and Vocational education and training.

We support and enhance the quality, professionalism and efficiency of the education and training system. We champion the professional standards for the sector and help leaders and practitioners to achieve consistently excellent outcomes for learners and employers. We build the capacity for evidence-based education and innovation, including through practitioner-led research.

Our vision is of our country as a recognised world leader in Further and Vocational education and training. We have four main areas of work:

- Professional Standards and Workforce Development.
- Vocational Education and Training.
- Leadership, Management and Governance.
- Research and Innovation.



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Gatsby is a foundation set up by David Sainsbury to realise his charitable objectives. Gatsby works in areas that David Sainsbury and the Trustees are particularly passionate about and where they believe charitable funding can make a real difference. Gatsby is active in six tightly focused areas:

- Plant science research.
- Neuroscience research.
- Science and engineering education.
- Economic development in Africa.
- Public policy and research advice.
- The Arts.