

Response to the Select Committee's New Inquiry into Teacher Training

From TACTYC (Training, Advancement and Co-operation in Teaching Young Children)

TACTYC

This submission is from the organisation called **TACTYC**. TACTYC's work is in relation to young children from **birth to eight-years** of age. Therefore, this response focuses only on those training to teach this age group and the Inquiry's questions which appear to be relevant to them. Wherever possible our response draws on (sometimes limited) research in the early years field but we have also used the considerable expertise of the TACTYC Executive Committee.

Executive Summary

TACTYC believes that the current system of initial teacher *training* does not necessarily prepare teachers well for teaching in the early years, i.e. birth to 7-8 years. For example, the pedagogy of play is either absent or minimal within early years teacher education courses yet we know this to be fundamental to young children's making meaning from their education and developing positive dispositions to learning. Support given in schools to early years student teachers often amounts to being told how to deliver the curriculum rather than implement learning experiences based on children's own knowledge and understanding and close observation of their learning capabilities and current stage of development. Teacher *education* needs to incorporate birth-to-3 year olds because of known improved quality when teachers are involved.

Factual information

This submission drawn on factual evidence from a range of research and published sources which are fully referenced at the end.

General comments

1. We strongly believe that teachers should be *educated* not merely trained to jump through hoops. We would like to see the wording of teacher training (ITT) return to 'teacher education' (ITE) to which we will refer. It is clear from much research that in-depth education is vital if all teachers are to understand the complexities inherent in their roles and to be educated to reflect on, analyse and evaluate their own practice and its effects on learners.
2. We cannot emphasise enough how important early years teachers are in settings providing for our society's youngest children. It is now well-known that a good start in the early years is crucial to children's well-being and future education. As Siraj-Blatchford (2008: 11) reports 'The presence of a qualified teacher ... was most important for academic provision, and in particular for: literacy, maths, science and overall curricular quality'.
3. The proposals within the *Interim Report of the Rose Review* on the primary curriculum imply a need for teachers to be able to work responsively and to understand

how to provide for and extend learning through play for over- as well as under-fives (Moyle 2005). In other words, a learner-centred pedagogy – rather than curriculum-based – is vital for younger children and remains relevant throughout schooling (Nutbrown 2006; Fisher 2007; Papatheodorou and Moyle 2008)

4. There is a huge variation within and between ITE institutions across England in how they are able to incorporate vital aspects of the *Early Years Foundation Stage*, i.e. play, early learning, children’s development and working with other practitioners and parents. Subject teaching and subject knowledge requirements have substantially diminished opportunities for in-depth learning for students about these vital areas. Yet, play, as one example, is known to be an essential component of young children’s learning and the process by which they make their learning meaningful (Broadhead *et al.* 2009, TACTYC 2008).

5. TACTYC also argues that teacher education should cover the birth-to-threes and working with parents. In their cross-party pamphlet, Allen and Duncan-Smith (2008) emphasise the importance of the earliest years and the need to promote social and emotional development. They stress that children should succeed educationally in their first years at school and this implies the need for the highest quality teachers and other professionals. The pamphlet also emphasises the importance of parental contribution from the start of education in line with EPPE evidence on the over-riding influence of the home learning environment (Sylva 2007).

6. We would point out to The Select Committee that the TDA does not know how many early years teachers are in training or are qualifying at any one time. This is because they calculate only generic primary numbers. We at TACTYC, as well as UCET (University Council for the Education of Teachers) have made representation about this to the TDA on several occasions over many years. With the expansion of children’s entitlement to early education, this continues to be a key omission in current data which should be redressed.

7. Greater liaison between the TDA and CWDC is needed so that there is coherence across the full and relevant qualifications for Early Years Professionals and teachers, who must have EYP status in order to work in Children’s Centres.

8. Especially in the field of early years, there’s often a lack of evidence for much of what we would want to say. There is a need for much research in the area of early years teacher education and the links with other forms of practitioner/graduate training (see BERA 2003). The issue of comparable qualifications still needs resolution.

RESPONSE TO SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY STATEMENTS

1.0 Measuring Quality

1.1 The extent to which there is an evidence base for, and a shared sense of what makes for good quality teaching (in the early years)

1.1.2 There are a few studies (and much theorizing) about what makes for quality teaching in the early years. The *REPEY* (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.* 2002) and the *SPEEL* (*Study of Pedagogical Effectiveness in Early Learning*: Moyle *et al.* 2002) studies suggest a significant range of knowledge, skills and understandings need to be developed in teachers as well as appropriate professional attitudes and attributes. Yet other studies (Adams *et al.* 2003) have found that even well qualified teachers sometimes struggle to

provide appropriate and effective teaching in the early years due to several recognised pressures, e.g. the pursuit of a surfeit of 'outcomes' by way of the EY Profile and OfSTED inspections as well as the lack of deep understanding about the way children play and learn and develop positive dispositions to learning. In addition, some teachers working in the early years are not appropriately qualified to teach this age range and struggle to support quality learning.

1.1.3 There are a number of writings on research and theory in relation to quality practice in the early years (e.g. Dahlberg, Moss and Pence 2006) but few which address directly the elements of the teacher role. Studies such as those by Day (2005) and Gipps *et al.* (2000) identify what makes a 'good' teacher in general terms but do not focus directly on early years pedagogy. TACTYC stresses the need for more funded research on identifying the qualities, skills, attributes and understandings required by early years teaching students and those which can safely be left to continuing professional development.

1.2 The ways in which the quality of teaching (in the early years) can be measured

1.2.1 Notions of 'measuring' good teaching should be abandoned and the qualities and characteristics of good e.y. teaching should be exemplified and disseminated through case materials. Institutions should be allowed to develop their own models of assessing student progress – they should do this in conjunction with students and with training partners. In this way, communities of practice are established and the development of models of assessment become part of the awareness raising around the qualities of a good teacher for all concerned and also become an integral part of the continued professional renewal which teachers should themselves seek (Huntly 2008). In order to further develop debates about quality in teaching we also need to better inform ourselves about the relationship between teacher retention and teachers' wider professional lives (Rinke 2008). Whilst work was undertaken on the latter aspect in this country during the 1970s/1980s, there has been a singular lack of focus on this in recent years.

1.2.2 We at TACTYC are especially concerned with issues of quality in teaching for young learners between the ages of 3 and 7 years. There is considerable evidence to show that, for a long period now, children in reception classes are having low quality teaching and learning experiences in a wide range of local authorities (Bennett and Kell 1989; Cleave and Brown 1991; Adams *et al.* 2004; Linklater 2006). This is linked with the lack of early years training opportunities experienced by many of those required to deliver an over-formalised curriculum to these very young learners. It is also linked with the substantial reduction in playful, active and experiential learning for children in this age range (Anning 1997; Broadhead 2004; Wood and Attfield 2005). TACTYC would urgently request that The Select Committee looks especially at the training of teachers for the three-to- seven age range and bear in mind the changes likely to arise from the current *Review of the Primary Curriculum* as it seeks to create more open and active learning experiences across the primary age range. This is in keeping with the messages of *Excellence and Enjoyment* and the need for more open and learner-initiated experiences across the secondary curriculum. These approaches have traditionally more easily taken root within the early years and subsequently extensively influenced practice later on in the school. These approaches also ease transitions for children as staff engage in ongoing, cross-phase discussions and developments.

1.2.3 The way in which quality is measured at the moment is very outcomes-driven and this reduces teaching to a tick box system which can lead to 'one model' of a teacher,

whereas in early years it is necessary to incorporate a range of pedagogies. The promotion of emotional intelligence and the forming of strong relationships are both very important in early years and within the teaching process and these are difficult to measure, as they can take many different forms. It takes an experienced professional to be able to judge the quality of teaching, which is not likely to be accurately assessed within a brief observation, and certainly not by simply viewing data.

1.2.4 The quality of ITE students often depends significantly on the quality of their mentors (Moyle and Suschitzky 1998; Robins 2006), who are key in the effectiveness of school-based ITE processes. Mentor training is vital in producing quality teachers.

2.0 Entry into the teaching profession

2.1 The characteristics of those who are most likely to be good (early years) teachers and the extent to which they are reflected in current entry requirements for ITT

2.1.1 Those wanting to teach young children need a real interest in and enjoyment of young children and appreciation of their influence within and beyond the school is crucial for early years work. Such teachers need an awareness of the interrelated issues of social and health influences on children's development as well as family and community factors. They need to have a clear knowledge of the underpinning principles and the potential impact of the teaching role on very young minds. A commitment to on-going professional development and an ability to reflect on, analyse and evaluate the teacher role, are also vital. In the existing TDA Q Standards these are either absent or insufficiently emphasised.

2.1.2 Early years teachers must have a good command of spoken and written English as they are important models at a crucial time in young children's lives. They must also be good listeners as young children need time and patience to develop their communication skills. TACTYC would stress, however, that the over-emphasis on phonics and reading in the TDA Standards is really unhelpful for student teachers who need to understand the primary role of spoken language in the development of literacy skills in young children.

2.1.3 We understand the need to support beginning teachers in the development of their professional competences as teachers and the need to 'map' the field of teaching. Whilst this helps student teachers to begin to understand the extent of the complexity of teaching it does not help them to begin to form a deep understanding of 'learning' nor of how teaching and learning interconnect. Measurement against standards is technical and reductionist and teachers have expressed concern at the levels of control and regulation (Hargreaves *et al.* 2007). This suggests teaching is only about performance. The current systems also marginalise, indeed silence, the voice of the beginning teacher in determining what those standards might be (Huntly 2008).

2.2 The appropriateness of the way in which (early years) trainee numbers and trainee quality are prioritised in the management of training places at national level

2.2.1 As we have indicated above, early years student numbers are not monitored by TDA and this is a must if we are to relate training numbers to need and places.

2.3 Whether the current range of routes into teaching is effective in attracting and developing those with the qualifications, skills and attributes to become good (early years) teachers

2.3.1 TACTYC feels it worthwhile asking why the Early Years Professional Status was introduced when the same outcomes could have been achieved through appropriate initial teacher education in ways which could take prior learning into account. There are now many different routes for new and existing practitioners to gain a degree, although only some offer qualified teacher status. We feel there are limitations to work-based qualifications which cannot offer the students the breadth and depth of courses where they are able to access a range of different schools and settings and gain a wider knowledge of the implications of research and theory on practice. This cannot and should not, of course, only happen at initial teacher education level: there is too much to learn and to experience. Teacher education is lifelong.

2.4 The adequacy of current measures to improve the diversity of the teaching profession

2.4.1 Because of the nature of early years, it probably has less difficulty than some other areas of education in attracting applicants from diverse groups with the exception of males (see 2.4.2). There is now a broad range of different routes into teaching and we believe that these are important in relation to diversity. Each route needs to be significantly rigorous: there are no short cuts in teacher education. Many institutions are still struggling to raise diversity regarding ethnicity and the PGCE route is where many best achieve a reasonable mix. There are several projects to address diverse entry into teaching; however these are often short-term funded yet recruitment needs to have a long term perspective.

2.4.2 There is clearly more difficulty in recruiting males in early years, partly to do with the image of the job but also to do with the lower pay and lower status still attached to the early years (Smith 2008; Drudy *et al.* 2005). We would add, however, that although common sense and the political agenda suggests that young children need positive male role models, there is no empirical evidence, as yet, that male role models are vital to young children's learning and development (see e.g. McNaughton 2000; Yelland 1998).

2.4.3 TACTYC would welcome further and more sustained efforts to bring men and ethnic minority candidates into the early years teaching profession in a systematic and sustained way (Basit *et al.* 2006). The efforts made by government organisations to increase these figures are not working. This is because these efforts are spasmodic and cursory and government is seemingly unable to accept that the reason these people do not enter teaching is related to issues within wider society rather than omissions within training institutions, who can only mirror wider society.

2.5 The extent to which existing ITT provision adequately prepares trainees for entry into the teaching profession, whether they intend to teach in primary schools, secondary schools, early years settings or further education settings. (Comments are particularly welcome on whether provision meets the needs of new teachers in working with pupils with special education needs and of new teachers based in schools operating in more challenging circumstances).

2.5.1 Understanding the impact of teacher decision-making on children and young people's learning is an intellectual act that requires a questioning and reflective disposition to be developed within the beginning teachers' intellectual repertoire. It is developed over time and becomes fundamental to teacher decision-making as this relates to the selection of curriculum content as well as its implementation. The teacher who understands learning processes also understands the wide range of variables that affect children's learning

dispositions, including home experiences, cultural impact, motivation, self-identity and well-being, amongst many others. Whilst teachers can be exposed to the theory of impact upon motivation for learning, its application cannot be measured through competences as the complexity of human learning theory cannot be captured in this way (Jarvis and Parker 2007).

2.5.2 There is a continuing lack of serious time and attention given to the key aspects of early years teaching which take account of the differing rates of child development and are grounded in a responsive pedagogy (e.g. Blakemore and Frith 2005; Bowers and Flinders 1991; Gonzalez-Mena and Widmeyer-Eyer 2008). TACTYC feels that it is necessary for students to engage with young children at an early stage in their ITE to encourage students to value children's positive attributes and capabilities. This is sometimes difficult on courses and ways need to be found for students to engage with and monitor young children throughout an academic year rather than just in teaching practice situations. Some HEIs now have on-campus set-ups where children can attend educational events and experiences and this would appear to extend students opportunities to gain greater insights into children's skills and understandings.

2.5.2 Many courses offer a PGCE Primary 3-7 option which addresses two key stages, currently 3-5 years and 5-7 years. Some courses incorporate a very brief introduction to birth-3, with compulsory attendance at provision which includes this age phase. It would be potentially difficult to staff a course if it incorporated two age phases birth-3 and 3-5 as courses are often linked with Key Stage 2 provision for placements etc.

2.5.3 There is, we believe, still a serious shortage in HEIs (and in schools and settings) of highly qualified, early years trained teachers to educate, train and mentor new entrants to the profession. We need many more higher degree teachers, with a deep knowledge and understand of early childhood pedagogy and child development to staff such courses and processes. We need people with such training also to be involved with the OfSTED inspection processes which are the cause of much concern to many early years teachers because of the perceived lack of empathy with, and knowledge of, the early years from many inspectors.

2.5.4 We are concerned about the status of non-maintained/non-school settings as potential placements for student teachers, although aware that it is vital for them to have sufficient experience of these types of settings at initial teacher education level.

2.5.5. Placements for students should involve the potential for working with parents: the government requirement for teachers in Children's Centres means that early years teachers MUST have some awareness of birth-to-three in their initial training. This is also valid preparation for work within the EYFS and Key Stage 1. It follows that working with parents should logically be part of the QTS requirements, which it currently is not.

2.5.6 Institutions interview all students and believe this to be extremely important, even though time-consuming, in assessing the applicant's commitment to early years education and lifelong learning for themselves.

2.5.7 Play rarely has sufficient time given to it on HEI-based courses and we are also aware that, because play is sidelined in schools, experiences of playful pedagogy are not a major part of school-based ITE. As play and playful pedagogies now have such high profile in the EYFS, we believe it is vital that all courses include a substantial element relating to learning and teaching through play (Wood 2004). This means that some subject teaching MUST also include rigorous elements in relation to play and that, in turn, means

educating the educators and mentors within ITE on the benefits and challenges of playful pedagogies.

3.0 The delivery of ITT

3.1 The extent to which the current ITT system encourages innovation and diversity in approaches to ITT

3.1.1 Within the early years, as we have indicated above, there are many different routes into degree qualifications and qualified teacher status. TACTYC believes that every early years practitioner should be given the opportunity to work towards a degree but, at present, the courses are too diverse and some aggregation may be necessary to sustain the high quality young children and their teachers deserve.

3.2 The role of higher education institutions in relation to ITT and the extent to which they make a distinctive contribution to provision

3.2.1 At present, there is too much emphasis on ITE courses on subject teaching. Subject knowledge is important but not at the expense of a deeper understanding of how children learn and the best (and most playful) strategies for teaching. The distinctive contribution of HEI used to be that teaching and learning was closely linked with theoretical perspectives so that students learned not only 'how to' teach something but 'why to' teach it and what to do when a certain teaching strategy failed. This element of why one is taking certain actions to enable or enhance learning allows the individual to think through a range of other strategies for ensuring children's learning and the most appropriate means of teaching. TACTYC believes that this is currently lost in the welter of subject and inspection pressures where 'outcomes' and 'performance' are the key criteria. As the *Primary Review* (2008: 6.2) suggests: 'The relation of research to policy and practice needs to be linked more systematically and enduringly to deep issues concerning learning and motivation, rather than tied to the evaluation of ephemeral initiatives'.

3.2.2 *The Primary Review* (2008: 6.3) reports that the demands upon HEI in both teaching and research have created a 'schism between research active staff and teacher educators' which has meant that 'most teachers are trained in departments with no core research'. This is exacerbated when it comes to early years educators.

3.3 Whether the current nature of partnership working between schools and higher education institutions in the delivery of ITT is sustainable

3.3.1 Early years teachers need experience in the voluntary and private sectors as well as school settings and also experience of working with parents and other professionals. From the time they enter early years ITE, students are likely to be in the position of managing support staff, a difficult task given that these people are often more experienced than the students themselves. It is important that an on-going connection is made for early years students to work with/in a setting for a long period of time so that their growing competence can be established and the working relationships deepened.

3.3.2 There is a view in HEI that partnership with schools is under-funded and there has to be a reliance on school's goodwill. With schools and teachers themselves being so busy, there needs to be some incentive given for them to take on the additional task of educating and mentoring students. TACTYC would suggest that partnership experiences should be compulsory for all students with allowances made in HEI budgets, despite there being little empirical research in the area of quality partnerships (Moyle and Stuart 2003).

3.4 The adequacy of development opportunities for those involved in the delivery of ITT, including those who are based in higher education institutions, schools and other settings

3.4.1 The *EYFS* and *Every Child Matters* agenda are both clear in emphasising the importance of planning for individual children's needs. Such planning is not mentioned in the TDA's Q standards and TACTYC believes it should be incorporated.

3.5 The role of educational research in informing (early years) ITT provision.

3.5.1 Educational research is vital in informing early years ITT provision. There is a wealth of some kinds of research, e.g. that to do with children's learning, brain development, playful pedagogies, and such like (see, e.g. Wood 2004; Broadhead 2008; Goswami 2007) but far too little research on the education and training of early years teachers and other practitioners.

3.5.2 It is important the ITE lecturers are early years trained, experienced and knowledgeable about young children. They also need to be creative and flexible thinkers to enable students and then children be so too. OfSTED inspections can stifle this both in schools and ITE if people gravitate towards what they consider to be 'safe practice', i.e. merely delivering the curriculum. ITE courses are evaluated on TDA standards which can lead to a narrow range of outcomes: courses could be much more creative without so much prescription (Hobson *et al.* 2005), and open up bigger issues about early years education and care for students. The new National Curriculum, as envisaged by the Interim Rose Review, could be positive and enable more flexibility and an emphasis on play in all ITE courses.

4.0 CPD provision

4.1 Whether current CPD provision for new teachers, experienced teachers and head teachers supports and enhances their practice in school and, if so, to what extent

4.1.1 Early years teachers, both new and experienced, need CPD that helps them to work with parents, as well as specialist courses to refine their knowledge and understanding of special educational needs and all aspects of the EYFS areas of learning. They also need opportunities to learn through working with other professionals in both schools and settings.

4.1.2 In relation to a deep understanding of learning, we must expose beginning teachers to the related issues and continue to nurture the deepening of this understanding through exposure to CPD through for example, higher degree work. It is also connected to the development of research into practice which we have known for a long time has positive impact on teacher development. We commend recollection of *The Schools Council* initiatives in the 1960s from which many examples of good teaching practice arose from within schools and were disseminated by schools across the wider community. Such practice empowers schools and teachers to believe that they can make a difference on a day to day basis and not have to wait for a government department to tell them what good practice is or put materials on yet another website for de-contextualised application.

4.2.2 Whilst we welcome teachers gaining Masters degrees, we have a worry about the Masters in Teaching and Learning that is practice-based. It will be vital that mentors have Masters' degrees themselves and have worked and studied at that level, as it needs to be

comparable with other M level awards and also have sufficient rigour in linking practice with research and theory.

4.2 The adequacy of current arrangements for tracking the impact of and spending on (early years) CPD provision

4.2.1 We have insufficient experience of this to comment.

2nd February, 2009.

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