**TACTYC**

**Position Paper:**

**ITT Market Review Report**

**July 2021**

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/itt-policy-unit/initial-teacher-training-itt-market-review-recomme/consultation/subpage.2021-06-03.4550510894/>

TACTYC, the Professional Association for Early Years Education, is deeply disappointed by the recommendations proposed in the ITT Market Review. The majority of our Members are involved in initial and advanced teacher education and in professional development for early years educators.

We endorse the intention to improve the quality of ITT provision, but take issue with the proposals, which are highly questionable, and potentially damaging to the training of early years professionals.

The education system as a whole is suffering severely from the impact of the COVID pandemic; the timing of the consultation process is not helpful as it is to take place over the summer when schools and many settings, including FE and HE colleges, are closed. We would urge the government to plan for a more realistic and genuine process of consultation with all the stakeholders concerned. The system is not likely to benefit from a poorly timed and rushed process of consultation.

Given that existing HEI provision is rated good or outstanding by Ofsted, it is hard to justify the fundamental assumption that current structures and partnershipsneed significant improvement*.* There has been good progress in developing close partnerships between universities and schools/settings. The implications of this major overhaul would be seriously damaging at the best of times, but in the context of the aftermath of the pandemic and the need for educational recovery*,* they would also be a serious distraction.

The proposals are unhelpful and risk significant disruption to a sector that is currently meeting the requirements of trainees, school partnerships and national priorities very effectively.

Of course, there needs to be a degree of consistency in the range of experiences on offer on placements across different schools and settings, but that is very different from the top-down model proposed for ITT, which views teaching in essentially technocratic terms, with little acknowledgement of the principles behind professional autonomy, critical judgement, and the essential awareness of individual differences and needs that are not negotiable in the early years. The intention appears to be that professional judgement should be replaced by a centrally defined curriculum, which is particularly damaging in relation to the teaching of reading.

The Review’s orientation towards the teaching of reading enforces what has been government policy over many years; the rhetoric relies on limited evidence, and ignores wider knowledge, based on research as well as experience. It does not respect the professionalism and experience of teachers and over-simplifies the complexities of the reading process. The assertion that trainees should be *familiarised with the evidence for the effectiveness of SSP (Systematic Synthetic Phonics)* and *that* *time is not used teaching them alternative approaches* is less than helpful in the early years, when children come to nursery with very wide differences in their experience of spoken as well as written English*.* Phonetic decoding certainly has a place, but research demonstrates that it is not the only approach needed for effective support of early reading, particularly for children with special educational needs, or those in the early stages of learning English, where more than half of our most commonly used words are not phonically predictable. This level of intervention in what is essentially a matter for professional judgement is an unprecedented exercise of state control over the process of teaching.

In their most recent advice, The Education Endowment Foundation has stated clearly:

“*Learning to read is a highly complex undertaking that is underpinned by two fundamental processes:*

* *word reading through the recognition and decoding of words, and*
* *comprehension of texts through a range of knowledge and skills.”*

As they say: ***“Helping children learn to read [...] requires multiple teaching approaches to appeal to the discrete but interconnected facets of one of life’s most essential skills.”***

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/phonics-mastering-the-basics-of-reading/?mc_cid=849f6b05fa&mc_eid=87f236e212>

The proposals to overhaul provision and to introduce a new accreditation process at this very demanding time are not helpful, and indeed are likely to be counter-productive. However, the intention to strengthen the role of the mentor in initial teacher education is welcome, as is the encouragement for schools and settings to think seriously about their responsibilities in the provision of placements and to work alongside HEIs and other training providers. The commitment to an evidence-based trainee curriculum is welcome provided the full range of evidence is taken into account, and we strongly agree that educational disadvantage must be an area of priority in initial and continuing professional development.

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