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Reforming Initial Teacher Training provision in England - implementing the new core content framework, improving NQT retention, and next steps for the teacher training system 25th February 2020

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The future shape of ITT system - range of providers, regional imbalances and the market's effectiveness in attracting ITT trainees

Professor Lynne McKenna, Dean, Faculty of Education and Society, University of Sunderland

Thank you.

I'm going to talk about the modern university approach to shaping the future of the ITE system and I hope you will bear with me because I'm going to do this by reflecting on my 5 years at the University of Sunderland.

The University of Sunderland is one of 5 regional universities in the North East providing teacher training and education. There are three modern universities and two Russell Group universities in the North East, the market for initial teacher education is really buoyant. Shona discussed the polarisation between school-led and the HEI-led approach and I'm a great proponent of the modern university approach to initial teacher education, recognising that approximately 62% of teachers have been to a modern university. However, I caveat that with we couldn't do it without the collaborative development of partnership with our schools. Developing and maintaining partnership has been key to everything we've achieved in the last 5 years at the university and we now see ourselves in a position where we have developed our partnership to over 1,000 schools in the North East regionally and in the UK and internationally, and we offer over 2,000 placements a year. That is huge and has not been achieved by simply standing still and expecting schools to take our student teachers on placement, it has taken a lot of time, effort and commitment to encourage our existing schools to stay with us and to encourage prospective partnership schools to consider us alongside those SCITT providers and other providers of ITE in the region.

I was very happy to join the University of Sunderland in 2015. As you can tell from my accent I am a North East girl and I worked for 15 years at Northumbria University before joining the University of Sunderland. I have a Masters degree from Newcastle University and a PhD from Durham University and the only university I haven't particularly had personal contact with in the North East is Teesside, but I'm just going to stay at Sunderland for now.

I joined the university at a time of great change in 2015, a time when university-led routes into teacher training were under increased scrutiny, a time when proponents of school-led routes were being promoted as the preferred route, and we will all remember Michael Gove and his 'Teaching as a Craft' agenda. We all know that teaching is much more than a craft.

It was a very scary time for university senior management teams and as you know many universities decided at that point to stop offering ITE, the threat of school-led provision concerned some University Vice Chancellors and I'm very pleased to say that I was able to persuade our Vice Chancellor that there was room for all of us in the sector and I still believe that to be the case, but it's all to do with partnership.

Recruiting new staff to ITE was incredibly difficult at a time when universities were asking whether will we would still have an education department in 5 years' time, so just bring somebody in for a year, and it's really difficult to improve quality if you haven't got the quality staff, and who wants to come to work in a university on a 1 year contract. Really difficult times.

But I was very clear that rather than hide our light under a bushel we needed to create an ITE provision at the University of Sunderland which met the needs of our local and regional schools. I'll be honest, my plan was to spend a length of time reviewing the provision and then implement a period of change. I'm an early years teacher by background so I was going to plan, do and review. That didn't work. 6 weeks in, I got the Ofsted call. This was the new 2 phase inspection period and James Noble Rogers will remember the panic that I had, I rang him up and said, I can't upload the documents to the portal, it was a really scary time.

Anyway, I digress. The inspection highlighted two main concerns at that time. We hadn't recruited to the NCTL allocations which were absolutely ridiculous in 2015 and for those providers who know, you will remember the allocations methodology at that time, the % over and above and below, was an absolute horrible place to be in. We also had retention of teachers as a major flag. So it was very clear that there was some work to be done.

What I really looked at were all of the Ps, so I looked at priorities, processes, protocols, procedures, paperwork, but most important I looked at partnership, and getting out there and bringing the partnership in to work with us to redesign the curriculum, to redesign the assessments and to really work with the students in terms of what is it we want our regional teachers to look like, what is it that we want from our new teachers.

Baroness Perry of Southwark: One minute.

Thank you. So what did we do to achieve a growth in student numbers at a time of national decline and thus begin to shape the future direction and shape of ITE in our institution? As I said we put partnership at the heart of our offer, and it's not just paying lip service to partnership it's about developing a real collaborative partnership where everybody plays an equal part and everybody is valued. We reviewed the curriculum with our partnership and we stuck to our guns, for example, we retained the creative and the foundation subjects in primary at a time when the curriculum was being squeezed and the emphasis was on core subjects. We reviewed the placement offer, increased the credit size on placements and the time spent on placements. We worked with Million+ and with UCET to look at what a career framework would look like for an early career researcher and that work was presented at the DfE and at the House of Commons. We've had a very strong voice as a modern university in terms of changing the shape of initial teacher education.

I think one of the things that I would say in terms of the change to ITE in the last year have been really welcomed. We've got the three documents that we've heard a lot about today and we've also had the announcement from Gavin Williamson that he is going to increase starting salaries for the teachers in 2022. My question is, why not now? We've got a recruitment and retention crisis, let's pay our teachers what they are worth.

Baroness Perry of Southwark: Thank you very much indeed.
So now we hear from Faye who is from the Teacher Development, Teach First.