

## ATTRACTING SIXTH-FORM PUPILS INTO TEACHING

### FINDINGS FROM THE TASTER COURSE PROGRAMME AIMED AT RECRUITING BLACK AND ETHNIC MINORITIES INTO INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

*Report by: Yasmin Valli, Leeds Metropolitan University, School of Educational and Professional Development*

The taster course programme was conducted in 1999/2000. The programme sets out to encourage young people from ethnic minority backgrounds to join the teaching profession. In order to address the current situation of under-representation from such groups, this programme was seen to be innovative, in the way it sought to recruit sixth formers from black and ethnic minority community who were in Year 12 of schooling. To 'catch them early' was the underlying aim of the programme. Working with teachers in schools and jointly delivering the message about the teaching profession was one of the strengths built into the programme. It appeared that black and ethnic minority young people rarely considered teaching as a career, not least because there are such few role models, but also due to their own experiences of school in general, which on the whole, tended to be a difficult one. This view was further exacerbated by the 'bad press' that continues to follow the teaching profession and the stress levels experienced by the teachers themselves.

Findings prove that despite this, the participating youngsters who engaged in the programme with a positive attitude, got a true picture about the teaching profession. Both, the teachers and their pupils valued the course. When these participants are ready to join this profession, they will have made an informed choice. Surely, this exercise has implications for recruitment and retention of members joining the teaching profession as it throws a positive light upon their chosen career path.

The taster course programme was funded by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA). Leeds Metropolitan University collaborated with two schools in Yorkshire, one was an all boys' school and the second an all girls' school. In all, 24 sixth form students enrolled on the course.

The course included the following:

- introduction to the course, led by one of the participating schools' head of sixth form
- presentation on teaching as a career, led by a careers officer
- visit to Leeds Metropolitan University organised by the participating schools
- introduction to the National Curriculum, led by the deputy head teacher of one of the schools
- introduction to the Literacy/Numeracy Hour, led by Leeds Metropolitan University
- a presentation on the use of ICT for making resources and use of audio-visual for teaching and learning
- an introduction to special educational needs

- an introduction to classroom management issues (often a matter of concern to intending teachers).
- 'real life' problems for primary teachers and classroom issues
- meeting standards 4/98 and test requirements
- presentations

a unique feature of the taster course was a one-week school placement. This was the highlight for many participants as this is where they were able to make connections between theory and practice. Their reactions are listed later on in this report. Other students undertook shorter placements. Four joined "paired reading" activities to support weaker readers, while two others supported pupils with special needs, using an information technology package to improve their reading skills. All the students received glowing reports from their placements.

The schools involved were both in Bradford - Belle Vue Girls' School and Belle Vue Boys' School. Belle Vue Girls' School had already been involved in a 'preparation for teaching' programme and welcomed the opportunity of continuing their programme through the TTA taster course initiative in collaboration with Leeds Metropolitan University (LMU). This school had already successfully completed a taster with (LMU) and were delighted to participate in the second round. In both schools the group was composed entirely of students of Pakistani or Bangladeshi backgrounds.

At Belle Vue Girls' School, the course was publicised to the hundred pupils taking Advanced courses in years 12 and 13. The Head offered a brief description of the course in Assembly to all Advanced Level students in Late September 1999. Twenty seven students, predominantly from year 12, expressed an interest and were invited to the first meeting at the beginning of October. Of these, fifteen enrolled on the course. All those enrolled were Year 12 pupils.

Belle Vue Boys' School, who was participating in the taster course programme for the first time, launched an in-school poster advert in late October 1999 aimed at sixth form boys. In addition to this, sixth form pupils were alerted to the idea of a taster course in initial teacher training through tutor group meetings. Nine students expressed an interest and of these, six were enrolled on the course.

#### **Belle Vue Girls' Schools:**

Fifteen pupils were offered a place on the course at Belle Vue Girls' School. Thirteen were studying A' Level, one was studying Advanced Business and one Advanced Health and Social Care. All of these students had passed GCSE English Language at grade C or above (3 had grade A, 8 had B, and 4 had C). all but five had passed GCSE maths at grade C or above (1 had A, 1 had B, 8 had C, 4 had D and one had E). All had taken double award science which eleven had passed with grade C or above (2 had A, 2 had B, 8 had C, 2 had D and 1 had E). All students were 'ethnic minority' being Muslim and from families originating in Pakistan.

After three meetings, numbers went down to thirteen from the original fifteen who enrolled. No pupil attended all of the sessions. Five pupils missed one session, one pupil missed two sessions, five pupils missed three sessions and two pupils missed four sessions, giving an overall attendance of 79%. The major factor was undoubtedly the fact that the sessions were held after the end of school; pupils had other commitments like attending mosque classes or appointments with dentist or optician.

At both schools senior staff known for good practice were invited to contribute to the programme. Input from external bodies (Leeds Metropolitan University) was by invitation.

At Belle Vue Girls' School thirteen sessions were planned and ten actually took place. Ten pupils responded to the questionnaire about the course. The figures following each session title below indicate the number finding the session quite useful, useful or very useful. (1 - 10 being very useful)

Sessions:

- Introduction to the course – led by Head of Sixth Form (6)
- Teaching as career – led by Careers Officer (9)
- Visit to Leeds Metropolitan University (9)
- The National Curriculum Framework – led by the Deputy Headteacher
- -The Literacy/Numeracy hour –Leeds Metropolitan University (9)
- ICT and use and production of Audio- visual aids – led by Head of Geography (9)
- Special Educational Needs (9)
- 'Real-life' problems for Primary teachers (8)
- Classroom issues (8)
- Pupil presentations

Two pupils added suggestions for sessions they would have liked. These were: a Primary School teacher to talk about their job and more information on dealing with special problems like harassment and abuse. Clearly pupils appeared to value the sessions that offered practical insight into teaching (how to do it and what it feels like) at this stage, rather than the policy background.

### **School Placements**

Included in the taster course programme was a one week school placement in a Primary School. Six pupils had a week's placement in Primary schools. The others were very reluctant to miss a week's lessons, and opted instead for practical work within school, helping younger and special needs pupils with work under the supervision of the class teacher or (SENCO)

Pupils on placement received good reports. One was assured of a glowing reference if she needed one for future applications. Pupils observed that teaching was not 'roses all the way', it was hard work and 'you should be fit' as it entailed a lot of preparation and organisation. However, they also

observed that teaching was varied, fun and therefore a 'great profession to work in.

Four pupils worked on the 'paired reading' scheme in school which involved giving morning registration times on regular basis, to read with Year 9 pupils who have literacy problems. Six pupils gave up study periods to get involved in paired learning with a Year 9 class. Two pupils helped Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils on the information technology package 'Wellington Square'. As we can see, pupils created opportunities to gain as much practical experience as possible despite the constraints that were upon them.

Pupils rated their school experience in terms of perceived usefulness in helping them understand how children learn. Paired learning and helping SEN pupils were perceived as very useful by all pupils.S

### **Belle Vue Boys' School:**

Nine pupils were offered a place on the course at Belle Vue Boys' School. All pupils were in Year 12 studying for A' Level and Advanced GNVQ courses. Seven pupils had passed GCSE English and mathematics at grade C or above. Two were taking these subjects again. Five pupils completed GNVQ at Intermediate level. All students were 'ethnic minority' being Muslim and from families originating in Pakistan.

After two meetings numbers were down from nine to six. Attendance was good as sessions took place within school hours and varied in length to ensure that pupils continue to attend their normal school lessons.

At both schools senior staff known for good practice were invited to contribute to the programme. Input from external bodies (Leeds Metropolitan University) was by invitation. I was invited to talk to the boys initially, giving them an overview of the taster programme and helping them identify the need for teachers from ethnic minority background.

At Belle Vue Boys' School, thirteen sessions were planned. Sessions took place within school hours and varied in length between twenty to fifty minutes.

The programme included sessions on:

- Everyone remembers a good teacher
- Personal qualities required for the profession
- What makes a good lesson
- Careers - routes into teaching, philosophy
- The National Curriculum and qualification requirement
- Head teacher talk about the hidden curriculum, role of governors and legal requirements
- Visit to Leeds Metropolitan University
- Talk about community interest - why them?
- Preparation for teaching placement
- Time management and organisation
- Feedback from teaching placements
- Presentations

- Help/guidance given towards UCAS applications

### **School Placements**

Included in the taster course programme was a one week school placement in a Primary School. All six pupils participated in this programme and found it a very useful experience. It's popularity was also reflected in the questionnaire responses.

On the whole the programme above was received positively by the boys. There was a degree of informality built into the course in order to allow pupils to reflect upon the input and ask questions. They remained enthusiastic and asked many questions regarding the teaching profession. The insight gained about the profession was a real eye opener for many pupils. They were also concerned about the grades needed to get into teaching and daunted by all the tests involved in order to gain the teaching qualification. They thoroughly enjoyed their visit to Leeds Metropolitan University where they were given a warm welcome, met some of the staff and were given a guided tour of the campus. Many felt convinced that they wished to study at university level.

### **Questionnaire:**

A questionnaire was sent out to the two schools involved. Seven out the thirteen pupils at Belle Vue Girl's School completed the questionnaire. At Belle Vue Boy's school all six pupils completed the questionnaire. Listed below are joint responses from the two schools in relation to the questionnaire.

#### **Q What did you feel about teaching as a career before the course ?**

The majority were interested in the career, thought it was challenging and new things could be learnt. Many felt that it was a good career, with good money and that it was easy to teach children. Some felt that it sounded stressful and the pay was not good enough compared to all the work you had to do. Others thought it was an easy job with good pay and bonuses. One member felt that it was an easy job where you just taught from books and no real preparation was involved!

#### **Q What did you enjoy most about the course?**

All participants enjoyed the course on the whole, however, they emphasised different aspects which they enjoyed. The majority got a lot out of their school placement where they enjoyed working with the children, being in the school environment and talking to 'real' Primary class teachers. Some enjoyed learning about the role of a teacher through the course. Many found that it was quite interactive as there were a lot of interesting things which they learned about Primary schools. Visit to a higher education institution (Leeds Metropolitan University) was appreciated by all.

### **Q What did you enjoy least?**

Responses to this question from both schools centred around their school placement. Some pupils found it hard work as they experienced the difficulties involved in teaching a class of children, such as discipline issues, large classes and the amount of time spent preparing for teaching. Some pupils from the Girl's schools found the sessions tiring after school. One pupil found some of the sessions boring.

### **Q What did you learn through the course?**

Pupils responded in a variety of ways to this question. Listed below are their responses:

Got more information about teaching.

That teaching is a rewarding and satisfying career.

How much work is involved in being a teacher.

I learnt how to get children's attention.

I learned about the different types of learners and ability of children.

You have to be very patient and endure long hours.

How to cope with children and how to coax them into learning.

You should never underestimate children.

You need good communication skills to be a successful teacher.

I learned about different teaching methods.

I learned about the life of teaching - how tough it is

That teaching is a good career

I learned about the advantages and disadvantages of being a teacher.

### **Q Did the course change the way you felt about teaching as a career? How?**

Many pupils found that a lot of patience, commitment and hard work was needed in teaching. Some had to re-consider their views on teaching. One pupil felt that teaching older children would be a better option. One decided it wasn't for him. Some thought it was boring at first but later found it varied and interesting through all the different things they had to teach and the practical elements involved.

### **Q Did the course make you feel more likely to choose teaching for your career?**

For many participants, the course made them want to consider teaching as a career. Some found that it confirmed their view about wanting to teach. Some were not sure. One pupil felt that it made her decide to teach older children.

### **Q How could the taster course be improved?**

Course participants would value input from other teachers outside their school and talks from trainee students about life at university. They also expressed an interest in visiting more teacher training institutions to get more information and more of a feel about being a student. One pupil would have liked to have

more information about the school placement. Some would have liked more informal discussions to really ask what they wanted to about the career as the sessions were too structured. Some felt that spending more time in school through the school placement would benefit the course.

We can conclude from the questionnaire responses that there was a high level of interest in the teaching profession amongst pupils from both schools. Two pupils from Belle Vue Girl's School said that they were intending to apply for teaching courses in 2001, either at Bradford or at Leeds Metropolitan University. Three more were unsure. Two wrote that they have decided that teaching is not for them as they feel they have not got the patience required. however, all but one asked for further information about teaching as a career, so plans would seem to be unsettled as yet.

At Belle Vue Boy's school, two pupils were intending to apply for a teaching course. One wants to be lawyer, two were undecided and one had definitely decided that teaching is not for him.

Overall the taster course was welcomed by both schools. They felt that it was a good way of allowing pupils to make career choices, particularly in an area like teacher training which required a person with many skills and qualities. Time has been a factor in both schools - at Belle Vue Girl's School pupils had to stay after school to do the course, this impacted upon attendance. At Belle Vue Boy's School, the course ran in school time and was well attended but they had to be careful not to disrupt the on-going school time table. Pupils were seeking more time in schools, this was a valid suggestion, however, it did impact upon their own schooling and therefore we need to think about other ways in which they could get more school experience. It was interesting to note that Belle Vue Boy's were going to continue to visit their primary schools on a voluntary basis in a 'classroom assistant' capacity. Certainly, this experience has had a positive impact upon the participants. These will be the candidates who will enter the teaching profession and retain their enthusiasm for teaching.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7777</sup> Taster Course