

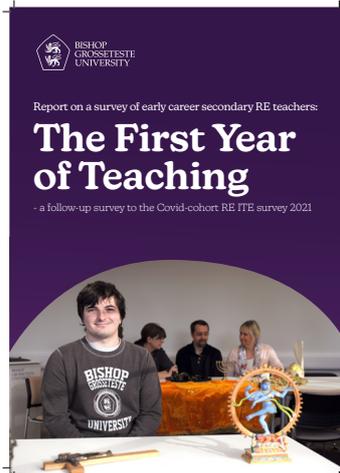


The First Year of Teaching Report on a survey of early career RE teachers

Mark Plater

What is this study?

In Autumn 2021 the results of a survey carried out that year across all ITE providers in England was published. The intention of that research was to explore the make-up and motivations of students applying to become secondary Religious Education teachers in the period 2020-21. A full copy of the report can be accessed at <https://bgro.repository.guildhe.ac.uk/id/eprint/971/>

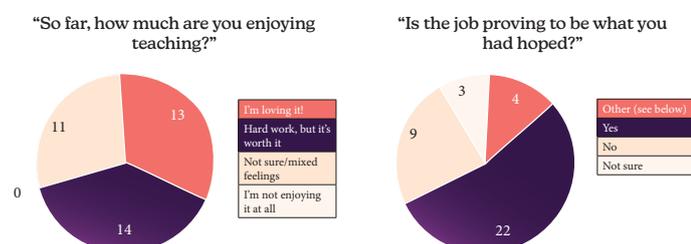


About half of the participants agreed to be contacted for a further survey in 2022. The 'First Year of Teaching' report summarises their experience in applying for jobs, the nature of the teaching posts that they secured, their experience in being supported as early career teachers, and their hopes and dreams for the future. In addition, they were asked to reflect back on their previous training provision, including both the practical and academic elements of the ITE course that they completed.

In addition to being the first ITE cohort to surpass the government's target number for RE ITE applicants in recent years, they are also the first to experience the new two-year induction into teaching, based on the 2019 Early Career Framework for teachers. This survey asks whether they are being provided with the various components intended by that programme, and what other resources and networks have been of help during their first year of teaching.

Any questions about the report, please contact Mark.Plater@bishopg.a.uk

Responses to specific questions about the profession:



The 'science of happiness' in ITE

Clare Lawrence

Our 'Research Spotlight' input to our PGCE Secondary team meeting on October 10th focussed on the topic of pupil, teacher, mentor and tutor wellbeing.

This is an important subject. White and McCallum (2020) report that 99% of teachers believe that student wellbeing is important (I worry about the missing 1%), and Seligman (2019) suggests that 'schools and positive teachers are the fulcrum for producing more wellbeing in a culture' (pp. 15-16). The recent disruption to education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic may have exacerbated mental health issues and have made teachers more aware of the need to support good mental health in schools (Harris, 2020). However, this interest is not new. For decades, psychologists have proposed the concept of 'positive education' (otherwise termed the 'science of happiness'), with Oades and Mossman (2017) suggesting that wellbeing as an element in education should be viewed as foundational as numeracy and literacy.

Various wellbeing programmes have been created through the years, including the PROSPER framework (Noble and McGrath, 2015), which concentrated on **Positivity, Relationships, Outcomes, Strengths, Purpose, Engagement, and Resilience**, and the SEARCH framework (Waters and Loton, 2019), which foregrounds **Strengths, Emotional management, Attention and awareness, Relationships, Coping, and Habits and goals**. However, as Keyton (2021) ruefully observes, there is little evidence that the happiness of our children is increasing, and indeed rather there is suggestion that depression, self-harm and suicidal behaviours in our school populations continue to rise (Sachs et al., 2019).

Given the importance of this subject, Initial Teacher Education programmes are keen to include consideration of wellbeing within our curriculum, although finding time to squeeze it in amid already heavily prescribed content is a challenge, as is the lack of effective examples of what successful 'wellbeing' content with ITE may look like (White, 2021).

That said, it is interesting to note that having teachers who report themselves to be 'happy' has been seen to impact positively on both the wellbeing and learning of those teachers' students (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2011). Perhaps one place to start, then, is with our own sense of happiness. In research by White and McCallum (2020), pre-service teachers did not associate subject-specific learning or teaching with

(continued from first page) wellbeing. This seems strange. Surely, when we become teachers, it is because of joy in and enthusiasm for our subject? It seems that if we can share these with those we teach – whether new teachers or pupils – this could be to everyone’s benefit. If we can all be supported to remember why we love our subjects, and that we do – indeed – love this profession of ours, perhaps this will cascade down through our own teaching, our trainee teachers, to pupils and so to wider society.

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Talking point

In these times of economic instability, it is likely that school costs will continue to rise and will not be met in real terms by funding increases. Sunak’s budget pledge of 2021 that school funding would return to at least that of 2010 now seems unlikely to be honoured. This is on the back of already falling support, where school spending per pupil in England fell by 9% in real terms between 2009–10 and 2019–20 (Farquaharson et al., 2021). Even before the current crisis, 35 per cent of headteachers surveyed in 2021 expected to be forced to make cuts in the academic year 2021/22 (NAHT, 2021). The effects of all these on pupil welfare remains to be recorded.

Discussion: What can we do to help? How can we, as teachers, support pupils in an impoverished/over-extended system?

References

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Further information



Research co-operation opportunities with the University of Greifswald.

Matt Dunn

In early October, BGU was fortunate to host a visit by academics from the University of Greifswald in Germany who are keen to learn from our Initial Teacher Education programmes and to form research partnerships with us to share and support each other’s approaches to the education of teachers.

The University of Greifswald is one of the oldest academic institutions in the Baltic Sea Region, being founded in 1456. In addition to the education of teachers it specialises in subjects as diverse as Theology, Law and Medicine, Mathematics, Sacred Music and History. They are particularly interested in researching environmental change and also the cultures of the Baltic Sea Region.

A group of our teacher educators from BGU are planning to visit Greifswald later this month to further cement our growing relationship with this interesting university. If anyone would like to become more involved in the sharing of ideas regarding teacher education with our colleagues at Greifswald, please contact Dr Matt Dunn (matthew.dunn@bishopg.ac.uk) in the first instance.



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The Secondary PGCE newsletter is designed to enable our partnership school professional colleagues to remain up to date with the team’s current research interests.

Would you like to hear more about a project? Would you like to get involved in our research? Do you have any research you would like to share? Please do let us know. You can email beyondite@bishopg.ac.uk if you are interested or give us a call on 01522 527347.