

School2School

How to make Teaching Schools a success

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Contents

Contents	1
Introduction.....	2
Building a collaborative ethos	4
Case Study A: Creating a collaborative ethos through cultural change	5
Pupil-focused professional development.....	7
Case Study B: A model for raising attainment through networked lesson study <i>Jugyou kenkyuu</i> – ‘Lesson study’ in Fukushima Junior High School, Japan	8
Accountability.....	10
Case Study C: Accountability in Teaching Hospitals	10
Case Study D: Accountability in Professional Development Schools	11
Leadership development.....	12
Increased involvement with Initial Teacher Training	14
Case Study E: Boston Teacher Residency	15
Glossary of key terms	16
Bibliography.....	17

Introduction

This paper aims to analyse and describe the potential of the Teaching Schools initiative to improve teaching and raise standards, identify some of the risks that might jeopardise its successful implementation and propose possible mitigations. It contains insights for policy makers and practitioners.

The authors conducted a literature review examining school-centred professional development, drawing on international research. We selected our case study countries on the basis of the effectiveness of their systems and the availability of relevant literature in English. We also explored practice in non-education systems of adult learning, particularly England's Teaching Hospitals.

The 2010 government White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* called for the creation of a network of National Teaching Schools in England, based on the model of Teaching Hospitals. These schools will be outstanding institutions charged with working in collaboration with an alliance of local schools to raise standards. Teaching Schools will take a lead in the provision of continuing professional development (CPD), school improvement, leadership development and, in time, the provision of Initial Teacher Training. Through the establishment of networks, best practice is to be shared so that 'more children in more schools experience the benefits of great teaching and leadership'. Initially, 100 outstanding schools have been selected to become part of the first cohort of Teaching Schools.¹ Teaching Schools are currently in the development year (2011/2012); the programme will be rolled out in the academic year 2012/2013.

School-to-school partnerships are increasingly seen as the most effective context in which to deliver professional improvement. Some of the most highly effective education systems around the world are underpinned by systematic collaboration. In Ontario, Canada, groups of teachers work together on action research projects to improve pedagogy with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy. In Japan, public demonstrations of effective lessons, which have been jointly designed, are a critical spur for improvement. Teaching Schools provide an exciting opportunity to mirror some of these high impact approaches.

Structural as well as cultural change will be required to ensure the successful implementation of Teaching Schools. The widely reported failure of the Beacon Schools initiative provides a cautionary tale. Without a healthy culture of collaboration that is pupil-centred, accountable and well led, inter-school cooperation can fail.

¹ For a complete list see: <http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/docinfo?id=154985&filename=teaching-schools-initial-designations-september11.pdf>

We propose that Teaching Schools should:

1. Share a collaborative ethos with their alliance guided by a well-defined vision about how to raise the attainment of all children
2. Develop a framework for inter-school networked lesson study and action research to improve pedagogy by ensuring a pupil-centred, evidence-based approach to practice
3. Be directly accountable to a variety of stakeholders through regular peer and self assessment, guided by agreed national expectations
4. Develop a strategic approach to leadership that promotes the growth of internal capacity to drive professional development
5. Provide scope for increased school involvement with Initial Teacher Training.

Building a collaborative ethos

Teaching School Alliances must establish a culture of collaborative practice if they are to provide opportunities for CPD that significantly raise pupils' attainment. While the structural changes required to create Teaching School networks may be achievable, their impact will be limited without the cultural changes needed to ensure productive and sustainable relationships between practitioners.

One of the chief obstacles to the success of previous government initiatives to increase cooperation between schools in England, such as the Beacon Schools policy, has been an inability to 'overcome the isolationism and culture of competition' between schools (DFEE, 2000: 48). A process of cultural change away from this does not come easily. It requires networks to agree upon a specific strategic vision for improving pupil outcomes. Such a vision could well be focussed on improving the outcomes particularly of low-attaining groups, such as underperforming boys or pupils with poor literacy. School Alliances then require a systematic communications strategy to ensure that each partner subscribes and remains committed to this common goal. The lack of a shared vision and poor communications between Beacon Schools and their partners meant that there was little impetus to establish a collaborative culture.

The top places of the TIMSS and PISA indicators of educational performance are dominated by East Asian countries (South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Chinese Taipei and Japan), many of whom have a long tradition of collegiate approaches to teaching and CPD, guided by a shared vision of raising pupil attainment (IALEA, 2008: 70). According a McKinsey report, learning networks, collective planning and inter-school CPD are key features in the transition of such systems from 'great' to 'excellent' (McKinsey, 2007: 51).

Buy-in from all stakeholders is paramount in ensuring that these structures exhibited in high-performing East Asian contexts are able to flourish. Particularly pertinent lessons can be learned from the experience of Professional Learning Communities in Ontario, which are bound together by what Michael Fullan refers to as a 'collective moral purpose': a specific and quantifiable commitment to raising attainment in numeracy and literacy (2005: 211). (See Case Study A).

Case Study A: Creating a collaborative ethos through cultural change Professional Learning Communities in Ontario

In 2003 the new government in Ontario was faced with half of 3rd and 6th grade children rated as below standard in regional assessments (EQAO) in reading, writing and mathematics (McKinsey 2007: 57). With Michael Fullan appointed as a special educational advisor, the McGuinty government sought to raise attainment in numeracy and literacy with Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at the core of their strategy.

Key PLC activities:

- Groups of teachers from different schools led by a principal who would meet regularly (weekly or fortnightly) and engage in CPD activities based on focussed action research
- The needs of particular groups pupils were identified, goals set and findings assessed and shared between schools
- Student Achievement Officers appointed by a newly created Numeracy and Literacy Secretariat to support and advice practitioners in aligning themselves to a shared strategic vision
- Principals would build relationships with other schools via walk-throughs and other lateral capacity-building strategies

The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat offers the following advice on creating collaborative cultures between schools:

- Focus on knowledge building to promote learning of students and educators
- Encourage data-driven discussions and engage students in high-yield strategies that make a difference for their learning
- Take time to share, evaluate, and celebrate
- Ensure school improvement plans consolidate and align the input of all staff and community members (e.g. school council), identify measurable goals, and outline the actions required to achieve them.²

Outcomes:

- Pass rate increase of 10-12% in numeracy and literacy scores in EQAO tests between 2003-2010
- Ontario rated as a 'world leader in its sustained strategy of professionally-driven reform by the OECD'³
- Fullan cites the cultural change that 'Individual school principals became almost as concerned about the success of other schools in the district as they were with the success of their own school' (2005: 216)

² <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/PLC.pdf>

³ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/34/47/46580959.pdf>

Implications for Teaching Schools

- Teaching School networks should recognise that, as well as structural change, a change in culture will be required to ensure that collaborative practice is sustained
- Special Leaders in Education (SLEs) should play a key role in defining a common vision for each network, ensuring that all stakeholders are engaged
- Any such vision should be centred on raising the attainment of particular groups of low-attaining pupils across the whole Alliance, rather than just those in individual schools
- The vision must be driven by a specific strategic focus, agreed by all partners
- Communication between schools should be open and regular. Principals and other senior staff should visit other schools frequently to gain knowledge and build relationships.

Pupil-focused professional development

A culture of collaboration can be further developed through CPD activities that employ collaborative techniques. This is the case in high-performing East Asian systems, such as Japan, where CPD is promoted through programmes of networked lesson study that target raising the attainment of particular groups of pupils. This involves networks of teachers meeting to agree a particular research focus, jointly planning a lesson or series of lessons, carrying out peer observations and reconvening to discuss outcomes and provide formative feedback (See Case Study B).

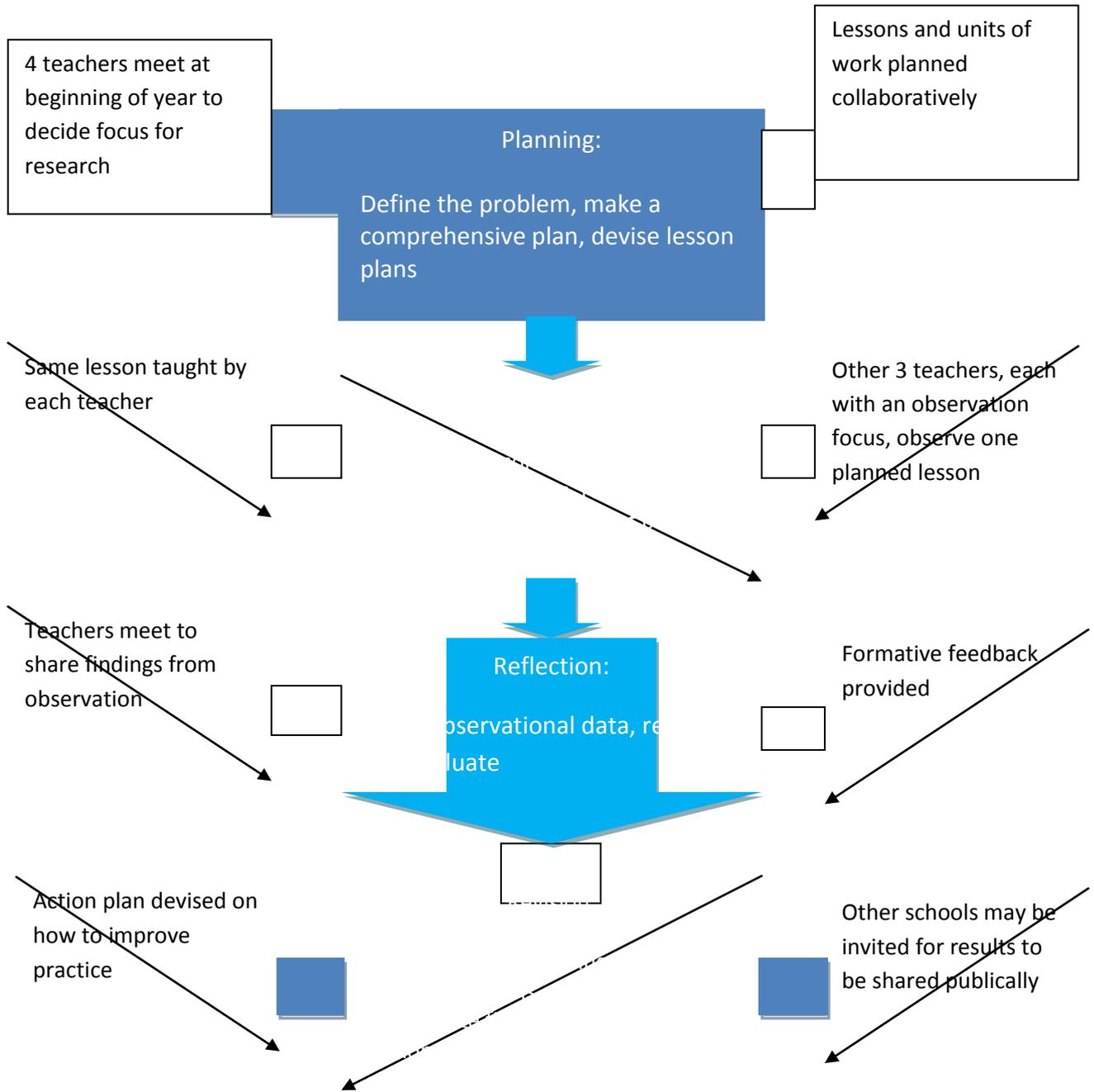
Similar models of collaborative practice have been employed in Ontario's PLCs, which assert the importance of 'collaborative enquiry', in which 'action research, case study discussions, classroom walk-throughs, mentoring, and peer coaching' form much of the basis for their CPD.⁴ The success of PLCs in raising attainment in Ontario (see Case Study A) illustrates that there scope for networked lesson study and action research both in individual school and on an inter-school basis. Research conducted in a 2003-2005 pilot by the NCSL (2005) strongly suggests that wide-scale implementation of what it calls 'Networked Research Lesson Study' could be easily translated to the English school system.

To be convincing, the benefits of networked lesson and other collaborative activities need to be supported by rigorous evidence of improving student outcomes. According to Guskey and Suk Yoon (2009: 498), 'sound, trustworthy and scientifically valid evidence on the specific aspects of professional development that contribute to such improvement is in dreadfully short supply'. Any evidence gathered should be made public so that successful practice can be shared and celebrated. In this way, schools and school networks can become leaders of research and innovation, much like Teaching Hospitals are in the medical profession. In Japan, for example, more than 50% of educational research literature is produced by classroom teachers, in contrast to the relative dearth of scientific research that currently takes place in English classrooms (NCSL, 2005: 4).

As well as contributing to building a wider bank of professional knowledge, CPD through networked lesson study allows practitioners to learn from, and then in turn apply, their findings to the specific context in which they are working. Their professional development is therefore directly relevant to the needs of their pupils, whose progress can be measured by the rigorous collection and dissemination of data. This mirrors the practice in Teaching Hospitals, where direct interaction between practitioner and patient is at the heart of clinical research and professional development.

⁴ <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/PLC.pdf>

Case Study B: A model for raising attainment through networked lesson study *Jugyou kenkyuu* – ‘Lesson study’ in Fukushima Junior High School, Japan



Source: Sarkar Arani, M. R., Shibata, Y. & Matoba, M. (2007) 'Delivering Jugyou Kenkyuu for Reframing Schools as Learning Organizations: An Examination of the Process of Japanese School Change', Nagoya Journal of Education and Human Development, Vol. 3, pp.25-36.

Implications for Teaching Schools

- Networked lesson study and action research should form a key part of the CPD activities led by Teaching Schools
- Teaching School Alliances should devise an agreed framework to govern how networked lesson study should be carried out, ensuring that each project has a clear focus and is consistently implemented
- Projects should be planned, implemented and evaluated in a collaborative manner, with teachers taking part from across the network in order to strengthen relationships and build 'lateral capacity'
- Teaching Schools should provide training to ensure that the research the teachers conduct is strongly evidence-based and maintains a focus on pupil outcomes
- Findings should be shared publicly and achievements celebrated to raise the profiles of networked lesson study and action research and make Teaching Schools centres of research excellence.

Accountability

The 2010 government White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* (2010) asserts that the ‘model of a Teaching School has been developed and modelled on Teaching Hospitals.’ However, one key difference between them is in the methods employed for assuring accountability.

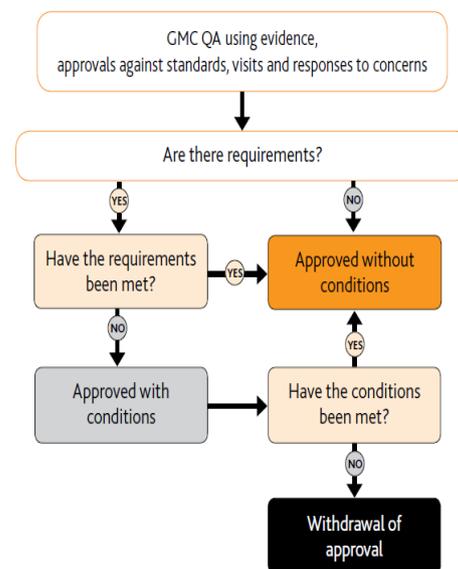
In the case of Teaching Hospitals, the General Medical Council (GMC) sets out rigorous standards for medical educators and employs a clear, centralised framework for quality assurance. Set out below (Case Study C) is the structure of accountability employed within Teaching Hospitals. Approval for training providers may eventually be withdrawn if they are unable to provide evidence they have met the GMC’s standards.

Case Study C: Accountability in Teaching Hospitals

Centralised standards and trainee

While there is no central curriculum for medical training or continuing professional development in Teaching Hospitals, the GMC outlines a rigorous set of standards to which students, medical schools and Teaching Hospitals should adhere. Made up of 12 clinical and 12 lay Council members, the GMC is an independent regulator with the authority to register doctors as well as to withdraw approval for deaneries and medical schools should they fail to meet those standards (see chart opposite). Particularly pertinent for Teaching Hospitals is standard 128: ‘Everyone involved in educating medical students will be appropriately selected, trained, supported and appraised.’

http://www.gmc-uk.org/Quality_Improvement 1



The GMC visits Teaching Hospitals and requests documentary evidence to ensure that clinical educators are meeting those standards. However, generally the most significant mechanism for accountability is the feedback from those in receipt of medical training in the form of expressed concerns, as well as the annual Training Survey.⁵ In addition, medical school league tables are influenced by trainee feedback, meaning that future trainees will be less likely to take up places when selecting their training provider.⁶

⁵ http://www.gmc-uk.org/static/documents/content/Training_survey-FINAL2010.pdf

⁶ Source: Interviews

Although the NCSL will have the authority to 'de-designate' Teaching Schools, 'it will be up to schools to decide how they undertake this important role [of quality assurance]' (2011: 8).

There is a precedent for schools using the same kind of peer- and self-assessment used in Teaching Hospitals. In the United States, Professional Development Schools (PDS), in partnership with other PDS schools, conduct self-evaluations and peer-visits according to a national set of standards generated by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). These evaluations are so strong a measure of accountability that external inspection is thought to be little required (see Case Study D).

Case Study D: Accountability in Professional Development Schools

PDSs, also modelled on Teaching Hospitals, are establishments committed to developing the profession of teaching through active inquiry and research. PDSs conduct self-evaluations and peer-evaluations through cross-site visits according to nationally prescribed standards. A balanced group of stakeholders including teachers, families, community members, administrators, university representatives and, where appropriate, students from the school, form a steering committee to conduct these evaluations ensuring the school's accountability to all stakeholders.

The processes are clearly structured for schools to complete independently in the NCATE Handbook for the Assessment of Professional Development Schools (2001). The procedure is entirely collegial and should not be associated with conventional inspections or accreditation. In addition to a handbook for self-assessment, there is a code of conduct and 'stance' for visits which is followed by all schools within the network (Teitel, 2001).

Implications for Teaching Schools

- With their full participation, an agreed set of national standards should be devised, against which the quality of Teaching Schools can be assured
- To maintain their status, Teaching Schools should eventually be required to present documentary evidence of the impact of their activities to the NCSL
- Teaching Schools should be encouraged to visit and formatively peer-assess one another for the purposes of quality assurance as well as 'lateral capacity building'
- All stakeholders (teachers, parents, pupils, community members, administrators, external partners) should be engaged in surveys to assess the impact of Teaching School activities
- The findings of any such surveys should be disseminated publicly to celebrate successful practice.

Leadership development

One in four school principals in England is eligible for retirement within the next four years. In response, the White Paper (DfE, 2010) has given Teaching Schools the responsibility for developing the next generation of outstanding school leaders. Because leadership can too often be confined to one school and promotion result from chance rather than design, Teaching Schools have been charged with:

- Developing collaborative system leadership
- Strategically nurturing potential leaders.

Developing collaborative system leadership

School leaders are increasingly expected to work not just within but beyond their own organisations, harnessing the best of shared resources to bring about positive impact on pupil outcomes (Hill, 2011). This move towards “system leadership” credits effective leaders with the knowledge and desire to work collaboratively to effect change within their sector.

Teaching Schools, because they must establish partnerships with other establishments, are likely to contribute to the move away from hierarchical leadership models towards more lateral system leadership. Two guiding principles of system leadership, advocated by Bond et al. are, firstly, building social capital and secondly, creating shared leadership through networks (Carter & Sharpe, 2006).

The most effective school principals are usually those who show greatest interest in developing teachers within and beyond their school. Their concern with investing in people – building social capital – is a key element in effective system leadership. Social capital can be built through practising relational trust and open dialogue between partner schools (West-Burnham and Otero, 2005).

School networks, such as Teaching School Alliances, encourage the democratisation of power. There is potential for responsibility and leadership to be devolved among schools throughout the network; for system leaders to stop doing things *for* those in the partnership and start learning jointly *with* the partnership (Carter & Sharpe, 2006).

Nurturing future leaders

Investing in social capital opens development opportunities for senior leaders of Teaching Schools. System leaders of Teaching Schools will require a strong senior leadership base on which to rely in their absence. Senior leaders are thus granted the opportunity to develop the skills required for further leadership positions at a time when retirement rates in schools are at their highest.

Since 23% of NLEs cite “lack of experience” as the main reason for not taking up further system leadership roles, support and training are central to the success of developing greater leadership capacity (Hill, 2011).

Professionally developing senior leadership will be an important aspect of Teaching Schools. To further strengthen their networks and expand their partnerships, Teaching Schools would benefit from aligning with present providers of training for principals, senior and middle leaders, such as the Local Leaders of Education

Programme, NPQH and Future Leaders, acting as brokers of these development programmes. As they become established and connections with universities in their networks grow, Teaching Schools may wish to create a leadership development programme informed by the outstanding practice and educational innovations their schools exemplify.

Teaching Schools Alliances will need to set explicit policies stating their commitment to growing internal leadership talent. Being part of a network holds great advantage for nourishing leadership potential by enabling leaders to rotate between schools and between roles. In this way the talent pool is both deepened and widened. This relates well to the creation of the position of specialist leaders of education (SLEs) who, while designated and brokered by Teaching Schools, can come from any school, so long as they meet the established NCSL criteria.

Implications for Teaching Schools

- Teaching Schools should encourage and promote system leadership
- Explicit commitment to nourishing internal leadership talent is required
- Teaching Schools should enable leaders to rotate between schools and between roles
- Teaching Schools should align their CPD activities with leadership development programmes offered by external providers
- Future Teaching Schools could develop their own leadership development programmes in coordination with university partners.

Increased involvement with Initial Teacher Training

As establishments of outstanding practice, Teaching Schools have great scope for influencing the quality of provision of initial teaching training (ITT). The government has expressed a desire to decentralise and reduce its involvement in managing the ITT system, offering schools greater opportunities to meet the needs of trainee teachers.

The future direction of devolved ITT would appear to be based on that of school-centred ITT (SCITT) and employment based ITT (EBITT) models, in which candidates spend the majority of their training practising in schools.

A central role of Teaching Schools will be to manage system relations between universities and accredited ITT schools. As a new initiative, Teaching Schools that were not previously accredited providers of ITT are expected to utilise and develop those ITT providers within their network, building on their success and experience. Though not expected to provide ITT in their first year, Teaching Schools can gain accreditation later at their discretion. In addition to managing these network partnerships, Teaching Schools are to be involved in:

- Recruiting and selecting outstanding graduates for training
- Co-designing with accredited providers of ITT, the content of training programmes based on their experience of outstanding practice.

Recruiting and selecting outstanding candidates for training

The quality of an education system depends on the quality of its teachers. Selecting the best candidates for teacher training is therefore of utmost importance. The rigorous screening of graduate candidates for teacher training in Finland and South Korea is often credited as an important ingredient in their success as education systems. In these countries, candidates are tested on their subject knowledge, critical thinking and interpersonal skills through national tests and university interviews (Barber & Mourshed, 2007)

Teaching School Alliances will be able to attract teachers with valuable professional learning to offer trainees and others. They could, in coordination with partner universities, contribute strongly to the design of selection criteria and screening processes, in line with national requirements.

Teaching Schools have the opportunity substantially to reshape recruitment, learning from the best systems around the world. This might involve encouraging applications to teach shortage subjects from well qualified candidates.

Co-designing the content of training programmes based on experience of outstanding practice

As provision for ITT becomes increasingly the responsibility of schools, Teaching Schools will be in a strong position to share the outstanding practice associated with their status.

Universities are likely to continue to play an important role in providing the theoretical pedagogy that underpins many trainees' practice. Partnerships between universities and Teaching Schools could co-construct programmes of study that link theory to practice in the context of the schools in which the trainees will be teaching.

Teaching schools, acting as centres for action research, are well positioned to use first-hand evidence to shape training courses and thus become providers of cutting edge ITT. Co-operation between universities and schools as providers of co-ordinated ITT has yielded strong results in places where it has been implemented, such as Billerica Education Consortium in the UK and the Boston Teacher Residency (see Case Study E).

Case Study E: Boston Teacher Residency

The Boston Teacher Residency (BTR) is a partnership between the University of Massachusetts Boston and Boston Public Schools which work together on the Boston Plan for Excellence placing teacher residents in local schools under the guidance of an experienced teacher and mentor there. Residents complete graduate level coursework, attend seminars and take an increasing responsibility in the school while earning a salary. Upon completion of the course, residents gain an MA in Teaching and entry-level teaching license. More than 8 in 10 teachers in the program stay in Boston Public Schools after three years.

Although the Teaching Schools policy clearly expects them to become leaders of ITT, the discussion paper, *Training our Next Generation of Outstanding Teachers* (DfE, 2011) takes a significantly more moderate stance. Teaching Schools have significant potential in impacting effective ITT in the ways outlined above as provision moves towards practice based models such as SCITT and EBITT. Whilst these models have been assessed as some of the most effective providers of ITT, there is a need for more research into the methods and means by which they achieve these successes.

Implications for Teaching Schools

- Teaching Schools, in co-ordination with accredited ITT providers, need to develop selection strategies for trainees, aligned with national recruitment processes
- The contribution of Teaching Schools to designing programmes of ITT ought to be rigorous, based on evidence of outstanding practice and informed by action research.

Glossary of key terms

Teaching School – An outstanding school given a leading role in the training and continuing professional development of professionals in a Teaching Schools Alliance and provide school-to-school support to raise standards.

Teaching School Alliance – A group of schools and other institutions that work in partnership and are supported by the leadership of a Teaching School.

Specialist Leader in Education (SLEs) – Outstanding middle and senior leaders charged with improving the quality of school leadership in Teaching School Alliances through school-to-school support and peer-to-peer learning.

Networked Research Lesson Study – The practice of networks of teachers jointly planning a lesson or series of lessons, gathering data through peer observations, providing feedback and developing strategies for improving pupil outcomes.

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