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The views of five participating undergraduate students of the Student Associates Scheme in England

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Abstract

This paper reports findings from a study which explored undergraduate perceptions of the Student Association Scheme in England (SAS). The scheme was established by the Training and Development Agency for schools (TDA) in an attempt to increase the number of graduates entering the teaching profession, particularly in shortage subjects such as the physical sciences and mathematics. The scheme places undergraduate students on short-term placements in secondary schools throughout England to provide them with experiences that may encourage them to consider teaching as a career option. Findings show that the SAS school placements were a positive experience for the students participating in this study. However, a question emerged as to whether or not the scheme is targeting students who have yet to decide upon teaching as a career or just reinforcing the existing aspirations of students who have already decided to teach. As the scheme is attempting to increase the number of teachers entering the profession this question has important implications for this study and further work which will focus on undergraduates who think that their career ambitions would not be fulfilled by teaching.

The views of the Student Associates Scheme from five participating undergraduate students studying at one university in England.

Introduction

The government of England established the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) in 1994 at a time of falling recruitment to the teaching profession. Its responsibility was for recruitment and training of future teachers and to provide an effective response to a number of challenges facing the teaching profession at that time. These challenges were identified as the need for teachers to be:

- better regarded
- better qualified
- better trained through more effective Initial Teacher Training (ITT)
- better inducted into their role

In response to these challenges the TTA introduced a changed Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in 1996. This the one year professional teacher training course in England and Wales completed by the majority of secondary school teachers. It comprises a 36 week course, of which 24 are spent in schools. This means that schools have considerably more responsibility for training (something that has meant a diversion of Government funds, normally held centrally, into schools). In 1998 the TTA introduced a set of standards that all trainee teachers must meet to be awarded Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) (DfEE Circular 4/98). These standards have been revised (TDA, 2008) (see Appendix C). However, at the time of this study the researchers used the original standards of:

1. Knowledge and understanding
2. Planning
3. Teaching and Classroom Management
4. Monitoring, Assessment, Recording and Accountability
5. Other professional responsibilities

The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) is responsible for evaluating all of this activity and inspections happen regularly. However, recruitment and retention of suitably qualified teachers in key subjects has remained a critical issue in the UK over the last fifteen years or more (Education & Skills Committee, 2004). Therefore in 1996 the Training and Development Agency for schools (TDA – formerly the TTA) in England issued a tender for the development and delivery of a scheme, known as the Student Associates Scheme (SAS),

which aims to contribute to the recruitment of 'able and committed students to ITT and raise the levels of attainment and aspirations of young people in schools in England (TDA, 2006).

The teacher recruitment crisis (Roberts, 2002; Education & Skills Committee, 2004) in England has resulted in the introduction of a number of initiatives aimed at addressing the problem, of which SAS is one of the most recent. The scheme's strategic aim is to increase the number and quality of recruits into teaching, particularly in shortage areas such as physics, chemistry, mathematics and modern languages. All Student Associates are trained prior to a 15-day placement and follow a programme closely aligned to the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). While in school each undergraduate student is guided by a mentor and has to complete a Core Programme of 12 activities (see Appendix A) that introduces them to the life and role of a teacher in school. They are also encouraged to negotiate other activity with their mentor to develop other interests and/or particular skills. The undergraduates targeted for this scheme represent the shortage areas for teaching but there are places also available for other subjects and the placements can take place in either primary or secondary school. Participating in the project for 2006-7 are around 8000 students across England. At the university used in this study the number of participating students for this same time period was 50.

The primary research question of this study is to determine whether or not the views about, and motivations towards teaching, of the students participating in the study are changed in any way as a result of the placement. The participants themselves are a self-selected group who responded to a call for volunteers from the full cohort of 50 on the scheme. The undergraduates in this sample were all generally positive about pursuing a teaching career. However, the financial and time perimeters of the reported study did not allow the inclusion of interviews with mentors and other students who chose not to opt for a teaching career after completion of their placement. Future work will include these participants and those who have yet to decide to train as teachers and are only considering the possibility.

Relevant contexts

In his examination of the teacher training system in England, Sir Stewart Sutherland (1997), writing in the Dearing Report on Higher Education, called for an assessment of the effectiveness of the current arrangements for recruitment in priority subject areas. He also suggested that further work should be undertaken to establish more accurately the reasons for, and responses to, wastage. This was prompted by long-standing concerns over teacher numbers. For example, Grace (1991) described the concerns of the Select Committee for

Education in 1991, which included the difficulty in filling posts in mathematics, physics, design and technology and modern languages and also religious education, business studies and early years education.

A number of researchers have explored the issue of retention centring on, in particular, students who withdrew either before registering or within 3 weeks of starting their ITT courses (Baumfield and Taverner, 1997; Chambers and Roper, 2000). The main reasons for withdrawing appeared to be financial – students already having a large debt from undergraduate study. However, it must be noted here that since the introduction of training bursaries and financial incentives for shortage subjects this may be not be significant. A negative image of the teaching profession was also highlighted as a significant factor (students' perceptions of the profession as having a low standing in society, poor remuneration and low morale).

A wide range of studies have been conducted globally over the last 20 years which have focused on the motivation of those who are considering teaching as a career (e.g. Brown, 1992; Chuene, *et al*, 1999; Kyriacou and Kobori, 1998; Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000). Such work has indicated that there are three main categories of reasons why students opt for teaching as a career:

1. Altruistic reasons: these deal with seeing teaching as a socially worthwhile and important job, a desire to help children succeed and a desire to help society improve
2. Intrinsic reasons: these cover aspects of the job activity itself, such as the activity of teaching children and an interest in using their subject knowledge and expertise
3. Extrinsic reasons: these cover aspects of the job which are not inherent in the work itself, such as perceived high earnings and/or long holidays

Lortie's theory (1975) was that the teaching profession may attract individuals who consider the job to be 'right for people like me' and who want to work with children and make a contribution to society. A competing theory involves a market-response model which states that individuals make occupational choices based on demand and the levels of compensation (Ochsner and Solman, 1979). It predicts that students select an occupation which has high demand and will enable them to maximise earnings (i.e. extrinsic reason). It is worth noting that one of the reforms aimed at attracting more capable students to teaching has been to increase starting salaries. Ginzberg (1988) provided an alternative suggestion regarding career choice by describing occupational choice as a process where choice moves from 'fantasy' (from early childhood to age 11), to 'tentative' (between the ages of 11 and 17), to

'realistic' (between 17 and young adulthood). During this last part of the process individuals begin to look for ways they can utilise their talents and interest in a manner that will satisfy as many goals and values as possible.

Findings from studies of an individual's motivation for choosing teaching as a career are of particular interest given the recruitment crisis. A large number of these existing studies are based on the views of student teachers — people who have already made the decision to teach (Brown, 1992; Chuene, et al 1999; Johnston et al, 1999; Kyriacou & Benmansour, 1999; Kyriacou & Kobori, 1998; Reid & Caudwell, 1997). Consequently their image and perception of teaching could be very different from their peers who have not made that decision to teach. This implies that the view student teachers have of what they want from a career and their views on teaching as a career are probably very different from those who choose not to enter teaching.

Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) argue that it is the extent of the match between what an individual requires from a career and the extent to which a particular career can offer which will have a crucial influence on an individual's decision-making. The view of what is wanted from a career and what teaching is thought to offer will vary from person to person and if highly-qualified graduates are to be encouraged to consider teaching as a career it is important to identify the factors that are important during the decision-making process if we are to influence them. Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) also report that the image of teaching as a career held by both undergraduates and school students is largely based on opinion poll surveys (Yong, 1995; Young, 1995; Richardson, *et al*, 2006; Rots, *et al*, 2007). However, studies using this approach do not seek to make comparisons with the views of those who wish to become teachers and those that do not.

It should be noted that Kyriacou and Coulthard's study was carried out in one university so any generalisations to the wider population must be viewed with some caution. However, the findings do indicate that the undergraduates who were seriously considering a career in teaching tended to have a much closer match between the factors that were important to them in their choice of career and the factors that they think teaching as a career can offer, compared to other students. This implies that there are implications for teacher recruitment campaigns. They need to focus attention on the issues that undecided students consider important in their career decision-making and show how teaching can address these. Few studies have been reported which have sought to directly investigate if pre-training experience can affect the views of those who do, are undecided or do not wish to become teachers.

A number of existing studies have reported on the 'appeal' of teaching. This work has focused on practising teachers reflecting on their decision to become teachers, the appeal of teaching to undergraduates or the motivation of trainee teachers (Lortie, 1975; Young, 1995; Heafford and Jennison, 1998). Lortie's (1975) classic study of American schoolteachers found that the appeal of teaching was its interpersonal nature, the sense of service that it carried and the fact that it allowed teachers to continue their involvement with a subject they themselves studied and enjoyed. Concern was shown by Young (1995) that those who decided to teach might have a 'distorted view' of what teaching involved intimating that they might leave the job if/when that view changed. Young found that pre-service teachers in California had chosen to teach for altruistic reasons with fairly realistic views about working conditions. However, although many planned to remain in teaching this was only guaranteed if the expected satisfaction of working with children emerged.

Heafford and Jennison (1998) studied a cohort of teachers who had completed teacher training 16 years prior to participating in the study and found that almost half were still teaching with the remainder continuing in the field of education, although not teaching. These teachers revealed job satisfaction associated with forming positive relationships with young people together with a continued involvement with their subject as key factors for choosing teaching as a career.

Spear *et al* (2000) summarised the attraction of teaching to undergraduates as; providing high job satisfaction, a sense of providing a service to society, imparting subject knowledge and application of their degree subject and, working with young people. Prospective teachers were most influenced by a desire to work with children while placing a value on job satisfaction, career opportunities, sharing knowledge of their subject and improving children's life opportunities**.** Material rewards from the job were identified as less important. Practising teachers reflecting on their decision to teach wanted to work with children, had an academic interest in their specialism, and had a desire to guide and shape school students' learning. Howevr, they did perceive the relatively low salary as the greatest drawback to teaching.

Hammond (2002) placed a significant emphasis on previous teaching or 'teaching-like' activities on the motivation to teach which differs from many of the other studies. All of the trainees in Hammond's study groups pointed out activities from the past which they had enjoyed and had given them the confidence to embark on training. In most cases these experiences were important factors in the decision to teach. By experiencing 'teaching-like' activities the group found that they could 'rehearse and enjoy the role of the teacher' in a safe setting" (p 145). This led them to reflect further on the attractions of teaching a subject in

which they had a strong interest together with their suitability for teaching. Figure I shows a graphical representation of Hammond's process of reaching the decision to teach:

Figure I Reaching the Decision to Teach

(*after*, Hammond, 2002)
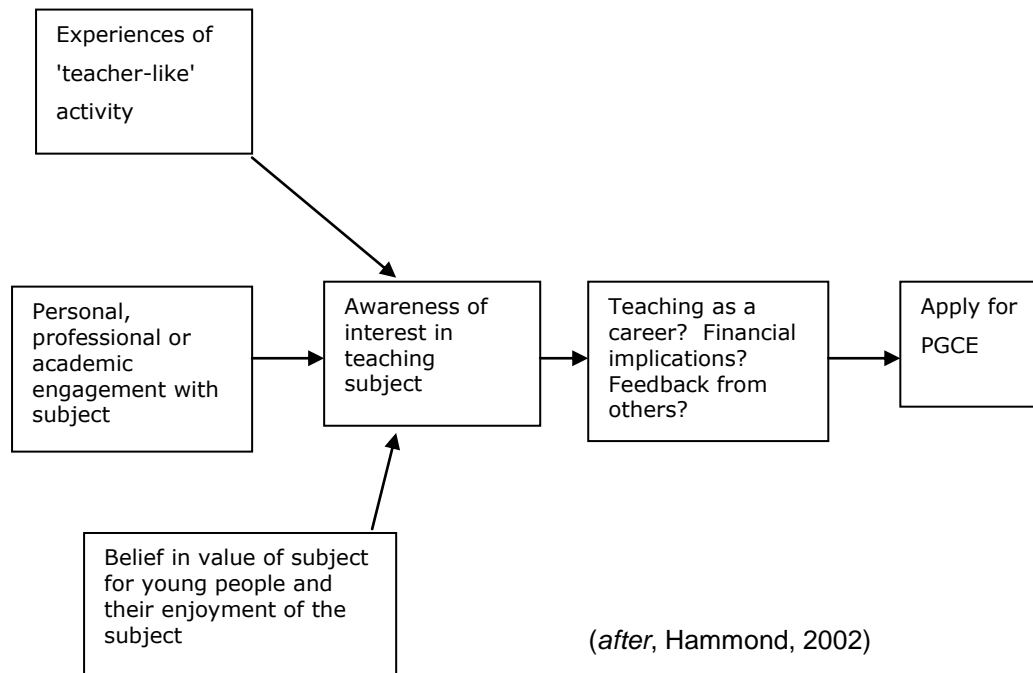
Research evidence has identified that teaching practice is very significant during training and it is at this point where some people realise that they are unsuited to teaching (Baumfield & Taverner, 1997). One of the requirements for acceptance on to ITT in the UK is experience of working with children and young people. Existing research suggests that potential trainees would benefit from experience of working in the classroom. Several authors have suggested that providing young people with the opportunity to visit or work in schools could have a positive impact on recruitment. For example:

- Campbell (1988) offered graduates who were considering teaching science or mathematics a three day course at a local comprehensive school. On completion all participating students felt that they had gained a realistic insight into schools and issues around being a teacher. Fifty per cent went on to train as teachers.
- A second UK study (Stewart, 1990) focused on six science undergraduates who were placed in a school for one afternoon a week in school for a complete term (6 weeks). They all felt that they had benefited and three out of the six went on to train as teachers.

- The Teacher Apprenticeship Programme (TAP) in Canada (Adams, *et al*, 1996) was aimed at candidates who had already applied for teacher training but had been rejected because they lacked experience with children. Each trainee worked under the guidance of a mentor (a teacher from the school) in a school over a seven month period. All participants were accepted onto teacher training courses the following year and their ITT tutors stated that, compared with many of the others on the course, these students demonstrated a greater depth of knowledge and understanding of teaching. This programme was successful in that it provided a means for recruiting from candidates who might otherwise have been excluded from the teaching profession. However, these candidates had already decided to enter teaching as a career and the programme offered them the means to do that. This is to say that it met the needs of the trainees rather than aiming to specifically increase the supply of teachers. However, it does suggest an approach that might encourage retention on ITT courses as it provides potential teachers with a realistic view of teaching as a career. Consequently they are less likely to withdraw from their training courses.

The reported literature suggests that initiatives which provide classroom experiences prior to training have the potential to help people who are already considering a career in teaching. Whether or not such opportunities would encourage young people who are as yet undecided about their future career to consider teaching leads to some interesting questions. How do we identify those who are potentially, but not yet overtly, interested in a career in teaching? Would classroom experience offered at an appropriate time increase the proportion of these people actively considering teaching as a career?

Methods

It should be noted that this study took place during the academic year 2006-7 with the participants' school placements taking place at various times throughout that year. A qualitative approach to the study was decided upon as the researchers intended to illuminate the experiences of the participating students. Five students were identified (representing 10% of that year's cohort) by self-selection following a general call for participation to the whole cohort. It was not considered significant to purposely sample. Four female students and one male student agreed to participate in the reported study and represented a range of backgrounds, age and subject specialisms including the school shortage subject areas of science (x2), mathematics and food technology plus one Special Educational Needs (SEN) specialist. Two were of minority ethnic status. In the same way that the students were self selecting the placement schools were also identified on a voluntary basis as a result of a mail

out to local secondary schools. The host schools of the five participating students in this study included two 11-16 urban comprehensive schools, one large (2000 pupils) semi-rural 11-18 comprehensive school and one 11-18 selective rural school.

In an attempt to generate issues, to be further explored through individual semi-structured interviews, a group session was conducted to allow students the opportunity to share their experiences from their SAS placements. The approach used was that of Nominal Group Technique (NGT) (ATLAS, 1994). This approach is a useful way of establishing a consensus and is an effective way of prioritising issues. The students were asked to think about their placements and then answer the following question: 'Which five actions, activities and/or influences had the most impact on you during your placement?' They each wrote down their five actions, activities and/or influences (without any discussion). As a group then they shared their individual thoughts and after some discussion a new and agreed list of five actions, activities and/or influences was compiled. After that was done each student was asked to score each of the defined actions, activities and/or influences in terms of priority with 5 marks being awarded to the highest priority and 1 mark to the lowest. The result is a consensus answer to the original question (see Appendix B). The action, activity and/or influence that scored the highest mark and the one with the lowest was then discussed by the whole group with the students drawing on their own experiences to elaborate their comments.
Each student was then individually interviewed in turn in a different room. During this time the remaining three actions, activities and/or influences from the list were discussed in a similar way by the students left in the group.

A general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006) was used to analyse data with an underlying assumption that the development of categories from the raw data would capture key emergent themes judged to be important by the researchers and then validated by the participating students.

Individual students were interviewed through a semi-structured format and engaged in reflective discussions with two of the researchers. The third researcher, who is directly involved in the delivery of the scheme, did not engage in interviews or reflective discussions to avoid potential issues regarding the balance of control and power. Interviews and reflective discussions were recorded and transcribed to aid analysis. Systematic coding (line by line and focused) enabled researchers to develop analytic categories which illustrate the students' perceptions as well as what structures and cultural values influenced them. The Nvivo qualitative data analysis program was used to aid analysis. Nvivo does not remove the need for the researcher to think about the analysis it merely offers a way of organising qualitative

data. Codes can be produced either line by line or focused and can be saved within the database as 'nodes' which can then be reanalysed, deleted or reorganised. This allows for constant comparison of data sets.

Findings

Five key themes emerged from the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) as shown in Table I (see Appendix B for examples of individual students' lists). It was agreed by the participating students, during group discussion, that these five themes represented the actions, activities and/or influences which they perceived as the most important during their SAS placement:

Table I Emerging Themes from the NGT

Issue	Score	Ranking
"Buzz" of teaching and children's responses	14	1st
Teaching/helping to teach	12	2nd
Teachers – helpful & supportive	10	3rd
Teaching styles & activities	6	4th
SAS in general	3	5th

Emerging theme 1 - *Buzz of teaching and children's responses*

The students ranked the 'buzz' of teaching and children's responses highest of the five emerging themes. The students defined 'buzz' as an intrinsic satisfaction gained from successful practice, which in turn, is defined by school student responses to practice:

> *It's that feeling you get when you know something has gone*
> *right. I actually got children asking me to stay and become*
> *a teacher in the school. For me that was the buzz (Science student)*

Further exploration of the theme, during group discussion and interviews, revealed a perception of good teaching in the classroom which is immediately endorsed through positive responses from school students. This resonates with the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1997) whose concept of 'flow' examines the intrinsic motivation and satisfaction achieved by

individuals when completely immersed in an activity. The SAS students felt that being able to engage in, what they termed as 'real teaching' (classroom delivery of a topic and associated activity as opposed to simple observation of a practising teacher enabled them to become completely involved in the SAS experience. While, for some, this was an unnerving experience to begin with they found that positive responses from school students, through interactions, offset their fears and enabled them to become completely focused on their delivery and achieve a 'buzz':

> *..and it's all about the kids, if you're not going to get the buzz from*
> *teaching them, and feel happy about teaching them you're not going*
> *to teach them well. It will be really boring (Mathematics student)*

This is consistent with existing studies and demonstrates that these students place greater value on both altruistic and intrinsic reasons for considering teaching as a career (Brown, 1992; Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000; Heafford and Jennison, 1998).

Emerging theme 2 - *Teaching and helping to teach*

This theme was ranked by the students as second highest in importance and is closely linked to the 'buzz' theme. The participating students suggested that having the opportunity to teach and support teaching rather than simply observing classroom lessons gave them a better understanding of classroom dynamics:

> *I think to know whether you wanted to be a teacher or not you really*
> *need to know about things so that's why I wanted to go in and get into*
> *a routine. I wouldn't have got much out of it if I'd just gone in for one*
> *day a week for fifteen weeks (food technology student)*

The students indicated that because the placement was a three-week block they had time to become settled in the 'flow' of classroom teaching as well as gain valuable insight into the administrative and pastoral tasks that teachers engage in. It is apparent that the intensity of the three-week block placement enabled the SAS students to gain ownership of their role which in turn allowed them to settle more quickly and benefit fully from the experience.

During the discussion regarding teaching the undergraduates mentioned the interactions between themselves and school students suggesting that had they not been engaged in teaching/teaching support activity then responses from school students may have been different:

> *…once I'd settled in and built relationships with the children and knew the ways they learnt best, it really helped me to be able to plan lessons and do it in a way were going to enjoy…one of the things I enjoyed most was the whole planning and delivering of lessons…I think they [children] responded better cause I was teaching and doing stuff and not just observing (Science student)*

This particularly resonates with the work of Heafford and Jennison (1998) who highlighted the desire to work with and form positive relationships with young people as a cornerstone of existing teachers' decision to teach.

Emerging theme 3 - *Teachers: helpful and supportive*

All of the students stated that their teacher-mentors were extremely helpful and supportive. Moreover, all of the teachers they interacted with within their respective departments demonstrated complete professionalism and dedication:

> *…the majority of the maths teachers were in their 20s…and I thought they were going to be a good laugh but not care too much about their job but it was the complete opposite. They were a brilliant, brilliant team. All of the maths teachers stay in the maths staff room and I think that helps them and when you need resources or are not teaching you go in there, so you're always seeing the team, its really good (Mathematics student)*

The above anecdotal evidence is typical of the experience of all of the SAS students. It appears that while each student was given a dedicated mentor other teachers from the department also showed interest and provided support for the SAS students. Also, that the departments involved had a definite 'team' approach to teaching. Given that teaching in the UK has traditionally been viewed as a lone occupation where an individual largely operates singularly (Bevins, and Winslow, 2002) this is a refreshing concept. Moreover, that teachers can offer the depth of support for SAS students, as demonstrated by the teachers involved in this current study, is an encouraging finding. With increasingly heavy work loads and

significant time constraints setting aside time to mentor SAS students can hardly rank highly within their daily planning.

Emerging theme 4 - *Teaching styles and activities*

Core Goal 7 of the SAS scheme states that students should gain understanding of the preparation and use of effective teaching resources and activities. All of the students suggested that they achieved this goal through observing teachers and delivering lessons:

> *Everyone says maths is boring but we did this one lesson, and I taught it, on speed, distance and time, which is not much fun really. All we wanted them to get was to calculate— speed = distance/time. The teacher helped me out and then said to the class 'right, we're going to chant'. And by just chanting 'speed equals distance' in a song worked. The next lesson everyone could tell me what speed was (Mathematics student)*

This exemplar appears to be indicative of the types of classroom techniques and approaches employed by many of the teacher-mentors and colleagues from the schools involved in the scheme. Throughout the focus group discussion and subsequent interviews the students they referred to the creative practice they were witness to during placements and that it would have a profound influence on their decision-making about teaching as a career:

> *The teachers are, in fact, very good…the Special Educational Needs teacher is a young lady and I was thinking 'you're doing a very good job'. I've learned a great deal from her, the way she handles students, speaks to them and makes it very interesting through her approaches (SEN specialism student)*

This issue supports Hammond's (2002) finding that experience of teaching and/or teaching-like activities is a strong motivator for prospective teachers.

Emerging theme 5 - *SAS in general*

This theme highlighted the students' general views of the SAS scheme. While the students ranked the theme 'SAS in general' as the least important they were keen to emphasise that this did not mean the scheme was insignificant. To the contrary, the students were enthusiastic about the scheme overall and suggested that the structure, content and provision of the scheme had enabled them to gain valuable knowledge and understanding of what it is

to be a secondary school teacher. All were positive that their experiences were comprehensive enough for them to think realistically about becoming teachers:

> *It sounds like we're dismissing the scheme really but that's not it…the thing is the scheme is everything, from the induction sessions and materials, to actually being in school. Its all been brilliant and I'm glad I did it…it has definitely given me a good insight to decide on my career (Science student)*

A number of existing studies report similar findings to this theme (Adams, et al, 1996; Campbell, 1988; Stewart, 1990) with all suggesting that experience of teaching, support for teaching and access to the school environment were beneficial to the participating students with significant numbers going on to choose teaching as a career.

Conclusions

For the SAS students, going back into school had an interesting affect. It is clear from their responses that many of their own school experiences were brought to mind but, interestingly, they now place them into the context of being a teacher and not a school student. They remembered 'good' teachers and motivating lessons and wanted to be teachers who would teach like that themselves. They appreciated the dedication of many teachers and this encouraged them even more to take up teaching as a career. They experienced, first hand, the satisfaction of teaching a successful lesson and wanted to do more. They also gained understanding of the heavy work loads that teachers manage and realised that this was most likely the case with their own teachers. Again this did not deter them. In fact, in some cases they were even more determined to teach perceiving the satisfaction of teaching as outweighing any less positive aspects of the job.

Findings from this current study resonate with previous theories regarding why students opt for a career in teaching (Brown, 1992; Chuene, et al, 1999; Kyriacou and Kobori, 1998; Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000). Altruistic reasons are demonstrated through the students' desire to help school students to succeed and through their perceptions of teaching as a worthwhile job. Similarly, intrinsic reasons are highlighted through, in particular, the emergent theme 'buzz'. The five students identify the activity of teaching school students as having high levels of intrinsic value through classroom interaction and forming effective relationships with both school students and teaching colleagues. Job satisfaction is cited as being an important aspect of teaching echoing the findings of Heafford and Jennison (1998) and Spear, *et al* (2000). This becomes an important recruitment tool when assessing students' career aspirations. Also important, and in keeping with Hammond (2002) was the emphasis placed on the importance of any 'teaching-like' experience as a motivation to teach. The SAS experience, for most students, seems to have given additional confidence to consider ITT. When compared with how they felt as learners this role reversal plus the enjoyment and

satisfaction it brought has had a noticeable effect even on those who were already sure they wanted to teach.

While these findings resonate with a number of existing studies they compete with theories which espouse a 'market-response' model to career decision-making (Lortie, 1975). None of the SAS students stated that they are considering teaching due to a gap in the employment market or levels of pay. However, this suggests that these SAS students had already made the decision to enter teaching as a career and utilised the SAS experience as a tool for confirmation. Indeed, of the five participating students, three were certainly committed with the remaining two admitting to be seriously considering teaching as a career.

A study from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2005) reported that globally large numbers of new teachers leave the profession within the first few years. Attrition and turnover rates are often particularly high in schools serving disadvantaged communities. High teacher attrition has costs for both the individuals and the schools involved. Given current teacher shortages in some systems, and concerns about retaining valuable skills in schools, reducing teacher attrition has become an important policy issue. Even where new teachers do not leave the profession, a difficult start to their career may so reduce their confidence that their long-term effectiveness suffers, and pupils and schools do not benefit from the new ideas and enthusiasm they could bring. Teacher attrition rates tend to be higher in the first few years of teaching and some of those who leave teaching will eventually return to the job. However, high attrition rates suggest that large costs have been incurred in preparing people for the profession which they found did not meet their expectations, was insufficiently rewarding, or which they found difficult, or some combination of all three factors. Since beginning teachers tend to leave the profession at a higher rate, this can mean that schools lose many teachers before they gain the experience necessary to become effective (OECD, 2005). It has to be worth considering if there is potential in offering pre-training

undergraduates the opportunity to experience the role of a teacher in a scheme such as SAS to address some of these issues and maybe result in fewer unsure new teachers being trained only to leave the profession within a few years of qualifying.

Whilst the findings have shown that the SAS school placements have been broadly positive experiences for all participants an issue must be considered regarding target audiences (potential SAS students) and the possible overall impact the scheme can have on teacher recruitment and retention. The issue is concerned with the recruitment of the SAS candidates in relation to their own perception of teaching as future career. All students volunteering for the scheme in this study had already articulated a strong interest in teaching as a future occupation. Therefore, a question must be asked regarding the scheme's potential for introducing students to teaching who may not have previously considered it as a career option. Is the scheme is actually targeting the 'right people' or is it simply reinforcing the existing teaching career aspirations of participants? It is clear that targeting just those who already want to teach will inevitably get positive results. However, to fully understand the potential impact and importance of the SAS with regards to increasing teacher recruitment significantly, recruitment of future SAS students should include those that are clearly undecided in pursuing a career in teaching.

The next step is to take the work of Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) focused on undergraduates' career aspirations and offer the SAS experience to those who think that their career ambitions would not be fulfilled by teaching. As Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) demonstrated, those undergraduates who were thinking about teaching showed a much closer match between what they wanted from a career and what they thought teaching could offer. Would showing 'undecided' students that there could be a match make a difference in their attitude towards teaching? The aim of this trial will be to establish a clear understanding of the scheme as either an effective approach to tackling the falling levels of students applying for

ITT, or as primarily useful for reaffirming the preconceptions of students who are strongly

considering teaching as a career, or both.

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Appendix A

Core Programme for Student Associates

1. Professional behaviour
2. How to relate to young people
3. Contributing to teaching and learning
4. Young people's learning
5. Behaviour
6. Lesson planning
7. Teaching resources
8. National Curriculum
9. Promoting your own subject
10. Who is in the class?
11. Equal opportunities
12. Reflection

This is now a programme of 14 activities and can be found at: www.tda.gov.uk

Appendix B

Examples of students' individual NGT answers:

Student A
1. All the teachers constantly giving information and being friendly
2. Working in a subject class
3. Working on a one-to-one basis
4. Shadowing a pupil with behavioural difficulties
5. Being treated as an equal by teachers.

Student B
1. Methods of teaching
2. School environment – how close everyone was
3. Carrying out my own activities
4. Working with children who needed support
5. Using ICT in the classroom

Student C
1. Actually teaching a series of lessons myself
2. Shadowing a class for a day
3. Seeing a group of children turn from poor behaviour to sitting and doing work
4. The children asking me to stay!
5. Teachers were helpful and supportive

Appendix C

Professional Standards for Qualified Teacher Status (revised 2008)

1.. Professional attributes:
  - Relationships with children and young people
  - Frameworks
  - Communicating and working with others
  - Personal professional development

2. Professional knowledge and understanding:
  - Teaching and learning
  - Assessment and monitoring
  - Subjects and curriculum
  - Literacy, numeracy and ICT
  - Achievement and diversity
  - Health and well-being

3. Professional skills:
  - Planning
  - Teaching
  - Assessing. Monitoring and giving feedback
  - Reviewing teaching and learning
  - Learning environment
  - Team working and collaboration.