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The issues of teacher supply, recruitment, retention and attrition as well as increasing global demand and mobility of teachers has potentially never been as significant as they appear to be at this time. The current situation is delicately balanced and the evident trends a source of concern both for the UK domestically and for British schools overseas who predominantly rely on the UK for their supply of teachers (COBIS, ISC 2020). The combined effects of years of weak recruitment with targets repeatedly missed are further compounded by high attrition rates (Education Policy Institute 2021). The exponential growth of British international schools (ISC Research 2020) shows no sign of abating any time soon and brings with it an increasing demand and opportunities for British qualified teachers to work overseas at a time when supply is shrinking domestically.

There are two potential 'solutions' which may disrupt the current trends and trajectory. Firstly, the UK government may find a way to improve teacher recruitment and retention in the UK. This is however likely to require more innovative solutions and significant policy and practice changes than are currently in situ or proposed. Secondly, international schools could either decide to, or through the pressure of market forces, be made to rethink their approach to recruitment. This will require diversification away from a predominantly, UK focused model, to hiring more local teachers and teachers from outside the traditional native-English speaking nations. There are many reasons why this, in itself, might be a good idea, bringing with it a number of potential benefits. Yet, there is currently little evidence of schools and school leader's thinking moving in this direction. The introduction of international qualified teacher status (iOTS), if the UK government gets this right, could be a nudge in this direction. iQTS has the potential to achieve a significant and positive impact for the UK and British schools overseas in relation to teacher supply, retention and recruitment. There are however significant barriers that may make the DfE's stated aims challenging to achieve.

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As iQTS emerges from its current 'pilot phase' in 2022 to be fully formed and ready to be implemented in 2023, it is necessary to understand, address and overcome these challenges if it is to be a success and have the impact it is potentially capable of. The introduction of iQTS is a golden opportunity that could have a real and substantial impact on some of the current teacher supply challenges. It also has the ability to widen access to high quality initial teacher training around the world and to bring a much-needed diversity boost to the staff rooms of international schools.

WHAT IS iQTS AND WHY?

In February 2021 the Department for Education (DfE) launched a public consultation which introduced proposed plans for the introduction of a new international teaching qualification called International Qualified Teacher Status (iQTS). The iQTS proposal was part of the UK Government's *International Education Strategy* (update 2021DfE & DIT) which set out the aim of '*exporting UK excellence in teacher training*' recognising that '*global demand for high-quality education has created unprecedented demand for qualified and capable teachers.*' (DfE 2021 p32). In August 2021, the government published the response to the consultation announcing the launch of iQTS with a pilot to take place in 2022.

AIMS AND ASPIRATIONS:

The new iQTS is set to offer a new UK government backed and DfE recognised international teaching qualification equivalent to English qualified teacher status (QTS). The UK government sets out the following aims for iQTS (DfE 2021):

- provide opportunities for accredited English ITT providers to expand into the growing international teacher training market
- make high quality training accessible around the world, allow trainees to benefit from evidence-based ITT and allow schools to develop local talent
- *increase the global pool of quality teachers and support global mobility within the teaching profession*

OPPORTUNITIES AND INFLUENCE

Unpicking the aims outlined by the DfE; expanding into the international teacher training market certainly offers a number of potential financial benefits as well as further increasing British influence and 'soft power' internationally. Firstly, iQTS will almost certainly provide enhanced, almost 'ready-made' opportunities for English ITT providers. A number of English universities and ITT providers are

already well-established in a number of international markets offering international versions of their ITT programmes and courses such as the iPGCE which does not, in its current form, provide a direct route to English QTS. As such, there is no shortage of options to complete ITT qualifications at present, but these do not come with much converted QTS. It is however currently possible to obtain QTS outside the UK but there are a number of fairly substantial hurdles to navigate to do this. The most common way to achieve QTS outside of the UK is through the Assessment Only (AO) route which has strict qualifying criteria, is expensive and is only available in a relatively small number of (BSO) British Schools Overseas Inspected and DfE accredited schools. These are almost exclusively the premium schools, the majority of which only employ teachers with QTS already. Therefore, while it is currently possible to achieve QTS overseas the barriers to doing so are high. It is therefore currently more limited and complex than the introduction of iQTS would potentially create. Therefore, the iQTS model extends and potentially democratizes accessibility to ITT with (i)QTS outside of the UK.

The situation as currently exists, leads to a 'two-tier system' of qualifications between PGCEs with QTS and iPGCEs without QTS. In many countries QTS is a requirement and those without it cannot be employed due to local regulations. If the outcome of the iQTS pilot simply leads to qualifying a teacher to work only in international schools, it may risk not achieving its objective. It is hard to differentiate the purpose and value of iQTS from what is currently available in the form of iPGCE. If iQTS is not accepted by governments around the world that make the decisions on teacher licensing and visas required for employment it may be of no additional value. Much is likely to depend on whether iQTS has genuine equivalency and the portability to allow teachers to work in the UK. If not, it may have little additional merit or attraction for schools and would be teachers. If it does not have this level of 'equivalency' the UK government may find it impossible to convince other governments around the world of its validity. There are many countries like the UAE and Hong Kong for example where there are strong regulatory regimes in place around teacher licensing and qualifications. This could therefore justifiably be perceived as amounting to little more than tagging on the letters iQTS to an iPGCE which would not, for example, allow a teacher to work in Hong Kong under current licencing arrangements.

The option of creating genuine equivalency for iQTS to QTS would mean allowing a teacher holding it to potentially work in the UK on the same basis as a teacher in the UK with QTS. Although there was a recognition of the importance of this from the DfE, the response was unclear at this stage. The wording does however seem to indicate that additional processes for recognising 'overseas teaching qualifications' (DfE 2021) will be required. Reading between the lines it seems fair to conclude that iQTS will not automatically be accepted as equivalent

to QTS and that the normal processes for assessing qualifications will be used. The best-case scenario therefore seems to be that there is a clear and easy process put in place that makes this easy and straightforward for those with iQTS that want or need QTS to work in the UK or in countries that require it. Without at least this in place it is difficult to see anything meaningful or substantial difference about iQTS and the current range of iPGCE courses currently available. Getting this right is likely to be the key to the success of iQTS.

Genuine and meaningful equivalency would provide both the validity and portability needed to convince both overseas governments, international school leaders and prospective teachers, fuel demand and get iQTS taken seriously. What may make this potentially challenging is the limited flexibility that may exist if there is a need to tightly match iQTS to the structure and nature of QTS for England. For iQTS to work it is likely to need both flexibility in terms of delivery as well as structure and content to meet the needs of the local context. For the qualification to work and to be of genuine value it seems inevitable that it must take account of the local context in which the teachers are training and working. This may be challenging to achieve. Yet, it may be the crucial factor in its success.

COULD iQTS HELP THE UK IN TERMS OF TEACHER SUPPLY?

UK schools have increasingly turned to the recruitment of overseas teachers (Miller 2018). There has been a significant increase in the number of overseas trained teachers since 2014 as the falling recruitment figures and rising attrition rates began to see schools struggle to recruit. As Miller suggests 'the wave of teacher migration and recruitment to England which started in 2014 will intensify as England once more struggles to staff classrooms' (Miller P 2018 p4). This view perhaps leads us to envisage a highly mobile global, English qualified teaching profession with British teachers moving overseas and overseas qualified teachers with iQTS working in UK schools. This is not without significant challenges, but it is potentially a feasible outcome of developing a genuinely globally accessible and equivalent iQTS/QTS pathway.

There are however some major signs that this may prove to be unworkable. The required mechanisms for quality assurance already make this a challenging prospect. Given the diversity of provision that may be required to make iQTS locally relevant and the varying quality of British international schools it is not hard to see several major obstacles to achieving such an outcome. This is significantly compounded by the intended changes the UK government is poised to make to ITT in the UK (Weale 2021). While the UK government trumpets its *'high quality training'* and *'evidenced-based ITT'* (DFE & DIT 2021) and has developed plans to export it around the world it has almost simultaneously set out

the need for a radical reform of its own ITT provision in the wake of the ITT Market Review (DfE 2021). These mixed messages are at best likely to seen by others around the world as confusing and at worst hypocritical. This is likely to jar and confuse governments, school leaders and potential teachers around the world creating a stumbling block to the success of iQTS.

MIXED MESSAGES

The recent moves to overhaul ITT in the UK have been described as a 'wrecking ball' which 'could jeopardise the supply of teachers for years to come' (Weale S 2021). The government said that it would lead to a 'significant market reconfiguration' and that 'the development of new capacity will be needed'. (quoted in Weale 2021). Lord Jim Knight suggested that 'If changes prove, as feared, unviable for teacher education providers, many will have no choice but to withdraw from the market. Our early intel shows that as many as 10,000 teacher education places may go as a result.' More recent responses from leading ITT universities including Cambridge, Oxford and UCL have all indicated that they are prepared to withdraw provision if plans continue unchanged. Professor Susan Robinson, Head of Cambridge University's education faculty said the government's proposals would make it impossible for the university to continue its postgraduate teacher training 'if these reforms were implemented, we would find that delivering high-quality education would be deeply compromised.' (quoted in Weale 2021). The issue centres around the need for UK providers to be reaccredited and to tightly follow a standardized format. The planned measures, increasing and tightening the quality assurance mechanisms and the standardization of content and assessment criteria does indicate that any chance of real equivalency with ITT in England and QTS and iOTS looks remote. These are significant and radical changes and in taking this course of action the UK has created significant tension between its stated intentions to reform ITT domestically and to develop iQTS internationally.

This analysis suggests that iQTS, although an interesting and potentially very useful idea may be much more challenging to meaningfully execute practically. Domestic changes and uncertainty mean that it is perhaps more difficult than over to create an equivalent (but different) qualification internationally. The increased quality assurance mechanisms suggested means that attempts to develop similar quality assurance mechanisms overseas would be extremely challenging. Additionally, the highly prescriptive content and approach required for ITT in England certainly would be difficult to replicate internationally and would likely lack validity, robbing providers of the ability and flexibility to contextualise courses to ensure they are able to meaningfully reflect the local context.

That said, iQTS could potentially, if positioned correctly and communicated well by the UK government, be accepted as a high quality and desirable teaching qualification around the world. If through the International Education Strategy and the Department for Internal Trade the UK government can sell the virtues and benefits of English style ITT and iQTS with countries around the world and international school leaders are prepared to employ teachers with it, it may gain traction. This could help to alleviate the challenges of UK teachers moving to work overseas and the increasing needs resulting from the growth of the international schools market. The option to 'grow your own' teachers may be one that is appealing to many British international schools. Having access to a qualification which is well-recognised and respected may prove to be the key to unlocking this potential.

IS THE RECRUITMENT OF LOCAL TEACHERS AND THE POTENTIAL OF 'GROWING YOUR OWN' A REALISTIC OPTION?

There are some significant and foreseeable challenges to achieving this. Firstly, weaning British international schools away from their dependency on recruiting British and Western trained expatriates is likely to be difficult. The evidence from current recruitment data as well as the way British international schools market themselves and communicate strongly suggests this is seen as an important factor. The research on '*why parents select an international school*' (ISC 2021) suggests this is a significant factor with 92% agreeing that teacher nationality was an important factor in parents' decisions concluding that '*teachers of certain nationalities and /or native English speakers are often favoured by parents*' (ISC 2021 p6). There are almost certainly a number of factors behind this. One aspect of this and indeed a clear factor in the success of British international schools is the perceived importance and opportunities that come from an English-medium education and the access this provides to higher education and employment opportunities in the future.

For many parents English is seen as a 'passport to a global world' (Dearden J 2014 p2). The research suggests that English language learning will be a major priority for families (ISC 2021 p3). There is an intuitive connection here that implies that native English speakers are perceived as a better source of an English-medium education than those for whom English is a second language. Although further research would be needed to establish this and there are certainly other factors involved, it seems intuitive, based on the evidence above, to expect a reasonably strong relationship between parental perceptions and teacher nationality. Given the highly competitive nature of many international school

markets and the for-profit model of most international schools this is likely to hold significant sway. If it is what the 'customers' want it is highly likely that that market forces will prevail and that is what schools will seek to provide. The attitudes of school leaders and owners are instrumental as they are the ones making the hiring decisions for their schools. There is currently little research in this area, but it seems like this is very likely to be the crucial factor. If parental attitudes and those of British international school headteachers show a strong bias towards recruiting British and English-speaking expatriate teachers, it is likely to indicate that an attitudinal shift may be needed to impact on current recruitment patterns.

Could accreditation through iQTS satisfy parents, international school owners and headteachers and help schools withdraw from their dependency upon Western expatriate teachers? The available evidence, albeit scant, suggests that this may be unlikely. The research by ISC (2021) on 'why parents choose an international school' suggests that '*parents sending their child to an international school may want to see many expatriate teachers in the school*.' The same study clearly indicates that teacher accreditation was considered significantly less important than teacher nationality and that this was likely 'why most parents do not value accreditation is that they do not understand what it means' (ISC 2021). The value placed on nationality above qualifications and experience appears to be the current norm based upon these findings. It is therefore likely to require a significant sea-change in attitudes around this to be able to create meaningful change.

This shift towards hiring 'local teachers' in British international schools who have the necessary experience, qualifications and knowledge potentially represents one of the most significant ways in which we can impact on the challenges already outlined in relation to teacher supply and recruitment. If the impact and the growing demand for British teachers to work overseas can be reduced due to a more diverse and perhaps 'blended approach' to recruitment in British schools overseas we could see a reduced demand on the faltering UK supply of teachers.

In order to achieve this there would need to be an attitudinal shift in both school leaders and owners and also parents. Here there is the potential that iQTS could be the key to opening the door to this possibility. If the qualification were of a sufficient standard to assure school leaders that it carries the validity and weight required for them to employ teachers who hold it, we could perhaps begin to see the way in which these changes could begin to develop. Much therefore is likely to depend upon the nature and quality assurance mechanisms that are developed and emerge in the final form iQTS takes. It is likely that anything which is lacking in these important areas could condemn iQTS to be seen as second-class qualification making it unlikely that it would have much of an impact on thinking and practice in international schools teacher recruitment.

The challenges involved in avoiding this outcome are substantial but not insurmountable. At this stage, when much is still unknown, it does however look like a tall order. The intended changes to ITT and QTS in the UK currently make it hard to see how genuine equivalency can be achieved. It therefore seems potentially likely that iQTS may emerge to be perceived as a second-class qualification lacking validity and value by international school leaders. This would certainly make it hard to achieve the DfE's stated aims. Despite these challenges there are good reasons for international schools to think carefully about the overall nature of their teacher demographics and the potential benefits that iQTS could offer in terms of diversification.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

As International schools have grown rapidly, they have also changed considerably. Initially international schools were set up to serve the children of the expatriate population working overseas. Although this is still one of their functions, this is no longer the case in the majority of British international schools. In fact, the vast majority of the pupil population of international schools (80%) is from local demand (ISC 2020). It is the demand from the growing local, wealthy middle classes that is fuelling the growth in international schools. With these clear facts is it time to think differently about teacher recruitment in international schools? As we have moved away from expatriate teachers teaching expatriate children to expatriate teachers teaching largely local children, do we need to think about changing our current model? This brings with it a whole host of potentially very complex capability questions as well as some significant moral and ethical considerations (Free L 2019).

It is worth considering what impact the current approach has upon the children educated in international schools? How does the experience of being educated by teachers who do not look like them or share their culture impact upon them? Is it as Liz Free suggests valid to have concerns about the '21st century colonialism of education?' (Free 2018). Although this may seem dramatic it is something that should perhaps be an important part of the conversation around this exponential and UK state supported growth of British curriculum schools overseas. As one international educator, I often think about my continued employment and cringe. Well remunerated and living in a country that I have grown to love, I think how odd it is that my 60-odd British, American and Australian colleagues and I live in Malaysia and teach mainly Malaysians because globalisation means my Britishness make me an employable asset' (Bayfield A 2021). He also goes on to reflect that 'one of the uncomfortable realities of my existence is that I am aware

that if I were replaced by a Malaysian teacher, my students and their parents may feel shortchanged'. These reflections offer a useful insight into both the question posed above and also the challenges that exist in terms of changing the current prevailing attitudes. It also serves as further anecdotal evidence to reinforce the point made about parental perceptions related to teacher nationality.

A TEACHER LIKE ME

Although this is a very sensitive and complex topic it is important that we ask ourselves these questions. There is a significant body of research which clearly indicates that it does matter (Miller 2018). There appears to be a strong correlation between teachers in terms of gender and ethnicity and pupil achievement. Although this effect is suggested across a range of studies it is still not clear why this makes a difference. One idea is that teachers who share the same ethnicity and gender are more effective as role models. Much of the research in this area emerges from the US and is surrounded by a host of complex issues around race and identity which may be difficult to generalise too far. However, some recent research from the UK which is the largest study of its kind concurs with this view. The study from the Education and Employers Charity (2021) concludes that 'the motivation, confidence and attainment of primary children are positively impacted when they meet relatable workplace role models.' This further suggests that the ethnicity of those we are exposed to in education matters. Although the basis for and context of this research in the US and UK is significantly different from the affluent middle-class children in Asia and the Middle East who go to international schools it should still be enough to make us sit up and think. How does the ethnicity and nationality of the teachers in our classrooms impact on the students in our schools?

It is also worth taking time to consider some of the potential benefits that may result from a greater diversification of teacher ethnicity and nationality in British international schools. It seems reasonable to conclude from the evidence above that it is likely to be a benefit to the local students if they have exposure to some teachers who look like them and are immersed in their culture. There are also a wide range of other potential benefits that may be achieved with such a change in teacher demographics. Firstly, local teachers naturally understand the cultural and social nuances better than any expatriate could possibly achieve despite how long they have lived in the country, how well they speak the language or how many shawarmas they have consumed. This brings many obvious benefits to the school. Further, the cost of employing local teachers is most often significantly less than that of employing expats. Not because of paying lower salaries (although unfortunately this happens a lot) it is because many of the addons needed to hire expatriates like flights and health cover are not required. An analysis of the

available evidence seems to suggest that increasing the diversity of teacher demographics in British international schools may benefit students and schools in several ways.

The feasibility and likelihood of this depends significantly upon the perceptions and attitudes of school leaders, parents and school owners. There is some evidence to suggest that there has in the last few years been an increase in the willingness of school leaders to recruit 'local teachers' with 27% of school leaders saying they have 'increased' the employment of local teachers (COBIS 2018). It is not clear from this what increased means and there is scant information available on the breakdown and composition of this. It is also worth highlighting that in the same survey 93% of school leaders stated that recruiting internationally trained teachers was their priority. Even though there may be some positive signs that a minority of school leaders are perhaps more open to local recruitment it is some way off becoming the mainstream view. Examining the views of school leaders towards the hiring of local staff and teachers whose first language is not English is something which is likely to exert significant influence on any changes that may occur.

On a macro level this could potentially impact on the UKs teacher supply situation. With 15,000 UK teachers moving to work abroad every year (Barker 2021) this represents a significant chunk of those joining the profession through ITT each year. The further continued and likely accelerated growth of British international schools could see this rise unless something happens to disrupt the current patterns. The shift to employing non-British, non-English native speakers as teachers in international schools could serve to help reduce this strain on UK teacher supply. Whether or not the introduction of iQTS can play a part in supporting this or not remains to be seen. Either way international schools may find it becomes necessary and indeed may be forced to begin adapting and exploring this alternative if the supply of British teachers begins to dry up. There are a number of factors that may require a rethink on the part of international schools.

TEACHER SUPPLY. GROWING INTERNATIONAL DEMAND AND SHRINKING UK SUPPLY.

The rapid growth of international schools, 'bordering on exponential', (ISC 2020) has created a wealth of opportunities for teachers who wish to live and work outside the UK. In 2000 there were just 2,584 International schools. Over the last two decades this has grown more than four-fold to 12,373 international schools, educating 5.68 million children and employing 550,000 teachers (ISC Research 2021). The research also indicates that growth of the international school market is

set to continue reaching an estimated 19,200 schools, educating over 11million children and requiring over 1 million teachers by 2030.

The projected growth outlined above suggests that by 2030 International Schools will likely require somewhere in the region of an additional half a million teachers (550,000 to 1.03million ISC 2021). Connecting the concerns expressed in the media headlines purporting '*England's teacher brain drain*' (Knight 2018) it is a potentially concerning projection. It is likely to raise concerns both in the UK and in international schools around the future supply of teachers required for their schools. If we consider that 45% of International schools are British curriculum then we are potentially looking at somewhere in the region of additional 200,000 teachers to meet this growth by 2030. Given that the majority of staff currently teaching in British curriculum schools are British trained and experienced it is likely that schools will continue to target British teachers in their recruitment.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND SUPPLY IN THE UK

In the UK the statistics on the 'teacher recruitment crisis' are eye watering. The UK has failed to meet its teacher recruitment target for each of the last years from 2012–2019. Although there was a marked improvement in 2020–21 figures with the government exceeding its recruitment figures for the first time since 2011–12 (Education Policy Institute 2021). This 'Covid inspired boom' has however already dissipated with targets missed again this year (2021) The 2020–21 upturn is not enough to begin to even make a dent in the years of under recruitment that we have seen over most of the previous decade (Education Policy Institute 2021).

Recruitment of course is only one aspect of the teacher supply equation. We must also consider teacher retention, the attrition rate of teachers leaving the profession as well as projected pupil roll to evaluate the demand needs. Add in the demand for UK teachers in British curriculum schools and pressure on teacher supply is building from all directions. The prolonged period of disappointing retention data for the UK is a significant cause for concern. In 2018 the School Workforce review highlights that a third of teachers leave the profession in their first five years. The attrition rate within a year is 15.5%, 23.2% in 2 years, 32.6% in 5 years and 40.7% in 10 years (DfE 2018). For every 1,000 teachers trained only 684 were still teaching 5 years later and just 593 in the classroom after 10 years.

Bringing this together, it is clear that we are not getting enough teachers into the profession. To compound that we are also not keeping the ones we get. The attrition rates are high and have been very consistent in this regard for over a decade now. Worse still there are dark clouds on the horizon. A recent study from the Education Policy Institute on the '*pandemic and teacher attrition*' raises the

question that there may be 'an exodus waiting to happen?' (Education Policy Institute 2021). The research suggests that teacher intentions to leave the profession have increased by 9 percentage points from 12 to 21%. This suggests that teachers are now almost twice as likely to leave than previously. This impact was seen across every school phase. The research appears to indicate that the pandemic has 'resulted in an increase in teacher workloads, lower levels of happiness and wellbeing and a rise in anxiety and stress' (Education Policy Institute 2021). The analysis suggests that we therefore continue to face a teacher supply crisis with the pipeline supplying the profession struggling to meet demand. That supply continues to fall into the rusty hole-filled bucket which loses one-third of the supply within 5 years. iQTS is one potential and partial solution that could help to provide some relief to this problem. By increasing the 'global pool of quality teachers' and supporting 'global mobility' for teachers we may simultaneously reduce global demand and increase the potential teacher supply pool the UK itself can draw from. Given the current situation it is a potential solution that may be worth pursuing.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

iQTS is the kind of innovative solution that has the potential to make a positive and tangible impact on global teacher supply. It is a possible 'golden opportunity' (Steed 2021) to increase access to high quality ITT around the world, support international schools in increasing teacher diversity and potentially alleviating the challenges around UK and global teacher supply. Yet, there are some significant questions that need to be addressed and some potential barriers that will need to be overcome in order for iQTS to be a success.

Firstly, the UK government and ITT providers must create a clear coherent argument and value proposition for iQTS that other governments, school owners and leaders and potential teachers will find convincing. If iQTS is going to be perceived as having 'real value' questions about its equivalency portability and utility need to be clarified. The damaging mixed messages which simultaneously promote world class ITT and call into question the whole model and approach to ITT in England are significantly damaging to making such a case and have certainly not gone unnoticed. There are also challenges at a school level for school owners and leaders where mindsets, attitudes and recruitment practices would need to shift. For iQTS to ultimately be successful ITT with iQTS needs to lead to real employment opportunities in schools. There are many significant benefits to diversifying our staff rooms in British schools overseas and to become more representative of the students we teach and the communities we are part of. While

there is work yet to do on both a governmental and school level to make iQTS a success it is an idea worth supporting and investing in.

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