

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Art, Craft and Design in Education 22 February 2017

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I would like to thank Susan Coles and our Chair Sharon Hodgson MP for the focus of this APPG to be on Initial Teacher Education (ITE), and to thank also those courageous artists, makers and designers who decide to take up the vocation of teaching.

The last time I came and spoke at this APPG, the NCTL had just released the ITT census showing recruitment figures to secondary ITE for the 2015-16 cycle.

Shockingly only 63% of those places allocated to art and design had been filled nationally. I believe this unprecedented decline is the demonstration of a cycle of unintended consequences of denigrating art and design education.

Those art trainees that qualify to teach face a reduced job market which is spawning strange and unattractive job descriptions combining art expertise with food, maths or DT.

This year's ITT census pretends to show an improvement in that 82% of allocated places are filled, but only because they have reduced the number of places allocated by 161.

Application numbers have sharply declined, but in my experience, the quality and seriousness of those applicants have risen.

Those that do apply have made sure they want to do this, have already tested their passion and commitment for the subject. All are aware that art and design does not attract any government bursary and discussion at interview show that they are thriving on the ground swell of support shown from this nation's creatives, and in some cases, this has called them to the profession.

My role as Programme Leader of a PGCE in Secondary Art, Craft and Design at Northumbria University is part subject leader, broker of partnerships, counsellor and guidance tutor, troubleshooter, academic and assessor.

It is an appropriately complex role to reflect the learning journeys of my students. In just 36 weeks, with over 30 of those in teaching practice in three schools with experience of planning, teaching and assessing across three key stages.

This is coupled with a programme designed to extend subject expertise, address personal skills and knowledge gaps but also introduce reflection, theory and research to them.

Without exception, all my trainee teachers need and deserve compassionate support and real care to ensure they achieve self-efficacy. We make sure that everyone knows that there is no weakness in asking for and receiving support – teacher resilience is developed and shaped over time and in response to a caring environment – it should not just be an expectation in the face of ever-increasing adversity, like a scab to cover a wound.

High expectations, support, compassion, inspiration and the odd essay extension results in an open minded, creative, committed and deeply engaged and a pervasively developing workforce.

My colleagues in ITE cannot quite understand how I have the programme model that I do – we almost never have time to be on campus, always out in schools, being part of the amazing arts networks in the north east at for example BALTIC or Northern Print. So many organisations want to be involved in their training, to welcome them into the profession, to show them that there is longevity in their career choice, that there is support for their own creative practice for the long haul – they totally succeed in this.

Let's take the schools who work with us year after year. Mentors have to fight real opposition from their school leaders to take in a trainee art and design teacher, leaders who just want to simplify their ITT work in the face of such complexity.

All our subject mentors talk about the impact our students have on pupils and indeed themselves as practitioners – new ideas, refreshing perspectives, and passionate dedication developing relationships with young learners.

It is crucial to remember the reciprocity of values that the trainees bring into the profession and to networks.

Colleagues who run core subject Teacher Education programmes ask:

Why are your PGCE art and design retention rates high even though they receive no bursary? Why are art trainee teacher's outcomes so high in comparison to core subjects? How are you ensuring that your trainees are happy, confident and want to progress into the profession? Why do art teachers stay in the profession beyond five years when so many others, up to 40%, decide to leave?

I believe it is our subject – it does for our teachers what it can offer to their pupils – allows meaningful, professional, art and design-filled lives offering the opportunity to keep learning for the rest of your career alongside young people.

While other subjects are in the grip of prescribed curriculum, art and design teachers still practice a subversive stance, we make sure we know what makes for an excellent art education and while we will 'take advice', we draw from personal practice and philosophy – really, what could be more attractive in a profession?

In the light of yesterday's education select committee report on Teacher Supply all these questions abound – perhaps rather than denigrating art education, government should look to it closely as example of a thriving cycle of how to inspire, recruit, train and retain a happy teacher workforce. I have the pleasure of introducing you to Henna and Sam, brave representatives from this year's cohort.

When planning together what we wanted to share with you, we decided to speak from the heart and without soundbites, statistics or a so-called evidence base.

Henna and Sam want to try to give you an insight into why they made the decision to become art and design teachers, how they feel about it now in the middle of their training and their aspiration for the future of their own profession.

In the midst of all the challenges, it is a positive story.

Much of our enthusiasm is in response to the rallying call being answered by so many creatives, to protect art and design education in schools.

Individuals and organisations, represented here today – the likes of BALTIC, Susan, Sharon, NSEAD, our wonderful school mentors, artists, makers and designers who speak up, lobby and demonstrate. If you get anything from our visit to speak with you today, it should be that your efforts are making a difference, we feel that because of you and the high quality art and design education being delivered right now, this wonderful profession cannot just disappear.