

# BEYOND THE PLATEAU

The case for an Institute for Advanced Teaching



Matthew Hood (ed Jonathan Clifton) | July 2016

[www.ippr.org](http://www.ippr.org) | [@IPPR](https://twitter.com/IPPR)

Read online or download at:  
<http://www.ippr.org/publications/beyond-the-plateau-the-case-for-an-institute-for-advanced-teaching>

## 60-SECOND SUMMARY

Every education system around the world faces two major challenges: closing the stubborn achievement gaps between disadvantaged children and their wealthier peers, and ensuring that young people leave compulsory education with the knowledge, skills and characteristics they need in order to thrive in the modern world. Failure to address these challenges is morally indefensible and economically unsustainable.

While the underlying causes of achievement gaps are complex, and require similarly complex solutions, the world's highest performing education systems are making good progress by improving the quality of classroom teaching, which we know has the biggest impact on pupil progress. This is especially significant for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, where the difference between a good teacher and a bad teacher can represent a whole year's worth of extra learning in any given academic year.

Yet a shortage of expert teachers in the stands is frustrating our ambition to close this attainment gap. This problem is particularly acute in certain areas of the country that struggle to attract, develop and retain members of staff. The government has acknowledged this problem and recently pledged to try to address it by spreading 'educational excellence everywhere'.

In order to improve teaching expertise through existing channels, three barriers must be overcome.

1. Courses, programmes and workshops are often poorly designed and delivered.
2. Incentives to participate in training and development are often poor.
3. The environments in which training and development takes place are often poor.

As a result of these challenges, too much training and development benefits neither teachers nor their pupils, failing to transform the knowledge and craft needed for expert teaching; indeed, it often lacks the incentives required to encourage participation in the first place. Some development does benefit pupils, but those benefits are often locked within a single school. Likewise, many current university master's courses offer good incentives – they're portable, and give those who undertake them a sense of status and progression – but their focus is often on research rather than on transforming classroom practice.

**If we are to improve teacher training and development, we need to address all three challenges – poor design and delivery, poor incentives and poor environments. We need a well-incentivised, transformative training and development offer, delivered within a supportive environment.**

This paper draws on examples of successful, innovative school-led teacher development programmes in the US and Singapore. It argues for the creation of a new school-led, higher education training institution – an Institute for Advanced Teaching (IAT) – that could address each of the three barriers to effective teacher development described above, and deliver well-incentivised, transformative training and development within a supportive environment.

As a dedicated not-for-profit social enterprise with a mission to build a movement of expert teachers who will ensure that all children get an excellent education, the IAT would accomplish the following.

1. Recruit high-potential, qualified teachers who work in challenging schools.
2. Develop them into expert teachers.
3. Build them into a movement for change in education.

Through careful design, it could meet three objectives that will be vital to addressing England's teacher training and development needs.

1. transforming classroom practice
2. incentivising participation
3. providing teaching within a supportive environment.

---

### Defining 'expert teacher'

Defining the term 'expert teacher' is the subject of debate, in part driven by an individual's view of what outcomes our education system should aspire to. For the purposes of this paper, we will use Hattie's definition. He identifies five major dimensions of expert teachers: they have high levels of knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach; they can guide learning to desirable surface and deep outcomes; they can successfully monitor learning and provide feedback that assists students to progress; they can attend to the more attitudinal attributes of learning (especially developing self-efficacy and mastery motivation), and can provide defensible evidence of positive impacts of their teaching on student learning. Here in, Hattie says, lies the difference between 'expert' and experienced.

---

The next stage in the work of the nascent IAT will be to outline the practical elements of this institution. It will shortly be drawing up more detailed plans for the content and composition of the course, the design of the social enterprise, and the cost involved in creating the scheme.

For the full report, including all references, data sources and notes on methodology, see:  
<http://www.ippr.org/publications/beyond-the-plateau-the-case-for-an-institute-for-advanced-teaching>

**Citation:** Hood M (2016) *Beyond the plateau: The case for an Institute for Advanced Teaching*, IPPR. <http://www.ippr.org/publications/beyond-the-plateau-the-case-for-an-institute-for-advanced-teaching>

**Permission to share:** This document is published under a creative commons licence: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 UK  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/uk/>