



The militarisation of education: Troops to Teachers and the implications for Initial Teacher Education and race equality: Briefing paper
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Full paper available at: Chadderton, C. (2014) The militarisation of education: Troops to Teachers and the implications for Initial Teacher Education and race equality. Race, Ethnicity and Education (Special issue on Initial Teacher Education and race) DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2013.832937

The Troops to Teaching (TtT) programme was introduced in England in autumn 2013. The programme fast-tracks ex-armed service members to teach and act as learning mentors in schools. The initiative is supported both by the current Coalition government of Conservative and Liberal Democrat, and the previous Labour government.

This paper was written and published shortly before the TtT programme began, and therefore does not include empirical research, but combines an analysis of policy, media reports and relevant academic literature.

The White Paper, The Importance of Teaching (Department for Education 2010), gives the main purposes for the introduction of TtT as twofold: firstly, poor standards of achievement in comparison with other industrialised nations, and secondly, a need for increased discipline in schools. One of the main solutions to these issues, the introduction to the White Paper claims, is to 'raise the status of teaching' by improving the quality of teachers by making changes in the way they are trained. There will be opportunities for both non-graduate and graduate Armed Service leavers to enter teaching. This is in contradiction to the government's own stated commitment to increase the academic requirements for teachers. The White Paper also states a commitment from the government to pay the tuition fees of service leavers, at a time when tuition fees in England have been raised to £9000 per annum for other home students.

The UK is not alone in introducing such programmes of collaboration between the military and schooling: In the US, the Troops to Teachers (T3) programme retrains ex-soldiers with a minimum of 10 years' experience, and a degree. The programme has been in place since 1994 and is administered by the US Department of Defense. It has been referred to as an 'outstanding success', with 88% remaining in the profession three years after they qualified, compared to the usual retention rate for teachers in the US of 50% after five years. The programme has been beneficial in bringing in more men and ethnic minorities to the teaching profession. T3 teachers have been reported as being more prepared to teach in inner city schools, and teach shortage subjects such as Maths and Science and in areas such as Special Education and Vocational Education, and more likely to move where demand for teachers is greatest. It has also been reported that over 90% of school principals have claimed that T3 teachers keep better discipline than traditional teachers. In Germany, there is a tradition of so-called 'Jugendoffiziere' holding project days at secondary schools, and many German

local education authorities have official agreements to work more closely with the military, including the military having input on modules in some teacher training programmes. Since 2010, there has been an increase in military activity in German schools, both in order to attract more support among the population for Germany's foreign wars, but also as a recruitment drive, since compulsory national service was abolished in 2011.

An analysis of the rhetoric around the introduction of the English TtT policy suggests that despite appearing to be aimed at all young people, the TtT initiative actually appears to be aimed at poor and racially subordinated youth, and implicitly targets boys. The paper argues this is likely to further entrench polarisation in a system which already provides two tier educational provision: TtT will mostly be a programme for the inner-city disadvantaged, whilst wealthier, whiter schools will mostly continue to get highly qualified teachers.

TtT is also likely to contribute to a wider process of devaluing of current Initial Teacher Education: The focus on discipline and authority to tackle (perceived) bad behaviour, youth violence and crime seems to imply that current ITE is too 'liberal,' current teachers are unable to cope and the behaviour problems can only be dealt with by sending in the troops. The TtT policy seems confused as to whether what is required is males (ex-army will obviously also include females), or what is understood as masculine military-style discipline, but the call for (male? masculine?) service-leavers devalues the work being done by a predominantly female teaching staff currently in UK schools. The assumption that ex-armed forces will somehow automatically maintain discipline in the classroom, assumed to be an inevitable consequence of them having been in the army, and that TtT teachers will not be expected to be subject specialists, seems to render ITE in general virtually irrelevant.

More sinister, and somewhat controversially, the paper argues that TtT is part of the wider militarisation and securitisation of society and specifically of education. Schools in the US have been compared to maximum security prisons, with features including on-site police officers, mandatory drug testing, CCTV cameras even in toilets, metal detectors and biometric testing. Schools in the UK, whilst not (yet) so securitized as those in the US, have also already introduced many of these measures. The incipient militarisation contributes to the conditioning of the population to accept a culture of permanent war, and to increase ideological support for foreign wars. Military programmes in schools contribute to this process by making war seem natural, and normalizing and glorifying violence, as well as potentially providing military recruitment by stealth.

Military programmes in schools can also be seen as one of a number of policies which criminalise youth, particularly minority ethnic and disadvantaged young people. In being classified as in need of the army for discipline, this in turn further confirms the racist stereotype that such groups are undisciplined, violent, tending to anti-social or criminal behaviour, and threatening to the social order, contributing to the essentialisation and fixing of such racial categories. In addition, following evidence from the US, it is argued that high security, militarized schooling contributes to preparing disadvantaged young people, marginalised along lines of race and class, for whom there is little paid work once they leave school, for a life in which they frequently find themselves under police surveillance or even in jail, by conditioning them to accept such a securitised environment.

This work was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council [grant reference ES/K000233/1: Mass population response to critical infrastructure collapse – a comparative approach].