

Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey

summary report



Should universities change their admissions processes to encourage pupils from state schools and less advantaged backgrounds?

There has been considerable debate about the influence of qualification types and pupils' backgrounds upon decisions by universities to offer places to young people, and about whether universities should change their admissions processes in order to encourage more pupils from state schools and less advantaged backgrounds to attend university. In order to find out about perceptions of these issues a number of questions were included in an Omnibus survey of 1,300 teachers (in both primary and secondary sectors) conducted in October 2008 by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) for the Sutton Trust.

- Only a small proportion of teachers (21 per cent) saw the **14–19 Diploma** as a qualification suitable for those who want to go to university, and just under one quarter of teachers saw it as a qualification for the academically able (24 per cent). In addition, only 29 per cent of the sample (less than one third) felt the Diploma was a suitable qualification for independent schools compared to nearly three-quarters (74 per cent) of the sample who felt that the Diploma was suitable for schools in poorer areas. Eighty-three per cent of teachers thought that the Diploma was a qualification was for those wanting to pursue a vocational route.
- **A levels** were seen (by around 95 per cent of the full teacher sample) as a qualification suitable for the academically able and for those who wished to go to university. They were seen as appropriate for pupils both in independent schools (75 per cent of the sample) and in schools in poorer areas (70 per cent of the sample). A levels were less frequently mentioned as suitable for those wishing to follow a vocational route (18 per cent of the sample).
- The survey also looked at teachers' perceptions of the **International Baccalaureate** and the **Cambridge Pre-U**. Many teachers felt they did not know enough about these qualifications to comment, but those who did generally believed them to be for bright students who want to go on to higher education and independent schools, but less suitable for schools in poor areas.

The government has sought to persuade employers and universities that Diplomas *should not limit* young people's future options and to ensure that this qualification is suitable preparation for both work *and further study*. These findings suggest, however, that there may still be some work still to be done in terms of communicating the aims of key government initiatives to provide different routes into higher education for young people from non-privileged backgrounds.