‘Massive surge’ in overseas teacher training applications

29 March 2024



A recruitment drive in countries such as Nigeria and India has led to a big increase in people wanting to teach in the UK

Ministers are hoping that a ‘massive surge’ in teacher training applications from overseas with help fill classroom teacher posts in the UK, The Times reports.

The newspaper reported that foreign applications for teacher training have doubled this year after ministers started a recruitment drive offering £10,000 to teachers in countries such as Nigeria and India to come to Britain.

Teachers in Nigeria are seen as an easy market to recruit from, given that a currency crisis left some teachers there unpaid for months.

One in 12 of those accepted onto UK teacher training programmes for this autumn are from outside Europe, up from one in 18 last year, with courses increasingly reliant on foreign staff to maintain numbers after a drop in successful applications from Britain.

Concerns have been raised about whether reliance on overseas labour can be a long-term solution, with local teachers put off by poor classroom pay, workload and bad behaviour. Many British teachers have been making the most of opportunities for them in a burgeoning number of international schools around the world.

Universities say generous bursaries to attract foreign applicants have been effective but that many were unsuitable and one in four applications has been rejected so far.

James Noble-Rogers, executive director of the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers, told The Times "There's been a massive surge in international applications, particularly from Ghana and Nigeria, but this includes a lot of serving teachers applying, who need to take other routes to come."

He said people were "desperate to get out" because of the economic situation in sub-Saharan Africa, which meant there were a number of "speculative" applications. "There are some good people in there who would become good recruits and some universities are having to employ dedicated people just to go through the international applications."

He welcomed the increase in applicants for subjects with shortages, but added: "The sheer volume is disproportionate to the potential gains, we need a better system … The real solution is to find ways to boost domestic recruitment."