



# TEACHER EDUCATION IN CRISIS

THE STATE, THE MARKET AND THE  
UNIVERSITIES IN ENGLAND

EDITED BY

**VIV ELLIS**

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# Teacher Education in Crisis

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*In loving memory of Dr Carol Fox (1942–2022),  
university-based teacher educator par excellence,  
who would have had a few choice words to say on this topic.  
And in solidarity with the university- and school-based  
teacher educators who helped to make England's  
partnership-based  
initial teacher education so successful for so long.*



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I would also like to thank the contributors to the book who worked to extremely tight deadlines and with multiple rounds of feedback as well as the peer reviewers who supported the development of drafts. Thanks also to the Bloomsbury-appointed anonymous peer reviewers whose feedback helped to propel us to final submission.

It would be remiss of us all as contributors not to acknowledge the outstanding (in Ofsted-speak as well as literally) achievements of university-based teacher educators in England over many decades. They delivered exactly what the state asked them to deliver and, until recently, they were rewarded for doing that – on the basis of the state’s own evidence of their success. The personal toll on some of the people at the sharp end of the innocuous sounding ‘Market Review’ has been high. There has undoubtedly been damage to important infrastructure in England’s education system, including to broader principles affecting the whole of higher education, even if the universities themselves haven’t all quite realized this yet.

In terms of permissions, a longer, open access version of Chapter 12 by Ian Cushing appeared in a special issue of *The Curriculum Journal* (2022) on decolonial and anti-racist perspectives in teacher training & education curricula in the UK (Volume 34, Issue 1, pages 43–61. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1002/curj.173>).

Finally, a book on a fast-moving, topical issue like the crisis in teacher education in England is always destined to lose some of its currency fairly quickly. Nonetheless, we offer this volume as an attempt both to document and explain a process that is still unravelling. No doubt with some further surprises along the way.

Viv Ellis  
Melbourne, April 2023



## CHAPTER ONE

# Introducing the crisis: The state, the market, the universities and teacher education in England

*Viv Ellis and Ann Childs*

What's going on in initial (pre-service) teacher education in England is worthy of examination by international researchers as well as wider debate among the teaching profession. Initial teacher education (ITE) has long been of interest to education policymakers around the world given its influence on the quality of teaching (Furlong, Cochran-Smith & Brennan, 2009; Rowe & Skourdoumbis, 2017; Ellis, Gatti & Mansell, 2023). But the combination of policies implemented in England since 2019 is unique internationally, in several respects (see also Ashton & Ashton, 2022). First, from 2024, any organization across the country that wishes to offer ITE has to deliver the government's core curriculum that mandates certain content and proscribes other knowledge, with compliance micromanaged nationally by central government, to the level of reading lists and PowerPoint slides (Department of Education, 2022). Effectively, teacher education in England is now a national, state franchise with a strong emphasis on fidelity to both mandatory design and content. Second, compliance with this prescribed

curriculum is further monitored by inspectors during site visits, document reviews and interviews, potentially leading to failure of the programme and closure of the provision or even the School of Education (Ofsted, 2022). Internationally, central government monitoring of universities' teacher education programmes by inspectors is highly unusual. Third, the two-stage reaccreditation process now required for every organization wishing to offer ITE led to 20 per cent of those who applied failing (Fazackerly, 2022), sometimes by one mark, leading to expected shortages of teachers, especially in those schools and regions where it has been historically hard to recruit (French, 2022; Long & Danechi, 2022; Lam, 2022). The extent of the state's micro-level interest and urge to control is also indicated by the fact that universities are even required to share their financial model for running their programmes with the state (Department for Education, 2022). And fourthly, the English government has established its own 'National Institute of Teaching' (NIOT) that, before it was even launched, was announced as the country's 'flagship' and 'leading' teacher education institution, despite having no students, no staff and no track record (Martin, 2022).

As a result of this unique combination of policies, England now has the most tightly regulated and centrally controlled system of ITE anywhere in the world. Whilst some other (state or sub-state) jurisdictions internationally may have demanding regulations for their own purposes, in England the reach of these reforms is national and controlled by the government's Department for Education alone. So whereas some jurisdictions might have mandated curriculums for the teaching of reading, for example; or demand that student teachers evidence their compliance with professional standards or pass state-approved tests of their subject knowledge; or require that certain ideas are eliminated from the curriculum for pre-service teachers (e.g. critical race theory in certain US states; Brager, 2023) in order for programmes to be accredited, the intersecting scope, extent and reach of the English teacher education reforms are unprecedented, creating a closed system of control. As the contributors to this book point out, this situation is very high risk for English schools and the communities they serve, for the teaching profession, universities and, ultimately, for public trust in the state and its democratic accountability.

We refer to England and the English state specifically. As a result of late 1990s policies to devolve government to the

UK ‘home nations’ of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Bogdanor, 2001), when people refer to ‘U.K. education policy’ they are usually now referring to *English* education policy. England, among the four home nations of the UK, has no devolved forms of government; the whole of England (the most populous and the richest home nation) is governed by the UK government in Westminster (London). So, education policy in England is for England only and if you are interested in understanding more about teacher education in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, then we recommend you take a look at the websites of the Welsh government, the Scottish government and the Northern Ireland Department of Education. Sibieta and Jerrim (2021) have provided a useful comparison of schools’ policies across the UK, illustrating the divergences post-devolution, and Beauchamp and colleagues (2015) also summarized these divergences in ITE, although their analysis is now dated given the rapid pace of change. The point is that policies in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are interesting, sometimes exciting, but always different. England is the outlier in the UK and England is our concern in this book.

## **The state, the market and ITE in the universities**

Whereas some researchers and commentators focus their analysis on the effects of neoliberalism on education broadly as well as ITE specifically – e.g. the use of competition and market principles or the role of non-state actors in privatization – in this book we are primarily concerned with the role of the state in what are generally seen to be the most radical and regressive reforms in the history of teacher education in England. The state may use the rhetoric of the market and arguments connected with choice, competition and their supposed effect of ‘driving up quality’, but what is most noticeable about teacher education policy in England is that there is little interest on the part of the state in creating a genuine market for ITE (as one might argue exists in the United States) or even a quasi-market (a familiar situation in some countries, including England). Instead, the English education state wants *control* – as much control

as it can lever through a tight assemblage of multiple policies – from the macro-level of student numbers and financial models down to the micro-level of what an individual teacher educator does and says in a training session and what books and articles they recommend (Department for Education, 2022). In England, the market will not decide; the state will. To that extent, the situation represents the triumph of ‘strong state’ English Conservative thinking over ‘free market’ ideals (Gamble, 1988).

How did this situation arise? How has the crisis of teacher supply, teaching quality and, indeed, the crisis of confidence in both policy formation and teacher education in England been constructed? What impacts have these policies had on programmes and people? How has it been possible to present these policies as a ‘golden thread’ of teacher development? What has been lost in the midst of the resulting turbulence? Fundamentally, what has been going on in England that has created such a crisis, with such consequential implications for teaching and teacher education? In this book, leading teacher educators and researchers address these questions and more, providing unique insights into what effectively has been a radical experiment in ITE in England, including insights from people who were ‘in the room’ at critical junctures in the crisis. The book also offers international perspectives from colleagues in Europe and Australia, near neighbours as well as a country from which England often borrows policies or that borrows them from England.

The book is also focused on universities and the university experience in the period since 2019 when the radical sequence of policies enacted by Conservative-led governments since 2010 suddenly accelerated. This focus on universities may appear to be a limitation. We argue instead that focusing on universities gets to the heart of what has been going on in England as it is university Schools of Education and university-based teacher educators that are the object of these radical policies. The state’s anger and impatience with the universities is an important part of the motivation for them. Even though England’s teacher education landscape has long been characterized by very strong school-university partnerships (Furlong et al., 2006); even though school-based routes into teaching have existed for several decades; even though Teach First (the English Teach for America) relies on universities to deliver their programmes (Thomas, Rauschenberger & Crawford-Garrett,

2016), the state has come to regard universities not as part of the problem they have constructed but as *the* problem. And after several attempts at reform since 2010 (on the election of the Conservative-led coalition government), by 2019 the state had decided that the only way they could achieve what they wanted to achieve was to destroy the university-based teacher education system in England as it existed and, through a series of extraordinary, authoritarian interventions, to make the universities submit to its will under threat and actively re-make the system. Just how this was achieved and how it was experienced forms the content of this book.

## How did we get here?

It would be wrong to think that until 2019, the English state wasn't interested in and didn't intervene into ITE and how universities prepared schoolteachers. Rather, from the election of the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 to the present day – including through the New Labour governments of 1997–2010 – there have been relentless attempts to control ITE – as well as continuing professional development (CPD) – in England and to reduce the power and influence of the universities on how teachers are prepared for their jobs (Menter & Childs, 2013). Until 2019, the direction of policy change had been towards schools, initially through strong school-university partnerships and then by shifting financial resources and leadership to schools, private sector entities, individuals and 'enterprising charities' (Ellis, Steadman & Mansell, 2021) such as Teach First. In this book, we show that now the focus has shifted again, away from displacing universities in favour of schools, towards controlling universities. This power grab over universities by the state is consistent with historical New Right thinking that has been observed in both England and the United States since the 1970s (Apple, 1998; Ball, 2012; Ellis, Gatti & Mansell, 2023). Some might describe this approach as one governed by both technical and economic rationalities, advocating that ITE 'should be narrowly functional, emphasising only what will be professionally useful for teachers' (Furlong, 1992, p. 168). Under this analysis, what is technically useful is then determined by economic measures. But there is also a strongly 'traditionalist' or cultural restorationist (Ball, 2012; see also Watson, 2021) sub-text

for these policies (just as there has been for schools' policies) as well as a reactionary stance and, at times, moral panic around the figure of the university-based teacher educator.

### ***New Right thinking, state accreditation and the struggle for control***

Furlong (1992) talks about the period of the 1980s after the election of the Conservative Government as a 'period of quite dramatic change in teacher education' (p.163). At the beginning of the decade ITE took place almost exclusively in universities and colleges with one-year's training for graduates (the Postgraduate Certificate of Education) or four-year degree courses for school leavers, predominantly training them as primary teachers. As Furlong said, 'initial teacher education was a relatively quiet backwater of the education service, controlled and organized autonomously by higher education' (p.163). By the end of the 1980s, state control had increased considerably with 'those responsible losing a substantial proportion of their professional autonomy' (p.163). Childs (2013) argued that key proponents of the New Right ideology – for example, Lawler (1990), O'Hear (1988) and the Hillgate group (1989) – saw the need to weaken the autonomy of university-based teacher educators who, as academics, were perceived by these New Right groups as 'low level intellectuals with Marxist inclinations' (Wilkin, 1996, p. 166), favouring approaches to teacher education that privileged educational theory over practice. As a result, their perceived left-wing stranglehold on teacher education needed to be weakened; the focus of reform was and still is personal in targeting university teacher education staff.

Five years after the election of the Thatcher government, government circulars created a new regulatory body, the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE), which had oversight over ITE in England and Wales. All ITE courses had to gain CATE accreditation for their students to receive qualified teacher status (QTS) and for the first time this 'established the right of the Secretary of State to have a say in the detailed content and structure of ITE in England, thereby marking the end of higher education's (and even old universities') autonomy' (Furlong et al., 2000, p. 22). State control was here to stay and over the period of

subsequent Conservative administrations until the election of Tony Blair's New Labour government in 1997, the erosion of universities' role and influence in ITE continued. Examples of this were moves to more school-based provision, with schools more involved in planning and decision-making to, later, more school-led provision. For example, English government Circular 24/89 required a more school-based approach to teacher education where student teachers and their lecturers spent more time in school and, in addition, that schools should be involved in the planning, delivery and assessment of training. Circulars 9/92 and 14/93 required that all university-led provision had to be in partnership with schools with schools receiving money for training that had previously gone to universities. The move to school-led teacher education was accelerated with the School-Centred Teacher Training initiative (SCITT), where groups of schools could run their own postgraduate teacher education programmes independent of universities (although often, in practice, working with a university partner to award an academic qualification).<sup>1</sup> In 1992, other forms of control were also brought in through inspections of ITE carried out by the state inspection agency, the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED). The mid-1990s saw the development of standards/competencies in teacher education as means to control what skills and competences new entrants to the profession should have, again consistent with the technical-rational approach to teacher education.

### ***A National curriculum for ITE under New Labour***

Tony Blair's New Labour government did not depart from past Conservative policies, Childs (2013) arguing that policies under New Labour were 'a continuation of the "New Right" policies of control instituted by the Conservative administrations from 1979–1997' in two important ways (p. 318). The first was through, as Furlong (2005) argues, the 'issuing of a new circular

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<sup>1</sup>It is important to note that none of these moves to engage schools more deeply in the practices of ITE were necessarily a bad idea. The strength of the English ITE system had been on the basis of strong 'collaborative partnerships' (Furlong et al., 2000). The point we are making is that policies over this period were intended to reduce the influence of the universities.

10/97 (DfEE, 1998) which transformed the previously specified ‘competencies; into more elaborate standards’, further reinforcing a technicist and bureaucratic approach to ITE. The second was through the introduction of a National Curriculum for ‘Initial Teacher Training’ (ITT) with specification over how the core subjects, English, mathematics and science should be taught (see Ellis, 2006). In practice, as Furlong (2005) argued, the National Curriculum was soon abandoned but compliance and control over ITE was maintained through detailed standards and again through inspection of ITE provision by OfSTED. Nonetheless, New Labour’s ITT National Curriculum is a good example of a previous attempt by the state to mandate what was taught in all teacher education programmes in England.

A significant difference to the situation in the current crisis is that these National Curriculum documents were prepared in consultation with acknowledged experts (even if not everything they specified was agreed with) and they were clearly based on recent, high-quality research and evidence (although not fully inclusively so). The implementation of the National Curriculum for ITT was overseen by a public body, the Teacher Training Agency, that was accountable to parliament. And compliance with the curriculum was monitored by Ofsted inspectors during regular visits on a multi-year cycle (see Ellis, 2006). There was never any attempt to proscribe knowledge under threat of closure, as there is under the Market Review accreditation process; no attempt to monitor reading lists and PowerPoint slides; and, crucially, in terms of implementation, none of this was done directly by the government department itself, as it is now.

### ***School Direct and policies after 2010***

The election of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2010 saw a continuation of the state’s desire for control over ITE and the erosion of universities’ agency, with further moves to establish more school-based, school-led provision. In November 2011 an implementation plan *Training our next generation of outstanding teachers* (Department for Education, 2011) introduced a new route into teaching called School Direct:

The main aim of School Direct is to allow schools to recruit and select the trainees they want with the expectation that they will then go on to work within the school or group of schools in which they were trained.

(DfE, 2011)

School Direct had been anticipated by Sam Freedman, a former policy adviser to Michael Gove, the energetic Education Secretary for England at the time, and championed by another special adviser, Dominic Cummings, who later went on to organize a campaign for the UK to leave the EU (Brexit) (Ellis & Spendlove, 2020). The implementation plan also included the formation of Teaching Schools whose role was outlined on the DfE website as:

Teaching schools give outstanding schools a leading role in the training and professional development of teachers, support staff and head teachers, as well as contributing to the raising of standards through school-to-school support.

(DfE, 2011)

The role of universities in ITE continued to be debated in this period. There were even some words of reassurance from Nick Gibb, then as now the English school's minister, when he said:

No, we are not abandoning universities. They still have a crucial role to play in delivering initial teacher training ... we are proceeding cautiously and universities will continue to play an important role.

(House of Commons Education Committee, 2012a)

Menter and Childs (2013) noted some contradictions in these reassurances, however. For example, the composition of the Teachers' Standards Review Group, established by Michael Gove largely excluded the universities:

Of the panel of 15, only one member represented a university Department of Education and that representative was from a HE provider that does not have outstanding practice in ITT [the University of Buckingham] and was one of the 1980s pamphleteers of the New Right (Anthony O'Hear).

(p. 109)

If the intention of School Direct as a policy was to destabilize the universities' ITE operations and to change the balance of power and resources in the favour of schools, it failed. As Ellis and Spendlove (2020) show, after an initial period where universities felt a genuinely existential threat, ultimately School Direct was absorbed into their portfolio of ITE provision, alongside their core 'university-led' programs that often supplied most of the content for the School Direct offer. Schools also began to realize that involvement in ITE at this level – actively leading programmes – required expertise and resources and the acceptance of responsibility for quality. For many schools, this degree of commitment and risk was unappealing. For policymakers, the failure of School Direct to transform the system along their preferred lines, withering away the residual power and influence of universities, must have been galling, especially given the additional complexity for prospective teachers it introduced into the course application process, especially at a time of growing teacher shortages.

### ***Acceleration after 2019: Enter a familiar cast of characters***

In 2019, the impetus for even greater state control of English universities' role in ITE was accelerating to unprecedented levels. The detail of this phase of the state's reach for control forms the substance of this book and the chapter authors take different foci in terms of the ways that policies worked, how they were experienced, their wider impact and likely future consequences for practice. In this section, we will just make some brief comments about key moments in the process after 2019, particularly about two interventions that have been critical to establishing the current, unprecedented levels of state control, as well as commenting on a distinctive feature of policy formation and implementation: the repeated engagement of the same small group of people selected by the state and nominated as 'experts'. Firstly, the publication of a Core Content Framework (CCF) was introduced as a 'minimum entitlement' for trainees that claimed to represent the best evidence for what teacher training programmes should contain. 'Best evidence' here was evidence endorsed or provided by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), an unusual organization in the English education landscape, that has privileged (sometimes quite under-powered) randomized

control trials as the ‘gold standard’ of educational research evidence. As with the Teachers’ Standards Review group, only two of the seven members involved in writing the CCF were from the university sector: Professor Samantha Twiselton, from Sheffield Hallam University’s Institute of Education, and Professor Becky Francis, from the University College London Institute of Education, who went on to become Chief Executive of the EEF. Professor Twiselton was a member of the Advisory Panel for the government’s ‘Carter Review of ITT in England’ (DfE, 2015) and, amongst other roles, she was a member of the DfE Expert Behaviour Management Panel. Other group members were from the more school-led provision that had expanded since 2010 and organizations outside of universities. These included John Blake from Now Teach (who, despite his apparent lack of experience with universities, went on to become Director of Fair Access at the government’s higher education regulator); Richard Gill from the Teaching School Council; Marie Hamer from the Ambition Institute; Emma Hollis from the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers; Reuben Moore from Teach First and, subsequently, the National Institute of Teaching (see Chapter 9); and finally, James Noble Rogers from the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), a membership organization intended to represent university interests in ITE

Two years later, the CCF was followed by the second intervention, the ‘Market Review’ of the entire ITE system with the stated aim of enabling ‘the provision of consistently high-quality training, in line with the CCF, in a more efficient and effective market’ (DfE, 2021, p. 4). The review was conducted by another ‘expert group’ led by Ian Bauckham, the Chief Executive of an academy trust (similar to a US charter school management organization) along with members of what by now was a familiar cast of characters: Professor Twiselton, Richard Gill, John Blake and Reuben Moore. These group members have generally spoken in favour of the radical changes they put their names to. Professor Twiselton has been something of a ‘golden thread’ herself in advising on and then promoting ITE policies since 2010, with numerous engagements by the Department for Education across multiple advisory groups (Mansell, 2021) and honoured with the Order of the British Empire in 2018 for services to education. By the time the fall-out from the crisis was becoming obvious in late 2022, Professor Twiselton began to express concern about the criticism she had received from her peers – as well as the

general turbulence – in the sector, in interviews in the educational press. Nonetheless, she has maintained that she was ‘happy to defend the new ITT criteria that came out of this process’ (Martin, 2023).

### ***The state’s reach for control of ITE: What is different now?***

We have shown that ITE has been a focus for reform policies by consecutive governments in England. There has been a degree of continuity in policy (particularly in terms of general direction) across New Labour and Conservative-led administrations. In this section, we want to briefly summarize what has been different about the phase of reform from 2019 onwards. Firstly, it is worth noting that the effect of successive reforms since the coalition government elected in 2010 has been cumulative – in terms of destabilization and disruption as well as reform fatigue. This is something that the contributors to this book discuss. It is also possible that the universities thought they may be able to deal with interventions such as CCF in the same way they had dealt with School Direct. Baird (this volume), a former Director of the Oxford Department of Education, ventures that many Heads of Schools of Education may not have fully understood the full implications of the CCF in 2019 so that, by the time the Market Review intervention happened in 2021, a key piece of the universities’ authority (over the curriculum) had effectively been surrendered.

Unlike New Labour’s ITE policies, such as the introduction of an Initial Teacher Training National Curriculum, by the time of the CCF and the Market Review, the government had abolished important public bodies such as the Teacher Training Agency (later the Training and Development Agency for Schools; later still the National College for Teaching and Leadership) and the General Teaching Council in what has been referred to as the ‘bonfire of the quangos’ (see Ellis, Steadman & Mansell, 2021). Power over both the school system and ITE was being centralized in the government Department for Education. In her study of the voluntary sector in the United States and England, Wolch (1990) referred to this process as the ‘selective dismantling’ of historical welfare state infrastructure

that had distributed power, oversight and accountability over a range of agencies and public bodies with various lines of democratic accountability. In England now, what the Department for Education says goes and critics are simply challenged to vote out the governing party at the next election.

The selective dismantling has led to what Ball (2012) calls a ‘process of substitution’ whereby parts of the state (e.g. agencies, local government authorities) as well as independent bodies such as universities and professional and employee representative organizations such as subject teaching associations and unions are replaced by non-state, non- and for-profit actors, awarded contracts to deliver services that were previously delivered either by or subject to the oversight of the organizations that had been dismantled or marginalized. In teacher development in England, the substitution has been by individual sole traders (such as members of the government ‘expert groups’ in another guise), enterprising charities (such as Teach First) and what Ellis, Steadman and Mansell (2021) describe as ‘co-created shadow state structures’. These are organizations that did not exist prior to the reform being announced, therefore having no track record, but often led by a policy entrepreneur who is able to give the state something that it needs that it can’t get (or doesn’t want), either through the legacy institutions such as universities and local government authorities or on the open market. So, whereas at first sight, some of these organizations may appear to be entirely private sector or independent charitable entities, they have in effect been co-created with the state. These organizations and the individuals leading them now have real power and the resources that go with it in the reconfigured ITE landscape in England.

More generally, but we believe crucially important in terms of the changing context, the rise of social media and the uptake by motivated teachers has had an important cultural effect on the politics of education. Teachers supportive of Conservative education policies (even if they are not party members) came to the attention of English education ministers after 2010 and were often quoted and sometimes rewarded with ‘expert group’ membership or advisory positions. For example, Tom Bennett, sometime government behaviour advisor and the owner of the ResearchEd company, was singled out early on by English Education Secretary Michael Gove:

I also hugely enjoy the always provocative work of Tom Bennett, the Behaviour Guru, who champions teachers at every turn while challenging them to up their game.

(Gove, 2013)

Watson (2021), in an article for which he received the kind of hostility he was analysing, studied interactions between teachers on Twitter organized around the (in England) familiar ‘trad’ (traditionalist) versus ‘prog’ (progressive) dichotomy. Using the concept of ‘micropopulism’ (Gutierrez, 2017), Watson distinguished the Twitter phenomenon he was observing ‘from larger-scale formulations of populism which orientate around nation, nationalism or at national-level political parties’ (p. 301). Referring specifically to Tom Bennett, Watson noted that ‘from the perspective of the teacher, [Bennett] articulates a populist rupture between the progressive educational elite and the ordinary teacher’ (p. 307). The teachers and others that Watson identifies have been enormously successful rhetorically in persuading some parts of the teaching profession in England that they have been serially let down by an elite, within which university-based teacher educators are a key part. The communicative landscape around education generally and ITE specifically is an important factor in what has been different about the effect of state interventions. Even if the mobilization of ‘Trad’ followers on Twitter has not necessarily won all arguments, it nonetheless showed itself to be very effective in silencing direct opposition. And although the Twitter warriors supporting Conservative, New Right or ‘Trad’ policies have been rhetorically adept, the evidence for their assertions has often been largely absent.

### ***What did the evidence say about the quality of ITE in England prior to the Market Review?***

Policies are designed to address problems. As such, the problem, like the policy, has to be constructed in ways that make the policy appear meaningful and reasonable. The state was presented with a major challenge in constructing the problem of a failing ITE system in England from 2019 on as its own evidence base of national student satisfaction surveys (known as Newly Qualified Teacher [NQT] surveys) and Ofsted inspection reports painted a very positive

picture of ITE quality indeed. Ofsted inspections up to 2019 had been thorough, based on regularly updated frameworks, conducted by teams of trained inspectors and involved observations of training in universities, observations of student teachers teaching in schools, scrutiny of documents and stakeholder views. In 2019, Ofsted rated 100 per cent of ITE partnerships as Good or Outstanding, up from 99 per cent in 2018 and 2017 (Ofsted, 2019). Thirty-six per cent of partnerships were rated as Outstanding. These indicators of high quality were notable as they were made based on a two-stage inspection framework where a university's former students were observed teaching when employed up to one year after qualifying and leaving the course.

In the last year that the government conducted a survey of the entire population of NQTs (2015), 89 per cent of primary and 90 per cent of secondary teachers rated their training as at least 'Good'; 43 per cent of primary and 53 per cent of secondary teachers as very good (NCTL, 2015). A final survey in 2018 based on smaller samples confirmed the same overall picture (NCTL, 2018). Considered together, these two official evidence bases (Ofsted inspection reports and NQT surveys) presented a positive picture both of how the state inspection agency assessed ITE system quality and how the former ITE students viewed their own training once qualified. Furthermore, in April 2023, the Department for Education in England published its own research in the form of the *Working lives of teachers and leaders* research report (Adams et al., 2023) based on a representative sample of over 11,000 teachers. The majority (77 per cent) of teachers reported being at least satisfied with their ITE; 12 per cent were dissatisfied; and 10 per cent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (Adams et al., 2023, p. 121).

In 2022, to coincide with a seminar on the ITE Market Review at Liverpool John Moores University, we commissioned an independent survey of a representative sample of teachers in England ( $n = 1087$ ) from research and polling organization YouGov (Ellis, 2022). The aims were to elicit teachers' views on the quality of their ITE and the CPD they had been offered since qualification. Contrary to the government's and its supporters' opinions, 77 per cent of teachers in England rated their ITE as either good or excellent; 97 per cent said it was at least satisfactory. These very high levels of satisfaction are significant because they bust the myth that the teaching profession shared the government's concerns about the quality of ITE.

The evidence of systemic ITE failure – whether from the government’s own data, their commissioned research (Adams et al., 2023) or from independent surveys such as our YouGov research – simply didn’t exist as a rationale for the course of action the state has taken in England. Why they chose to take the approach they did, how they constructed the problem regardless, and what this has meant for universities, in particular, are topics that are picked up by the contributors to this book in the chapters that follow. But the absence of evidence for systemic failure – indeed, the availability of evidence of high quality and high satisfaction – is another reason why what has happened in England around ITE in universities is so extraordinary.

## The book in outline

In the next chapter, Melissa Benn sets the scene for the rest of the book, outlining the reforms of the English education system after 2010 that have created the conditions for this current ITE crisis. Benn summarizes the changes as a ‘radical transform[ation]’ of the entire school system in England, ‘combining market-style reforms with tighter centralisation, resulting in a confusingly multi-layered bureaucracy that has been (appropriately) labelled the “Wild West”’. This new landscape is populated by an eclectic set of individuals and organizations that Benn terms ‘the New Educational Establishment’ (NEE), profoundly different to those who constituted the historical ‘establishment’ presumed to run the education system, the NEE includes those who have informed, advised or have been funded to implement many of the ITE policies discussed in the book.

David Spendlove, in Chapter 3, uses the concept of the ‘state of exception’ (Agamben, 2005) to explain how policymaking since 2010 has formulated the problem (failing social mobility in England caused by poor teachers produced by failing ITE programmes in universities), constructed the crisis rhetorically (in the face of quite substantial evidence to the contrary) and has taken an authoritarian, ‘fast’ (Peck, 2011) approach to policy, using extreme measures supposedly justified by the urgency and importance of the problem. As Agamben noted, once reserved for times of national emergency, this form of governing becomes a norm when the state decides it wishes to take control and make sweeping interventions without

the usual oversight or accountability. Spendlove enumerates the ITE policies produced since 2010 and shows how they have worked together to create the state of exception.

In Chapter 4, Jo-Anne Baird (in interview with Viv Ellis) reveals the inside story of the negotiations that took place with the English government when a small number of research-intensive universities decided to oppose the Market Review process. From her perspective as the former Director of Oxford University's Department of Education, it is a story of polite non-engagement with these universities' arguments, pragmatic concern with their 'red lines' and what it would take to 'keep them in' – but also of the high-level political significance of these reforms, with special advisers from the Prime Minister's Office not only in attendance but influencing the agenda. Baird also makes a strong argument for research-intensive universities' involvement in ITE and the benefits to educational research and researchers of ITE partnerships with schools.

Chapter 5 by Joe Hanley and Christian Kerr offers an analysis of the 'same game, same players, different field' with reference to parallels between teacher education and social work education. Drawing on social network analysis, Hanley and Kerr show how a 'shared policy network, comprising of shared connections between individual and organisations' influences policy and gets funded to enact policy across ITE and social work. They trace the '(frequently overlapping) historical, personal and ideological connections across this network' that have had much greater impact on social work and social work education since the Department for Education in England assumed greater responsibility for the regulation of social workers.

Jan Rowe's chapter (6) finds the origins of the crisis in ITE in the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy announced by the Department for Education in England in January 2019. This strategy included many of the policies – explicitly designed to improve recruitment and retention – that have been touted as 'the golden thread' of teacher development in England, from ITE through early career CPD, to national professional qualifications. Rowe also considers the available evidence for the success of these policies (not good – recruitment and retention have got worse since the policies were implemented) as well as of participants' experience of the ECF (also not good) and concludes that they are more like a rope

around the neck of the teaching profession than a ‘golden thread’. Rowe writes from the perspective of a former Head of ITE at a large university in England who resigned, feeling unable to lead the changes required by the Market Review with any degree of integrity.

In Chapter 7, Keith Turvey draws on an analysis of the discourse of ‘learning’ in two key policy texts – the ECF and the CCF – to show how they operate as ‘double texts’ (Schostak, 2020) to ‘monopolise the narrative of what teachers need to know in order to become effective teachers, exploiting an essentialist philosophy of teacher education and learning in education’. Turvey critiques the use (and abuse) of ‘evidence’ in the formation and substantiation of ITE policies arguing that the teaching profession is at risk of being both de-skilled and subject to ideological capture by the state-mandated ITE curriculums that will be built on these policies, disproportionately negatively affecting the students and schools the reforms were intended to help.

Chapter 8 from Rachel Lofthouse is a personal reflection on how the landscape for ITE in England has been changed through post-2010 policies. Using geographical and cartographical metaphors, Lofthouse argues that ‘while the maps being redrawn may look coherent and navigable, they plot narrow courses with diminishing horizons’. Along with other contributors, Lofthouse sees this narrowing and diminishing as consequential – for recruitment into a professional occupation but also for the retention and engagement of experienced teachers in their self-charted developmental trajectories. Nonetheless, Lofthouse remains optimistic, seeing a more activist future for teacher educators, ‘roles that [might] increasingly combine the characteristics of architects, agitators and activists’.

Caroline Daly, in Chapter 9, considers the curious case of the National Institute of Teaching (NIOT), announced by the government in England as the ‘flagship’ institution for ITE in that jurisdiction despite not existing at the time of the announcement and therefore having no track record. Daly considers the claims for legitimacy of this state-sponsored start-up enterprise, granted numerous privileges by the English Department for Education, and situates it in relation to ‘independent graduate schools of education’ in the United States, with which it may appear to share some characteristics, as well as an earlier attempt to start a similarly named entity by the policy entrepreneur Matthew Hood.

Daly points out just how high risk the state's claims for the NIOT are in a global context where highly successful ITE programmes in long-established universities are already able to claim flagship and world-leading status legitimately.

Chapter 10 by Sarah Steadman draws on data from a UK Economic and Social Research Council funded research project to examine the importance of identity in learning to teach. Steadman engages with the kind of learning theory not covered by the CCF and ECF – theories concerned with motivation, agency, self-actualization and becoming. Learning as becoming an identity is an established proposition in the field of sociocultural research and Steadman highlights its importance with respect to ITE. Steadman argues that ‘for teachers, discovery of their professional self will never be found solely in the individual mastery of the “learn that” or “learn how to” statements of the CCF and ECF’.

Ian Cushing, in Chapter 11, demonstrates how the recent ITE policies ‘represent a form of hostile governance which impose and reproduce prescriptive ideologies about language ... actively designed to promote and maintain white supremacy and racial hierarchies’. Cushing’s chapter highlights the broader culturally regressive intent of these policies as well as the specifically linguistic ‘hostile environment’ created for racialized speakers in relation to an imagined, historical ‘standard’ language. Cushing positions his analysis of current policies in the histories of teacher education and, like other contributors, maintains an optimistic outlook, urging teacher educators to ‘look for what Lillian Weber (1997) calls *cracks in the system*: ideological and implementational spaces which allow for the enactment of anti-racist efforts even when the wall seems tall and impenetrable’.

Chapters 12 and 13 provide international perspectives on the crisis in ITE in England from Maria Campbell and Fiona Crowe (Ireland) and Martin Mills (Australia). A theme across both responses is that England offers a ‘cautionary tale’ of what can happen when central government decides to intervene in authoritarian ways and at the micro-level in ITE to take even greater control for itself and to weaken the university sector. The consequences are beyond teacher educators and ITE, as these international colleagues point out, raising important questions about the kind of work that schoolteachers themselves are expected to do as well as about how democracies are governed.

In the final chapter, Viv Ellis picks up on these themes at the same time as arguing for the necessity of creating different conditions – political, economic and cultural – for the creation of good ITE policies rather than relying only on good educational research and evidence. He refers also to several contributors' previous work on 'design principles' for transforming the ways in which teachers are prepared in the form of the pamphlet, *Teacher Development 3.0* (Teacher Education Exchange, 2017).

## Coda

At the time of writing, it was unclear how the crisis in ITE in England would continue to unfold. Official data continued to show that the government was repeatedly failing to meet its own targets for recruiting teachers – by 41 per cent for secondary school teachers in 2022/23 (Long & Danechi, 2022). The number of student teachers who complete their training and then go on to work in state-funded schools is on a steady decline (Long & Danechi, 2022). Political turbulence as a whole continues; 2022 was the year of three UK Prime Ministers, one holding the record for the shortest tenure ever. As we write in early 2023, public sector workers (including teachers and university-based teacher educators) were taking strike action over their pay and conditions and the universities' pension scheme.

The second stage of the Market Review accreditation process was also underway, and there were some attempts to plug geographic gaps in ITE provision (where local universities' applications had failed) by brokering partnerships with universities in other regions who had passed. A few research-intensive universities claimed to have their ongoing participation in ITE still under review, with at least one saying it was seriously considering withdrawing. Yet, generally, preparation for the new state franchise courses seemed to be continuing. Meetings and workshops were being held to support universities and other providers to meet the new requirements. Members of the 'expert groups' were out and about promoting the benefits of what they had put their names to.

Yet, the implications for universities of the policies and interventions discussed in this book do not seem to be widely understood. And while there is clearly a natural anxiety about job

losses and the financial viability of Schools of Education if they do not comply with the state's edicts, the anxiety about working under such an authoritarian regime of surveillance and micromanagement seems subdued. Moreover, it does not appear that vice-chancellors and presidents have fully grasped that they have lost control of one part of their university – their ITE provision – that what goes on in those seminar rooms and on those courses is now controlled in very fine detail by the Department for Education in England. Course documentation, session plans, reading lists will no longer be produced independently by university staff, subject to the usual internal and external quality assurance processes. Instead, they will be determined by the state and the university will be subject to state sanction if courses lack fidelity to the state's requirements.

Universities have historically enjoyed a degree of relative autonomy in their decision-making and governance, usually under the label of 'academic freedom'. This freedom has been regarded as important, not only for the university, its staff and its students, but for society as a whole. The English reforms to ITE from 2019 on challenge this freedom and this autonomy in ways that provide a template for state interventions into the bodies of knowledge and practices for other fields and disciplines. It will be interesting to see whether the case of ITE sets a precedent for state interventions into other kinds of professional education for the public sector in England.

Finally, it is worth noting that none of the contributors to this book take a defensive stance on change and, indeed, reform in ITE. Our critiques of the current crisis in ITE are not a defence of the status quo or a special plea for universities, teacher educators, and teachers to be left alone and allowed to do as they please. Even in the best systems – and England did, on the basis of the evidence, have a very good system – there is scope for further improvement and development or even, as some of the contributors argue, transformation. Most of the contributors have been involved in reform processes, some of us internationally in consultation with government departments and agencies as well as universities and school systems. Our concern is not change *per se* but the nature of the reforms that have come in England from 2019 onwards and how they have been enacted. And while our concern is focused on ITE and the present crisis, the nature of the reforms and their mode of enactment merits much wider attention.

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## CHAPTER TWO

# Inside the ‘New Educational Establishment’ in England

*Melissa Benn*

It is always foolish to assign discrete policies and particular political ideas to neat time periods, especially in education. New Labour built on some of the significant educational reforms of the Thatcher government in the late 1980s; a few of the dominant players of the most recent decade got their start under New Labour. Similarly, during his tenure as secretary of state for education, Conservative Michael Gove pressed the accelerator pedal on New Labour initiatives, albeit with such speed (and apparent lack of understanding of the implications) that even the prominent Gove policy adviser Sam Freedman has described the consequences as ‘a bit of a Wild West scenario’ (Millar, 2018, p. 48).

Such caveats aside, the coalition government of 2010, and the ever more unsteady Conservative administrations that have succeeded it, have radically transformed the landscape of primary and secondary education in England, combining market-style reforms with tighter centralization, resulting in a confusingly multi-layered bureaucracy that even government sympathizers judge to be inefficient, expensive and illogical. Increasing instability and lack of transparency in public life in general have all further undermined the sector. Manifesto pledges and government Bills now appear of less import than they once did; key clauses in legislation put before Parliament appear to

be dropped at the last minute; ‘lines to take’, and even secretaries of state, seem to shift from one week to the next.

At the heart of these changes are what I call the New Educational Establishment (NEE), a set of individuals and organizations guided by values very different in character to that which once determined how our schools were run or, in my view, to how they should be run. It used to be joked that education policy in the long post-war period (essentially, 1945 to the late 1970s) was determined by a clubbable triumvirate of the permanent secretary (the chief civil servant) at the Department for Education (DfE), the leader of the National Union of Teachers and the General Secretary of the Association of (local authority) Education Committees. Nowadays ministers rely far more on special advisers, and key figures within the academy landscape, than on career civil servants; the democratically elected education committees of local authorities have been displaced by the powerful heads of multi-academy trusts (groups of academies, run by a single organization) and a range of policy entrepreneurs; both the trade unions (particularly those representing classroom teachers) and the universities, many of which train classroom teachers, have effectively been marginalized and dismissed as part of the ‘Blob’, the dismissive new right term for opponents of market/traditionalist-oriented reform.

Today’s leaders and policy influencers may be diffuse and somewhat shadowy in character but they are less independent of government than sector leaders of old. Over the last decade, a parade of increasingly familiar figures have moved between jobs in right-wing think tanks, special adviser posts, some moving to start up educational enterprises or take up quasi-official advisory roles; a select group of school and trust leaders are called upon to advise on policy, leaving large parts of the school estate out in the cold. Meanwhile, social media debate on education has become polarized and often ugly, creating a sectoral version of the culture wars that have become so familiar under Brexit, Johnson and Trump. Educational careers can now be made, or unmade, on platforms like Twitter. The growing social media platform of a provocative figure like Tom Bennett, founder of researchEd, has been key to Bennett winning government-funded contracts and recruiting schools to sign up to his courses (Mansell, 2022b).

Twelve years on, however, the NEE is frayed around the edges, as is the Conservative Party that has nurtured its growth. Some of its

once-noisiest players have crashed and burned: others have slunk away. However, while there is no longer any sense of a broadly united movement of reform with its disdainful attention-seeking certainties, many of the ideas that framed policy in its earlier years have taken more sober, entrenched root; in some areas, such as ITE, reform has not slowed but intensified. At the same time, some of the most pressing and enduring problems in state education, such as inadequate funding, excessive workload, a punitive inspection regime, the lack of meaningful continuing professional development and related crises in recruitment and retention, remain unsolved.

## Early years: Gove reforms

We cannot make sense of this new establishment without reference to the Godfather of its early reforms, the flamboyant figure of Michael Gove, appointed Secretary of State for Education in the May 2010 coalition government, and some of his key advisers. Gove himself is an idiosyncratic mix of company man, ably serving, with silken public loyalty, successive Conservative prime ministers, and political disruptor, with Gove several times falling out with, or foul of, his former party leaders, ideological allies and personal friends.

In opposition, Gove, shadow secretary of state for Children, Schools and Families from 2007 (the ministry was once again renamed the Department for Education when the coalition came to power), worked closely with various key allies on preparing his education plans. One of the most influential of these was Dominic Cummings who worked as Gove's special adviser until 2013 before moving to head up the Leave campaign in the run up to the 2016 referendum on British membership of the European Union. In 2019 Cummings became Boris Johnson's de facto chief-of-staff, leaving the government after only a year to then become the prime minister's most vociferous and public critic.

According to the intellectual historian Stefan Collini:

In Cummings's ontology, the world appears to be made up of an extremely small number of outstandingly clever individuals and a mass of mediocrities. Human progress depends on giving those with the highest IQ (he's very keen on the notion of IQ) the

education that will allow them fully to develop their talents and then the freedom to apply them.

(Collini, 2020)

Among an array of similarly maverick views, Cummings also holds that genetics plays a more important role than education in advancing social mobility; most teachers are, at best, mediocre; and more generous funding for schools should be handed directly to parents for them to spend their money where they wish. Cummings was possibly best known for his pugilistic and overly personal briefings while at the Department of Education, including using anonymous social media accounts to undermine opponents of the government; all of which contributed to the view taken by Prime Minister David Cameron in 2014 that Michael Gove had to be removed as Secretary of State for Education as he had become 'toxic' to teachers (Millar, 2019). Another influential adviser of this early period was Sam Freedman, a senior policy adviser to Gove at the DfE from 2010 until 2013, later becoming an executive director at Teach First and CEO of Education Partnerships Group. Freedman, now a Senior Adviser to Ark schools, has carved out a somewhat unique insider/outsider position for himself in the current educational landscape; considered by many as a well-connected and knowledgeable source of information regarding the workings of government, he has been, at times, a vocal critic of policy through both his journalism and the substack column he shares with his father (the academic Lawrence Freedman), and on social media, where he is a prolific presence.

Early Coalition reform was implemented with brutal speed. Within weeks of getting into office, Gove put in place plans to speed up the academy programme with the aim of further 'freeing' the state sector from the alleged 'control' of democratic local authorities. Schools judged as good or outstanding were encouraged to convert to academy status, many lured, in a period of austerity, by the offer of a sizeable portion of cash previously held back by local authorities, while those judged inadequate or requiring improvement were threatened with forced conversion under a government-assigned sponsor.

Autonomy was an early watch word, although it quickly became clear that most schools could not operate alone nor could the DfE run thousands of schools from its headquarters in London's Great

Smith Street. Chaos threatened, and so multi-academy trusts began to multiply, encouraged by government. Given the administrative mess that has since developed, with two main systems of school governance – maintained schools and academies – and parallel layers of bureaucracy – local authorities and Regional School Commissioners – the government has attempted various ineffective tidy-ups of its self-created 'Wild West'. Since 2016 it has insisted that all schools must join multi-academy trusts by 2030; this, despite little hard evidence that such a policy will increase either educational quality or equality.

Technically, England's schools are non-profit making but clearly some school leaders and trust executives have financially benefitted from running schools. Within months of becoming secretary of state for education, Gove had appointed a number of wealthy corporate figures and venture capitalists as non-executive members of the DfE Board. A Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report in 2013 claimed the DfE was diverting money from under-performing schools to prop up its academy programme; a 2018 PAC report accused government of failing to curb excessive salaries of academy and multi-academy trust leaders, with academy accounts for 2015/16 revealing that over a hundred executives were being paid more than £150,000; in the year ending August 2016, 40 per cent of academy trusts were also found to have engaged in 'related party transactions' (paying public money to individuals or businesses with whom they have a prior personal and often family connection) worth a total of £120m. Meanwhile, cash-strapped schools have been consistently deprived of vital funds.

The boldest innovation of the Gove period was the creation of the free school programme, launched with great fanfare in September 2011 under the auspices of the New Schools Network (NSN) which was first set up and run by the then twenty-five-year-old Gove ally Rachel Wolf. (Wolf has remained influential within successive Conservative administrations and co-wrote the 2019 Tory party manifesto with Munira Mirza, a close aide to Boris Johnson.) Initially celebrated as a programme that would encourage and enable parents and teachers to start their own schools, by 2018 the vast majority of free schools were opened by existing schools, multi-academy trusts or faith groups. As with academies, free schools (essentially, academies started from scratch) have brought both charitable and corporate interests into the running of English

education, including some wealthy businessmen and Conservative Party donors, to add to a long-established church presence. These changes have led, over time, to a significant diminishing of local involvement in, and oversight of, primary and secondary schools, with schools becoming more like consumer brands than a community-based public service.

Under Michael Gove, and Minister of State Nick Gibb, the curriculum was also redrawn along more traditional lines, with the introduction of more tests and harder exams at both primary and secondary levels and the removal of both oracy work (notoriously dismissed as ‘idle talk’ by Gibb) and the coursework element of GCSEs (exams taken by all pupils at 16). In 2012, two of the four figures on the expert panel set up to advise on curriculum reform publicly criticized the government’s ‘prescriptive’ proposals, arguing that they ‘fly in the face of evidence from the UK and internationally and, in our judgement, cannot be justified educationally’ (Stewart and Ward, 2012).

For Gove, Gibb and their powerful allies inside and outside government, a ‘good education’ was judged to be a series of sequential and testable facts in the core academic subjects, shaped around ‘high culture’ values (supposedly ‘the best that has been thought and said’), much of it modelled on the presumed excellence of the curriculum of private and selective schools, but without reference to the consistently superior resources and favoured intake of these sectors. State school quality was to be judged on a narrow range of exam measures, while the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) was given the role of policing school performance and curriculum quality. The threat of a poor Ofsted judgement continues to hang over the nation’s headteachers, some battling to meet harsh accountability measures in the most unfavourable of circumstances.

With the sacking of Michael Gove in 2014, many of Gove’s allies feared that his approach to education risked losing policy momentum and moved to set up Parents and Teachers for Excellence (PTE) an organization that stressed the importance of ‘core knowledge’ and strict discipline. PTE has been accused of ‘astroturfing’ – a practice in which a group masks or plays down the existence and role of influential backers in order to promote itself as a grassroots movement; certainly, the PTE board involved some of the most powerful allies of government, including Rachel Wolf, Dame Rachel de Souza (then head of the Inspiration Trust and now

Children's Commissioner) and Jon Moynihan, a major donor to both Vote Leave and Boris Johnson's campaign and later one of Liz Truss's most prominent backers. In order to promote its view of education more actively, free of the restrictions of charity law, the group established itself as a private company in 2016.

## Dominant narratives of the age

Despite Michael Gove's departure, and with no subsequent secretary of state stamping their own distinct identity on education policy, a particular set of narratives and initiatives have continued to shape the direction of government with differing degrees of emphasis. I will concentrate on three that have particular relevance for ITE.

Firstly, Conservative policy has consistently played upon a politically convenient and lazy assumption that 'progressive' education is at the root of the failure of state education and that it has posed one of the bigger threats to educational equality. In a typically entertaining and disingenuous speech to the Social Market Foundation in January 2013, Michael Gove laid the blame at the feet of 'progressive educational theory ... (which) sought to replace an emphasis on acquiring knowledge in traditional subjects with a new stress on children following where their curiosity led them. And that was usually away from outdated practices such as reading, writing and arithmetic'.

In a book published around the same time, *Progressively Worse: The Burden of Bad Ideas in British Schools* (for which Michael Gove wrote the introduction), teacher Robert Peal took up the same rallying cry claiming, 'Progressive education has given us decades of chaotic schools, disenchanting teachers and pupil failure .... Hard work is not a fashionable concept in today's schools' (Peal, cited in Benn and Downs, 2016, p. 124).

It is always hard to know where to begin with such cartoon-style representations of a complex tradition, particularly a set of differing practices that have largely involved decades of honourable and innovative intellectual and classroom work; sadly, much of this sort of reductive representation went unchallenged in the early years of the Coalition (Benn et al., 2022, pages 88–113). Instead, E.D. Hirsch's theory of 'core knowledge' – the idea that there are approximately 5,000 names, phrases, dates and concepts that every

citizen should know and be able to retrieve easily in order to progress to higher order learning – rose to prominence. English teacher Daisy Christodoulou found fame within the educational world, in 2014, with *The Seven Myths about Education*, a more sophisticated take on the Gove/Peal line, attacking an ‘educational orthodoxy’ which, she claimed, subscribed to such ideas as ‘You can always just look it up’ or that ‘teaching knowledge is indoctrination’.

Over time, many teachers have questioned what they see as the dangerous oversimplification of past and present practice. Joseph Bispham, a teacher from London’s Forest Hill, registered his coherent objection as follows:

Most of us aren’t defined by catch-all labels .... I, for one, am happy to teach at the front and directly instruct but I also don’t see group work and learning carousels as the root of all evil and have had great success with these methods. Equally, I like high behaviour expectations and believe students should be excluded if they endanger their colleagues, but I am deeply suspicious of silent corridors and think there is something very wrong with schools off-rolling large numbers of children. I don’t think I’m alone in this position.

(Bispham, 2018)

A second dominant narrative, particularly in the early years of the Coalition, was that poverty is no excuse for educational failure. Those who viewed the challenges of English schooling at least in part through the lens of social class or economic inequality were judged guilty of the ‘soft bigotry of low expectations’. Instead, it was implied, if not always directly argued, that the impact of poverty could largely be mitigated by use of the right curriculum, strict discipline and the driven labour of sufficiently committed teachers: idealistic, clever, hard-working young men and women who would somehow scatter the stardust of their own attainment onto their disadvantaged charges. A few schools were, and continue to be, publicly lauded for bucking the trend of educational failure for the poor, usually through a narrowed curriculum and authoritarian practices, sometimes even tipping over, as in one famous case, into a culture of ‘bullying, fear and favouritism’ (Weale, 2022).

A third, connected, narrative attributes much educational failure to a range of institutions often accused of being simultaneously

lax and overcontrolling, representative of an outmoded liberal elite that were nonetheless wedded to the encouragement of low educational standards and dangerously removed from the 'real world' of the classroom teacher. Those mainly under fire were local education authorities but also universities (responsible for much teacher education) and, of course, the trade unions, whom Michael Gove treated from the outset rather like an enemy army. The assault on the local authority role in education has a long history in politics, beginning in the Thatcher period and continuing through New Labour years; poor practice in some authorities was used to damn the maintained model as a whole, despite acknowledgement from key Gove advisors such as Sam Freedman that some local authorities were indeed excellent. Under Michael Gove and David Cameron, the clear aim was to free schools of 'municipal control' altogether.

University-based teacher education has been frequently maligned despite receiving consistently good Ofsted grades for quality. Ignoring clear evidence that the best systems worldwide have rigorous, extended, university-based teacher education programmes, the Coalition government introduced non-qualified teachers into free schools. Funding for university courses was also cut back in the autumn of 2012, the government continuing to favour a range of classroom-based training programmes including Teach First and School Direct. As Robert Peal crowed, 'university education departments, the temples of progressive education, are in the process of being, if not cleansed, significantly challenged' (Peal, cited in Benn and Downs, 2016, p. 97).

The somewhat arrogant assumption that only a right-leaning Conservative government grasped the importance of knowledge acquisition and good pupil behaviour was not, at least in the early years of the Coalition, adequately challenged from within the mainstream media nor, it has to be said, from within state education where exhausted heads and teachers were subject to a battering of constant criticism, policy changes and unwarranted scrutiny. I can still recall the barely controlled fury of state school heads at Michael Gove's jibes about 'knowledge' and the claim that, until he came along, schools were not sufficiently concerned with teaching it. The debate has now largely moved onto social media, where leading supporters of the government have fostered the idea of the 'voiceless' teacher talking back at an uncaring liberal elite.

However, just as important as what the NEE talks about is what it doesn't talk about; a set of interconnected silences that have grown more significant over the years, particularly as government promises and policies have failed. For example, when considering the challenges facing English state education, prominent figures within the NEE rarely seriously discuss any of the following: the historic unequal and hierarchical schools landscape (in particular, the role of private education in perpetuating educational inequality), declining school funding, stagnant wages, excessive teacher workload or the impact of broader economic inequality. Instead, it is frequently suggested that a large part of school success is down to the 'right attitude' of both teacher and pupil: those forward-facing, industrious and obedient creatures, unquestioning of the economic and political systems within which they live, study and work. Michael Gove's early reforms were also implemented alongside savage economic austerity during which school funding declined and poverty deepened, making the job of many teachers far more difficult. As the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has made clear, an improved school system has to march hand-in-hand with fairer economic redistribution.

Finally, many of these arguments have, quite simply, lost credibility over time. The scandal of some schools 'off-rolling' students in order to boost results has dented the reputation of some leading players in the sector; it is now well established, through work done by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) and others, that Michael Gove's reforms have systematically failed a significant proportion of children – the so-called 'forgotten third'; there is increasing criticism of cultures of harsh discipline, with their punishment booths and silent corridors; last, but very much not least, the crisis in Special Education Needs has deepened.

Ironically, one area of challenge has come indirectly from private schools, many of whom have, in recent years, adopted what we might call (with all due care) more 'progressive' approaches while the state system continues to be corralled into imitating cultures and pedagogies that belong to a long-ago age. Finally, the privations of the pandemic years and an escalating cost of living crisis have made tragically clear the impact of poverty, and inequality, on school experience and outcomes.

## Pillars of the establishment

In all political endeavours, there are tribes: influential networks of lobbyists, campaigners, government and post-holders. Friendships are often forged between those who exercise power and those who seek to influence it. However, it is perhaps the extent and intensity of the overlap between figures within government and the NEE that has been so striking over the past twelve years: the revolving door of special advisers, policy entrepreneurs, members of right-leaning think tanks such as Policy Exchange and 'grassroots' organizations such as PTE and researchED, the influential organization set up by Tom Bennett to inform teachers of the latest research on certain educational theories and practice, a body which has attracted influential figures, such as Daisy Christodoulou, Nick Gibb and Katherine Birbalsingh. Several leaders of prominent academy trusts and free schools have won appointments to key roles in government or places on expert advisory committees with others allegedly granted regular private meetings with ministers and special advisers; lucrative contracts have been awarded to lobbyists favourable to government. In 2019, the husband and wife team of Rachel Wolf and James Frayne co-founded Public First, a commercial lobby firm that specializes in public persuasion campaigns. Thanks, in part, to the long-established friendship of Dominic Cummings with James Frayne, Public First was granted a million pounds to do work for government in the early phases of the pandemic, a contract awarded outside the official tendering processes (Smith, 2020).

The Conservative government has never made any secret of its preference for academies, multi-academy trusts and free schools, and bodies like the Queen Street group that represents their leading members. Reporting on a reception at Downing Street held by Theresa May in 2018, *Schools Week* described the reception as an "ideological love-in" at which staff from academies and free schools outnumbered those from maintained schools five to one ... despite the fact academies make up just 35 per cent of schools nationally. Just 15 per cent of invitees teach in mainstream local maintained schools'. (Whitaker, 2018). During the later stages of the pandemic, state school headteachers, particularly in deprived areas, told me that government was listening only to a select group of academy trust heads on how to award exam grades, but that the latter were proposing an approach that favoured their chains of schools

but would have a negative impact on other schools to whom the government paid little or no heed.

This closeness goes well beyond party invitations to Downing Street; it also affects the genuine independence, and perception of that independence, of some of the most important posts in education. In 2016, in a highly unusual move, the Parliamentary Education Select Committee refused to ratify the appointment of the government's preferred candidate, Amanda Spielman – who, like so many at the top of English education, had previously held senior positions within the charity ARK Schools – to the position of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI). The Committee acknowledged that while Spielman had a 'broad range of experience ... (she) failed to demonstrate to us the vision and passion we would expect from a prospective HMCI'. The Committee also expressed concern at 'the lack of expertise on children's services amongst Ofsted's senior management'.

Spielman remains in post, with many claiming that Ofsted is too close to government to do its job properly (*Times Educational Supplement*, 2021). The organization has also been severely criticized by several leading academics in recent years for serious misinterpretation of their findings in 'research reviews' in Maths and English and modern languages. Critics charge that Ofsted's mission is to skew its own conclusions towards more traditionalist approaches (Mansell, 2022a). At the time of writing, Ofsted's role has become even more controversial, following the suicide of Ruth Perry, the headteacher of a primary school in Reading, who was awaiting the public announcement of the downgrading of her school from outstanding to inadequate.

The development of Oak Academy is another example of the potentially unholy alliance of state and private interests and the state-sponsored narrowing of educational content. Oak Academy began as an online curriculum resource hub, set up at great speed during the pandemic to provide video lessons to schools and pupils managing remote education, with a board of advisers drawn from a familiar roster of leading figures within academies and government-supporting organizations. In 2022, Oak Academy National Quango, as it had by then become, was granted 43 million by the government to produce bitesize 'curriculum support' for schools, with former Gove adviser and *Dragon's Den* star, Henry de Zoete, appointed

to the Oak board. De Zoete was reported to have advised the Oak team on an early proposal to privatize the body, a scheme which would have made millions for Oak leaders under the terms of a future sale, but the idea was subsequently dropped (Dickens, 2021).

In September 2022, Jon Coles, Chief Executive of the influential multi-academy trust United Learning, quit the OAK board. Coles was highly critical of the actions of government which had, he alleged, moved Oak away from a 'charitable and collaborative' body to becoming a vehicle 'to procure and promote a set of curriculum resources which exemplify ministers' curriculum ideals ...' putting pressure on schools to use it. Coles also posed the more fundamental democratic question, 'do we really want to live in a society where a large proportion of schools are following a government-approved lesson-by-lesson curriculum?' (Coles, 2022).

## Political postscript

Thanks to the serial disasters of Boris Johnson's and Liz Truss' premierships and a widespread sense of fatigue within the country after nearly a decade and a half of Conservative rule, Labour is widely expected to win the next election. However, to return to my original point about ideological and policy continuity, it is highly unlikely that any future government will easily be able to unpick thirteen years of (essentially) Conservative policy across the board, and no sign – yet – that they are ready substantially to challenge many of the key shibboleths described here. However, if the education policies of Labour are not to be hijacked by the powerful networks established over the past decade, the party must first and foremost search beyond the narrow walls of the educational establishment described here and forge fresh approaches concerning the purpose and provision of education itself. In so doing, it must consult a far broader and more representative body of leaders, teachers, policy experts and researchers. Above all, at a time when vital principles such as good governance and transparency have been so badly compromised, any future government must think strategically about how to transform some of the most powerful organizations serving state education into more institutionally independent, and genuinely publicly accountable, bodies.

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## CHAPTER THREE

# The state of exception: How policies created the crisis of ITE in England

*David Spendlove*

This chapter focuses on how policy developments in initial teacher education (ITE) in England since 2010 have worked together incrementally and strategically to create what has become known in political theory as a ‘state of exception’ (Agamben, 2005) whereby the normal rules of governing are suspended, and power is asserted by the state in the face of a crisis or emergency. The crisis and emergency – in the case of ITE in England – are a construction, a problem-formulation (Ellis, Steadman & Trippestad, 2019) by the authoritarian, ‘strong state’ factions of the Conservative governments in England since 2010 who have asserted ‘traditionalist’ educational values as part of a wider project of ‘cultural restorationism’ (Ball 2013; see also Chapter 2). The crisis is framed as one of social justice (Verger, Fontdevila & Zancajo, 2016) – or more specifically, social mobility – and teachers and their university-based teacher educators have been responsabilized for systemic failures in economic, industrial and social policies. These failures of university-based teacher educators, so this problem-formulation goes, require urgent and radical action, action that is

exceptional in going outside the usual practices of governing and even outside typical expectations of democratic accountability, but that are justified nonetheless by the extent and the urgency of the crisis. Hence the situation that can now be found in England.

So, in this chapter, I will focus on how such ‘fast policies’ (Peck, 2011) have actually impacted on ITE within universities in England. In doing so, I will analyse and reflect upon policy developments by the Conservative-led governments from 2010 up to the time of publication, approximately thirteen years. During this time, despite their evident success according to multiple measures, including the government’s own surveys and inspection data (Ellis, 2022), universities and university-based teacher educators have repeatedly been framed as the problem and not as the solution in establishing high-quality teacher preparation programmes, which in England accounts for approximately 35,000 new teachers each year (DfE, 2022).

From the outset, it is important to note that this chapter is neither a defence of the status quo nor a nostalgic tribute to ITE’s golden past. As a university leader and teacher educator of long experience, I am not anti-change nor starting from a position that universities should have an unchallenged entitlement or monopoly on ITE or continuing professional development. However, my concerns and my interest in this chapter are the abuse and reckless misuse of power and politics in the pursuit of nakedly ideological aims by post-2010 governments in England. Agamben’s discussion of the ‘state of exception’ is therefore useful because it shows how, when faced with powerful constructions of crises, exceptional, authoritarian and anti-democratic means of governing become normalized.

## **Implementing a ‘state of exception’**

From 2010 onwards, the rapid policy ‘solutions’ being implemented in ITE in England appeared to be disproportionate and in contradiction with the ‘problems’ they were allegedly attempting to resolve. Such reform was however justified misleadingly on the basis of addressing ‘emergency’ issues of quality and equity within this emergent ‘common paradigm of government’ (Preston, Chadderton & Kitagawa, 2014; Agamben, 2005). Creating the state

of exception involved the suspension and bypassing of ‘standard’ democratic processes and protocols (such as genuine consultation and consideration of impact assessments); the abolition of public bodies that had oversight functions (such as the Training and Development Agency for Schools) (Ellis, Steadman & Mansell, 2021); the cultivation of social media actors and ‘Twitter warriors’ to perpetuate an ongoing ‘culture war’ that promotes authoritarian or ‘traditional’ policy decisions (Watson, 2021) – all of which have subsequently become embedded as the norm and maintained across successive iterations of the same post-2010 governments. Thus, this new *modus operandi* has resulted in an abuse of power culminating in sustained, cumulative ‘threats and challenges’ aimed at, first, destabilizing university provision and then effectively colonizing it with state-mandated curriculums and tight surveillance (to the level of inspecting reading lists and PowerPoint slides).

The extent and urgency of government policy reform is however perplexing, given that the starting point for the new coalition government was a positive one with the annual survey of newly qualified teachers (with a response of around 11,000) in July 2011 having a 90 per cent rating of good or very good for the quality of the training they had received. At the same time Ofsted reported that ‘most initial teacher education inspected by Ofsted has been judged to be good or outstanding, although this varies between phases. There is very little inadequate provision’ (Ofsted, 2011, p. 75). Whilst even the newly appointed secretary of state for education, Michael Gove, stated ‘I believe we have the best generation of teachers ever in our schools’ (2010) followed by ‘I have been struck by the dedication and commitment in schools and universities alike to play their part in the recruitment and training of new teachers’ (DfE, 2011a, p. 3).

The government strategy has therefore, despite the evidence of high-quality provision, been one of creating a decade long, deliberate, disruptive turbulence within the ITE sector in England, disruptive and destabilizing enough to allow a more authoritarian intervention to slip in, initially almost un-noticed, as I show later. This disruption has not emerged as a by-product of policy but where the overall aim was disruption driven by the ‘urgency to reform’ to artificially address issues of quality and equity. As such, a form of education ‘disaster capitalism’ (Preston, Chadderton, & Kitagawa, 2014), where ‘emergencies’ are used to distract, has

been falsely deployed through framing initial teacher education as an area in need of urgent reform. This urgency being immediately apparent from 2010, where ITE, as part of a significant number of broader and 'ambitious' education reforms, was to face both hostility and significant disruption from the new government. Indeed, the extent of this hostility reached the popular media (*Daily Telegraph*) where a government source was quoted saying they would 'slash the number of students on university-based courses over the next three years' as for too long the 'left-wing training colleges have imbued teachers with useless teaching theories that don't work and actively damage children's education' (Paton, 2012).

Whilst ITE was used to being framed as a policy problem (Cochran-Smith, 2004) and a soft target for previous governments (Whitty, 2014), the extent, depth and determination of the new government to rapidly and permanently disrupt university provision was at a new level. Led by the Secretary of State for Education (2010–2014) Michael Gove and Minister of state for Schools Standards Nick Gibb (intermittently since 2011), an antagonistic and provocative characterization of academics and research within schools of education was maintained. Subsequently from the outset, endorsed by a 'discourse of derision' (Wallace, 1993), a false binary polarized and framed as traditional versus progressive teaching methods and proliferated by new forms of social media (Watson, 2021) emerged. Universities were portrayed as part of 'the Blob' who were depicted as 'enemies of promise' (Gove, 2013b). Whilst Nick Gibb, the minister of state for schools, stoked this narrative further by extraordinarily claiming that in order to stop 'slipping down the international rankings' and 'to boost the professional autonomy of teachers, to raise their status and to raise education standards in this country' a battle was required to liberate teachers from the dominance of 'academics in the education faculties of universities' (Gibb, 2014).

Ultimately Gove's rhetorical successful problem-formulation of systemic ITE failures relied on creating sufficient instability within the sector through demonizing the contribution of education departments within universities. Central to this strategy was accelerating the most rapid period of policy reform in the history of ITE (McNamara, Murray & Phillips, 2017) which included a tenfold increase in the number of 'providers' of ITE achieved

through incentivizing alternative ‘school-led’ routes into teaching. Gove’s emphasis being focused on diversifying and distributing teacher preparation programmes to those organizations the government would be able to manipulate and control, namely schools and charitable organizations, under the pretence of challenging the ‘vested interests’ of universities who were simply wishing to maintain an ‘effective monopoly of teacher training to sustain their finances’ (Gove, 2013).

### ***Ratcheting up the challenge: The exceptional state of ITE policy in England***

Having framed the crisis and formulated the problem of the failure of teachers to deliver social mobility because of the failures of their training in universities, the post-2010 Conservative-led governments set about creating a series of challenges for university providers, in particular, to first appear to shift the power and funding to schools and then, when that move did not work out as planned, to increase control through the Department for Education in England and the increasingly closely linked schools inspectorate, Ofsted. The challenges – and the evolution of the state of exception – came in the form of interconnected policies:

#### **1 Structural reform and the teachers’ standards**

Almost immediately upon entering power in 2010, the Conservative coalition government set about initiating radical policy reform including closure of the Training and Development Agency (TDA) for Schools, the main organization with oversight of ITE, as part of what was described as the bonfire of the Quango’s (*The Guardian*, 2012). The closure of the semi-autonomous TDA – accountable directly to Parliament – with the loss of significant teacher education policy expertise and sector intelligence, meant a new adversarial approach was to emerge from the Department for Education. Initially, this was in the form of the new National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) led by Charlie Taylor, a ‘chief executive with very little understanding of school leadership’ as part of a ‘shocking sequence of policy decisions made by education ministers’ (Dunford, 2017).

The subsequent absorption of the NCTL into the DfE intensified the strong control being exercised by the state despite a superficially ‘market’-oriented approach to ITE. The abolition of the NCTL coincided with the introduction of £9000 tuition fees, whilst direct funding from the government for ITE providers was also removed. As part of a new approach to recruitment, financial incentives were also introduced for trainee teachers which would vary by degree classification, phase and subject. In addition, new skills tests (later to be abandoned) were framed as ‘more rigorous’ which moved to pre-entry tests, where applicants had three attempts to pass each test with failing to do so resulting in not being able to retake a test for twenty-four months.

A further substantial change was a ‘major rethink’, by the secretary of state for education, of the teachers’ standards (DfE, 2011) in his ‘quest to improve the quality of teaching’ and ‘bring rigour to “woolly” criteria’ (Gove, 2011). The review of the teachers’ ‘Standards’, which are central to attaining Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), was chaired by Sally Coates (Principal of the Burlington Danes Academy) who aimed to reduce the existing 102 standards to fewer than ten (DfE, 2011c). Furthermore, and an early indication of what was to lay ahead with future reviews, were the concerns raised over representation from university ITE providers who were excluded from the group, despite ITE providers being central to assessing the suitability of a trainee for recommendation of QTS.

Ironically at a similar time to ‘raising the bar for teachers’ (DfE, 2011), the government was also confirming the removal of the requirement for QTS for teachers in Academies (state-owned semi-independent schools) in England (DfE, 2012). Academies represent approximately 80 per cent of secondary schools with this significant policy reform being seen at the time as ‘perverse’ and ‘clear dereliction of duty’ combined with a clear threat to ITE providers (Mulholland, 2012), particularly given the recent introduction of fees of £9000 to train to be a teacher.

What was clearly apparent from these early, rapid and significant policy changes was that the government had little regard for the impact of their decisions on ITE providers or for the preparation of teachers. The combination of the removal of the TDA, alongside the abolition of the General Teaching Council (DfE, 2010b) for England (who held responsibility for professional standards), the diminution of teacher standards, the introduction of a marketized

approach together with the removal of the requirement to be a qualified teacher, all pointed towards devaluing the profession and those who trained teachers. Consequently, the cumulative impact of rapid implementation and extensive operational changes required, alongside other major reforms listed, created an antagonistic and provocative relationship with the DfE and government ministers who appeared determined to generate a continual and incessant ‘turbulence’ within the sector. Within a few years of taking power, the government had abolished key public bodies that had had oversight; changed the professional standards; removed direct funding; increased tuition fees; and removed the requirement for teachers to have a qualification in state-funded academy schools.

## **2 *The Importance of Teaching: The Schools White Paper***

*The Importance of Teaching* (the Schools White Paper) (DfE, 2010b) outlined a radical policy for the future training of teachers that immediately posed an existential threat to university provision. ‘Outstanding schools’ were to be given a ‘much greater role in teacher training in the same way that our best hospitals train new doctors and nurses’ (p. 3) through the creation of a network of ‘Teaching Schools’. In addition, the White Paper outlined the ‘reform of initial teacher training’, including increasing the proportion of time trainees spend in the classroom (p. 9), with it being important to note that these radical changes were not founded on evidence, but deeply rooted in ideology and was the first real sign of what was to come from the new government. Rhetorically, *The Importance of Teaching* was a critically important text in establishing the state of exception.

Whilst not lacking rhetorical power, the White Paper did illustrate a lack of understanding of the sector it was attempting to reform. However, it was the follow up policy paper, the implementation plan for ‘Training our next generation of outstanding teachers’ (DfE, 2011a) where the true impact of further policy reform was to emerge. Within this policy the artificial binary of ‘school-led’ versus ‘university-led’ was established, setting schools up in opposition to universities, with no acknowledgement of the likely impact on long-established existing partnerships. New entities to be known as ‘teaching schools’ were to be at the heart of a school-led system

where one of their six (colloquially known as ‘the Big 6’) priorities was responsibility for ITE, where they were to drive quality and value for money, albeit neither priority was defined. ‘School Direct’ was also to be central to this policy and represented ‘the most far-reaching change in ITT in England’ (Jackson & Burch, 2016) for twenty years as it ‘was intended to shift the balance of power, resources and modes of training teachers away from universities towards schools’ (Ellis & Spendlove, 2020, p. 953). The primary rationale being to marginalize the contribution and influence of universities whilst attempting to shift the narrative towards one where it appeared school-led provision was the major contributor to ITE even though almost all provision was still located within universities in one form or another. *The Importance of Teaching* was crucial in establishing the social justice (mobility) crisis that successive governments reforms would be intended to address.

### **3 The Carter review of initial teacher education in England**

One of the last acts of Michael Gove whilst in the role of secretary of state for education was to initiate, in May 2014, a review of ‘Initial Teacher Training’ (DfE, 2015), with the obvious irony being that the review was carried out at the end of his tenure and after the four years of major reforms that he had instigated. Of greater concern was that the review was being led by Sir Andrew Carter, someone who, on the basis of his apparent experience, appeared to lack both depth and breadth of understanding of ITE. Similar to the Teachers Standards review, the advisory panel once again lacked expertise of the sector with just one of the members, Professor Samantha Twiselton, a mainstay of government reviews (Mansell, 2019), being from an ITE background.

Whilst the recommendations of the Carter review were eventually largely benign, possibly due to the sacking of Gove three months into the review, the biggest impact and ultimate threat was that the review became the means to justify the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Content Framework (see point 5 below), even though the Carter review of ITT was insufficiently rigorous to be able to validate such reforms. Regardless of the absence a robust evidence base, appendix A of the final report proposed ten key areas that would prove a starting point for a ‘sector led framework for ITT content’.

It is notable that, whereas in other countries such as the United States, Norway and Australia, for example, there have been numerous ‘reviews’ of ITE by national governments, some of which have gone on to be influential in other jurisdictions (e.g. Australia’s *Classroom Ready Teachers* [the Craven report] in Brazil), England has very few and they – and the Carter Review especially – have been flimsy in comparison. Rather than a rigorous review of the evidence and research, Carter’s report was primarily another articulation of the arguments being used to construct the crisis.

#### **4 ‘Allocations’ and pseudo-marketization**

Prior to the abolition of the TDA in April 2012, the oversight and management of the number of new teachers who could be trained each year was highly regulated by this agency according to phase, subject and region, based on a teacher supply model and managed through a largely transparent allocation process. On this basis, university providers would be able to plan, typically on three-year cycles for financial commitments, workforce requirements alongside managing the size of their school partnerships to ensure they maintained sufficient capacity and quality to train the number of ‘trainees’ allocated. In 2012, however the secretary of state for education announced a major restructuring of the trainee allocation policy, with significant changes introduced into the distribution of ITT places with an emphasis directed towards school control of places alongside the creation of a market forcing providers to compete against each other.

As part of the new policy the government planned for the growth of school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) alongside ‘school-led’ ITT through giving priority in the allocation of places to School Direct and existing SCITT provision. Under this new policy university providers were no longer guaranteed to be allocated trainees unless they were recognized by Ofsted as being ‘Outstanding’. Consequently, almost half of all allocations, for those providers rated as ‘Good’ by Ofsted, would be based on prioritizing allocations to the newly introduced School Direct route. What this meant in practice was a system was established where universities rated ‘Good’ were moved from first to fifth in line when being allocated training places, placed behind ‘Outstanding’ university providers and other forms of school-led provision. Ultimately

'Good' rated university providers were forced to negotiate and bargain with schools to 'buy back' training places in order to remain operational (Ellis & Spendlove, 2020).

Alongside the redistribution of training places, the government also further increased volatility by moving next to a system of 'no allocations', which this time meant providers had to compete against each other in a 'free for all' to recruit trainee teachers before a national cap was met. The system was so flawed that by November that year (2015), the scheme was introduced, long-standing and high-quality ITE providers attempting to maintain their standards were at risk of closure as they had not 'filled' their places quickly enough. The situation was only addressed by the intervening of the secretary of state for education who realized that without 'a last-minute government intervention' (Ward, 2015) the History PGCE at Cambridge university, a programme Gove had publicly praised, would face closure.

The volatility linked to allocations has to some extent abated recently, largely due to an ongoing teacher recruitment crisis created by the government having failed to meet its own recruitment targets for nine out of the last ten years (Walker, 2022). Accordingly, the DfE has now moved away from management or quality control of allocations, moving to an almost entirely unregulated recruitment process in almost any subject in any part of the country without constraint by quality or type of provision and consequently moving away from a controlled regional supply model.

The 'allocations methodologies' used by governments since 2010 have been deliberately disruptive and intended to undermine the economic basis of universities' ITE provision by transferring both power and resources to schools. In any other part of the university, such deliberate disruption and undermining of financial viability would have brought the wrath of vice-chancellors, yet it is characteristic of the culture of university-based ITE in England that it didn't.

## **5 Core Content Framework (CCF)**

In the CCF (DfE, 2019), when combined with the Market Review reaccreditation process (see point 7), we see the emergence of genuinely existential threats to the future of ITE within universities in England that now exists. Such a threat emerges through questioning the legitimacy of ITE existing within a university setting where

content and ‘delivery’ are prescribed, proscribed and monitored for fidelity and compliance. As is often said, a paradox exists that while the autonomy of universities is vehemently protected, the vehemently protective stance disappears at the door to ITE programmes.

In addition to the challenge to the autonomy of universities, the introduction of the CCF also represents the biggest shift in shaping the content for ITE this millennium through attempting to codify what those ‘training’ to be teachers should understand (learn that, learn how to) in relation to five core areas of behaviour management, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and professional behaviours (DfE, 2019). Whilst the CCF is naively framed as presenting the ‘best quality evidence’, due to an endorsement by the Education Endowment Foundation, such positioning, as identified by Baird (2022) presents ‘axiological questions about whose knowledge is privileged, ontological questions about the changing nature of knowledge, and pedagogical questions about how teachers should gain this knowledge’ (p. 34). Consequently, the CCF is articulated as ‘over-simplifications of Conservative education policy’s most obvious preoccupations: memory and, in particular, cognitive load theory (CLT)’ (Turvey et al., 2019). The result is a collection of statements that reflects the government’s limited ambition of how the CCF should be operationalized by ITE providers, which risks skewing the prioritizing of learning towards a narrow and somewhat-outdated version of cognitive psychology, seriously lacking in the kind of nuance that makes translation into the professional setting viable whilst also setting the intellectual and conceptual bar extremely low.

Little of this is however a surprise given that the emergence of the CCF was an entirely hasty process with the ‘Expert Advisory Group’ once again drawing on ‘hand-picked’ loyalists (Mansell, 2021) with limited credibility, recognized expertise or history of success within university ITE. The rapid consultation with the sector followed by a seven-week formal consultation across the summer meant that the CCF was hurriedly approved ahead of schedule to avoid election purdah rules prior to the 2019 general election. As such, the CCF now represents the flawed blueprint upon which all new teachers in England will be trained alongside the basis by which all training providers will be accredited. By implication this also means providers must become complicit in pushing government ideology to remain operational whilst their agency becomes marginalized.

## 6 Establishing a National Institute of Teaching

Previous policies based on marginalizing universities have primarily focused on increasing ‘School-led’ provision through growing SCITTs and School Direct provision. Despite government attempts to create an artificial binary of school-led provision, the reality has continued to be that universities play a significant role in the majority of all ITE (DfE, 2022a). However, even though School Direct presented significant challenges to the sector when it was first introduced in 2011, it has become absorbed and embedded into university partnerships with schools. Ironically, the successful implementation of School Direct now presents a challenge to the state as the number of School Direct ‘providers’ is so large as to be unwieldy whilst making the applications process complex for prospective ITE students choosing between a multitude of (small) providers.

Contrary to the previous emphasis on ‘school-led’ provision, in 2021 the government announced the establishment of its own ‘flagship’ and ‘world-leading’ Institute of Teaching (DfE, 2021a) that will have its own ‘awarding’ powers (see Chapter 9 by Daly for a more extensive account). Therefore, for the first time, the DfE now has the opportunity to develop and ‘certificate’ alternative provision at scale whilst being able to control the content and delivery model of the new Institute through its contractual arrangements. Of greater significance is the DfE now has an alternative model which it can scale up and use as leverage to compete against existing university provision through incentivized growth via further policy reform.

Whilst the National Institute of Teaching (NIOT) is at the forefront of the government strategy for marginalizing mainstream university provision this will be alongside other government-backed organizations who also operate nationally on a contractual basis. Ambition Institute, whilst framed as an education charity has largely been funded by the DfE and from 2024 will also operate as a provider of ITT. Likewise Teach First, also a charity, gained a £113 million contract from the DfE in 2021 for six further years of national provision framed as ‘high-potential initial teacher training and leadership development programme’ (Gibbons, 2021) even though it has failed to meet recruitment targets (Walker, 2022a).

The NIOT is a truly exceptional move by the English state. For the first time, it has initiated plans to establish its own university

with degree awarding powers to control exactly the ‘how and what’ it wants teachers to be taught. It has used Trumpian rhetoric to announce it as the ‘flagship’ ITE institution in England despite not existing at the time of the announcement and consequently having no track record. This is the realm of ‘alternative facts’ as well as marketing hyperbole. It is an indication of how seriously the state wants to construct the problem of failing ITE that it would by-pass all the existing structures set up by prior reforms to establish its own ITE institution.

## 7 ITT Market Review and accreditation processes

A newly and rapidly implemented ITT accreditation policy emerged in 2021 following a government-initiated ‘ITT Market Review’ (DfE, 2021b). As part of the reaccreditation process, all existing providers, alongside new providers, were required to apply to be accredited to be able to continue operating as a teacher training provider from 2024 onwards. As part of the accreditation process, providers had to submit a 7,000-word statement – a ‘pledge of allegiance’ (Spendlove, 2021) on their future provision – which was graded on a five-point scale by the DfE.

After the completion of the initial stage of the accreditation process, a third of existing ITE providers were unsuccessful (Whittaker, 2022a) whilst at the final stage, twelve long-standing university providers (along with 56 other forms of provision) failed to be accredited and will no longer be allowed to train new teachers under their own governance. The irony of this situation being that this loss of provision is significantly at odds with the aims of the ITT Market Review which claimed to focus on *capacity* and quality of provision and benefits to schools, even though some of those providers exiting ITE have been graded higher by Ofsted than providers who are remaining. As a result of this reaccreditation process, some part of England will lose almost all local provision of ITE.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to show how a sequence of interconnected and sometimes contradictory policies have worked together to present challenges and, indeed, existential threats

to the continued involvement of universities in ITE in England. Cumulatively, they have been driven by the desire to create a state of exception in ITE policy – a situation where normal rules of governing and policy formation and implementation are abandoned in favour of authoritarian and radical policies framed by the construction of a problem of systemic ITE failure for which universities are held responsible. In creating this state of exception, professional standards have been redefined; requirements for qualified teachers in all state-funded schools abandoned; public oversight bodies abolished; a mandatory curriculum required with detailed monitoring to the level of reading lists; reaccreditation required of all providers of ITE to the state's narrow requirements; and the fabrication of a 'leading' state institute of teacher education despite it not existing at the time of its description as the system's 'flagship'.

Failure to comply or sufficiently align with the government priorities has so far been used to force twelve universities to close their ITE provision (or merge with other organizations) whilst creating space for new 'favoured' organizations (Whittaker, 2022b). Likewise, those institutions who appear to have been 'successful' in gaining accreditation have had to commit to adherence to implementing a model of ITE which will leave them permanently exposed to a loss of autonomy, whilst compromising their academic freedom and leave them open to future government whims. The state of exception is such that policy no longer needs to be based on sound education principles subject to democratic accountability processes. Therefore, the state of exception has become the new normal (Zinn, 2022), where historical norms are suspended and where 'fast policy' is justified based on the effective rhetorical construction of the 'problem'.

The policies outlined in this chapter represent a sustained, direct attack on ITE in universities in England as well as an indirect attack on universities' autonomy and academic freedom. Consequently, it becomes difficult to envisage how universities can retain their provision of ITE particularly where there is a commitment in institutions to maintain autonomy, criticality and research. In the wider context, the situation in England should also serve as a warning internationally as while England is most certainly an outlier, there is an ongoing broader international New Right movement, with the ambition of further reducing the autonomy and professionalism of schoolteachers as well as the

academic freedoms historically accorded to universities (Ellis, Gatti & Mansell, 2023; Giroux, 2013).

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## CHAPTER FOUR

# Policy negotiation in ITE in England: A personal reflection

*Jo-Anne Baird*

*This chapter is an edited transcript of an interview with Jo-Anne Baird conducted by Viv Ellis. Professor Baird was Director (Head) of the Department of Education at Oxford University from 2016 to 2022. She was one of the Heads of Schools/Faculties of Education in England that initially resisted the imposition of the requirements of the government's Market Review accreditation processes in 2021–2, suggesting that their universities might withdraw from offering ITE. This chapter offers a personal reflection in which Professor Baird looks back on her time as Director of the Oxford University department, the decision to challenge the government's proposals, and the negotiations, such as they were, with the minister and civil servants.*

*The interview was conducted during the forty-four-day period that Liz Truss MP was UK prime minister – the shortest tenure for any head of government in British history.*

*The transcript has been edited to remove the interview questions and prompts and to ensure coherence as a written text.*

I completed two terms as Director of the Department of Education at Oxford, stepping down in 2022. In research-intensive universities in the UK, this ‘rotation’ approach to academic leadership amongst senior colleagues is common. Although I am not an expert in teacher education – my expertise lies in educational assessment – I did know a fair amount about initial teacher education (ITE) and I was fortunate to work alongside excellent colleagues in the Oxford department’s teacher education community as well as being Standing Advisor to the Education Select Committee of the UK parliament. So, during my time as Director and Adviser to the Select Committee, teacher education was at the forefront of my mind in terms of practice, research and policy.

## Teacher education at Oxford

At Oxford, the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) has been important – this is the initial teaching qualification in England. The Oxford Internship Scheme (Benton, 1990; McIntyre, 1997) and the Education Deanery (Fancourt et al., 2015; Burn et al., 2021) have led the way in ITE and partnerships with schools and the Internship Scheme became something of an international exemplar of a ‘collaborative partnership’ (Furlong, 1996) between schools and the university. To put it into context, though, a lot of university departments in England have cut their teacher education programmes like the PGCE, arguing either that they are not financially viable or that the people who work in teacher education do not always produce research that is good for the UK Research Excellence Framework (REF), the periodic measurement of research quality in the UK higher education system. Our strategic approach at Oxford was different to that.

There were, of course, debates to be had within the department and some people would have thought that financial viability and research quality were reasons to consider our involvement in the PGCE. When we actually looked at financial viability, however, ITE covered its costs. So that was one good argument against ending our involvement. The fact that the PGCE was financially viable was not the main reason for continuing to offer ITE, though. The main reason was that we were a Department of *Education* and so it really mattered that our work was grounded in schools and our work did not just speak to the academic ivory towers. As we know,

practice can improve research – if you have got a good research-practice relationship, it actually drives excellence in research. And I have colleagues in teacher education in Oxford who are really contributing to the field in impressive ways.

So for all of these reasons, it was a no brainer that we were going to encourage, focus on and foreground teacher education within the department. It is really embedded in what we do. It felt like we were in a very good place with our strategy around that as a department. I do recognize that not every university in England was in the same place as us in terms of finances, staff research capacity and so on. But that was our approach.

## **Teacher education in England since 2010**

ITE in England has carried risks for universities for quite some time and the institutional risks were apparent long before I became Director. Since the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government was elected in 2010, there had been constant reforms to teacher education, and concerns that the allocations of student numbers to universities would change [the government decides how many ITE students each university can have – see Ellis & Spendlove, 2020] created huge uncertainty. This uncertainty was really problematic because it made it difficult to plan and it also led to greater casualization of the ITE workforce, something that was going on in higher education more broadly. Our strategy was not to rely on a casualized workforce and to support people in their careers – something that is really important to high-quality teaching and research. So, following 2010, we had difficulties that we were trying to work around but we actually just had to hold our nerve as well as try to tackle them from a policy perspective.

Along with most other universities in England, we engaged with ‘School Direct’ [a government scheme that attempted to shift control and resources away from universities to schools that were prepared to lead ITE – see Ellis & Spendlove, 2020] and we looked for ways in which it might be possible to collaborate with them more widely. That didn’t really come to much because we had a long-standing, close-knit partnership with local schools which already incorporated many aspects of the ‘Schools Direct’ approach, but we had a realistic understanding that when the external environment

changes you have to adapt to it. Effectively, we were looking at our mission to provide high-quality teacher education locally and trying to find ways to support and collaborate with local School Direct providers. Some of these School Direct providers' students are now going through our Masters' programmes and they might also work with our Education Deanery as well. In theory, it was possible for there to be deeper collaboration with schools through School Direct but it didn't happen for us in this way.

## **ITE policy changes 2019 onwards**

In 2019, three years into my tenure as Director of the department, and shortly before the UK general election that Boris Johnson won, the government released the Core Content Framework (CCF) for ITE in England (DfE, 2019), building upon the recently established Early Career Framework. In retrospect, I would say that the response from the education sector was a bit of a damp squib. The CCF was a 'foot in the door', so to speak, for the government; they had intervened in the practice of ITE in England in quite a profound way but the changes were rushed in before the 2019 General Election without due consideration of the issues being raised by the education community. I recall the CCF being raised as an 'issue' in ITE management meetings at that stage but its implications and consequences were not teased out or understood by all of us around the table, myself included at that stage. I genuinely think people didn't get the significance. Or perhaps they knew what the dangers were but hoped for the best.

Ultimately, we in the department decided that it was worth the risk to work with the CCF, obviously, and so did the wider university, but the thing about the CCF is that it doesn't operate in isolation to constrain ITE. There are so many pieces articulating to constrain teacher education in England that it's quite difficult to even mount a brief coherent argument about what's happening. These pieces have worked together to close down various avenues for exercising one's agency. With regard to the 'Market Review' (Bauckham et al., 2021), for example, I think so much of the concerns are around the accreditation process. It was difficult for people to really justify concerns in advance of the accreditation process, if they had them, and I have been thinking more broadly that this is what happens when things are privatized to operate as a market. We have seen

this playbook over and over again. The whole agenda is about moving towards privatization just as we have seen it in healthcare in England. We have seen it in telecommunications industry; we have seen it in transport; you could go on and on. And it does start with apparently isolated, small steps, like the CCF.

### ***The ITE ‘Market Review’***

At the beginning of 2021, my personal opinion was that what we needed to engage publicly in the debate about the future of ITE in England and we discussed this within the senior team within our department. Others were minded to wait and see what came out of the Market Review consultation process. It wasn’t until June that we saw the problems clearly. By then, the issue was an existential threat to us in terms of offering ITE as part of our provision. But that wasn’t our prime concern. We had much broader considerations about teacher education, and I genuinely mean that, because I have always felt that the approach that we took in Oxford to teacher education mattered more widely than to our department alone – and I don’t mean that in an arrogant way. I mean that our PGCE has set a tone for the field in England which affects not just teacher education in the UK, but elsewhere in the world. So we really felt that by the middle of 2021, the issues were problematic for teacher education internationally. I’m not saying the Market Review in England is going to have an effect on ITE policies in every country in the world but I do think that it has the potential to affect practice globally in significant and detrimental ways due to policy borrowing. So that’s why we were really willing to stand up against it and not just worry about our own bottom line.

I think what galvanized us to oppose the Market Review proposals were the multiple constraints around how teacher education programmes could be conducted. It meant that it would become something like the scripted instruction of student teachers rather than an intellectual activity, something which we believed mattered at all levels. It mattered for the teacher educator; it mattered for the trainee teachers; and it matters for the children that they are ultimately working with in schools. That approach to ITE – which flies in the face of university education, where higher order thinking skills are valued in every marking scheme that you come

across – that was really fundamental. It affected what knowledge is valued, and how teaching affects the development of knowledge.

The issue of academic freedom was also important. A state-mandated curriculum has lots of problems, in whatever context. For a start, whose knowledge is represented? How is it verified as the ‘best quality’ (Baird, 2022)? When is it reviewed? How is it adapted for context? State-mandated curricula ultimately just don’t work in education without widespread consultation. We were really concerned about that and I think we were looking across at what had happened in medicine in the UK where proposals for a common or core medical curriculum had almost gone to the High Court. The level of control seemed both unnecessary and seriously damaging.

### ***A coalition of resistance***

Once we had taken the decision to oppose the Market Review proposals, things came together quite quickly with some other universities and organizations such as the Russell Group [an organization representing the most research-intensive universities in the UK]. Within a week we had met with other institutions, and we had decided that we were going to make a public statement about the Market Review and the stance we were going to take to it at our universities. The UCL Institute of Education, the University of Cambridge and the Russell Group were key players with us but we were reaching out to a wide range of other institutions – the Chartered College of Teaching, the teacher unions, politicians. There was a lot of activity. Many organizations shared our concerns – the entire field could see what the problems were even though they were being denied by the Expert Group who were running the Market Review and I said this in one of the meetings with the Department for Education (DfE). The response we received from government to the issues we were raising felt like gaslighting; there was a denial that the proposals meant the things they obviously did. We can now see that the words in that Market Review did mean what we said they meant; they did introduce the constraints that we were concerned about.

We planned to go public with our opposition very early on. We knew that the government valued teacher education and Oxford and Cambridge, in particular, and we knew that ministers were

concerned that we were going to withdraw. So making it plain that we were serious about this was important because there had also been comments by people on the Expert Group that we would back down. That was never the case. And we had the support of our university. We took these issues to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) for education early on and he very quickly took them to the Vice-Chancellor and we got excellent support for our position. We were regularly briefing the PVC but he didn't take the lead; he let us do that, which I think was really important to a collegial way of working and ensuring the right things were said in the details. The university really supported us: for example, the Vice-Chancellor and the PVC met with us and with the minister. The sector representative body – the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) – was also involved in the response to the Market Review, of course, and we heard from them what position they had taken. I think UCET and other sector bodies were a bit caught out by just how aggressively the government was acting. Ultimately, there was not always a shared set of values between the sector and government.

### ***Inside the meetings with government***

Within a month of our campaign starting, we had our first meeting with Nick Gibb MP, the Minister for Schools in the DfE who was also responsible for ITE. We had two meetings with him and one with Robin Walker MP [Minister of State for Education between September 2021 and July 2022]. Nick Gibb was a long-standing Minister for Schools and incredibly experienced. In our meetings he was very polite and said that he was 'in listening mode', but he gave nothing away and didn't make any promises. In the room, also on the government side, was a senior DfE civil servant and a special advisor from 10 Downing Street (the UK prime minister's office), Rory Gribbell. We from Oxford had meetings at the DfE separately as well as alongside UCL IOE, Cambridge and the Russell Group.

The chair of the Expert Group, Ian Bauckham, was at the meeting with Robin Walker and our Vice-Chancellor and PVC for education. I didn't have any contact with Ian Bauckham on this topic outside of that meeting, but there were also regular consultation events at which some of the Expert Group were presenting and they would interact with my colleagues. Overall, however, the engagement and

the way in which people were seeking to persuade us was at such a superficial level that there wasn't any real dialogue possible. At one of the consultation events (all online, obviously, as this was in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic) participants were talked through a PowerPoint presentation, with the chat function and reaction functions in the virtual meeting disabled. There was absolutely no opportunity for comment or discussion at all.

In our discussions with the DfE, Bauckham and Gribbell argued that we had never accepted the CCF; that was our main issue. We wanted to 'move on' and talk about the accreditation process. It worked in our favour at Oxford that we had been ranked so highly in the recent Research Excellence Framework [number 1 in the UK for research quality] as there was no opportunity for them to say we didn't know what we were talking about. Oxford has always come out of government inspections of ITE really well too, conducted by the schools' inspectorate, Ofsted. We had recently been inspected and found to be outstanding again. So by the government's own metrics, we were an excellent department.

The outcome of these meetings with government is I think obvious from the final version of the Market Review documents. Little of significance shifted in the discussions. Small changes were made to things that would have been unworkable in any case. What the government cared about were what our 'red lines' were and where we absolutely could not operate with the model that was being proposed by the Expert Group. Like any negotiation, though, all of the people around the table had their own agendas. If you are a civil servant your job is to deliver the policy as efficiently as possible. That was a DfE agenda. I am very accustomed to working with government on assessment policy so none of this was particularly surprising. In terms of our 'red lines', we were concerned about the accreditation process, the specifics of the mandated curriculum and the new, contractual basis of partnerships with schools. Obviously if you go through the Market Review document, there are lots of things in it that are difficult but those were our primary concerns.

We did get some changes on a few small things. The model of partnership with schools has been altered from the original proposal. The hours required for the mandated curriculum have also been amended and the role of mentors in schools has been changed too.

We refused to discuss implementation. We would only talk about matters of principle that concerned us. We would only meet around our agenda. We refused to keep the meetings confidential. We said that we would talk about these things publicly. We ensured that everything that we said was evidence-based, so we maintained an intellectual agenda. We were unapologetic about speaking to the media or tweeting or presenting at conferences, since contributing to the public debate on societal matters is an important part of the academic remit.

## **An ideological approach to teacher education policy**

Overall, though, in terms of government ITE policy, I think there are processes and organizations that are not public and are not private; they are a combination of the two, where we don't have the nomenclature at the moment to describe them. The agendas of some of the key government-sponsored players in teacher education – organizations such as Oak National Academy and Ambition Institute – and the governance of them is opaque, and that's because there is an advantage in keeping these things opaque, making them not transparent. This was also part of the dynamics of the meetings we were having with government. So in part, there wasn't a good intellectual discussion about the quality of teacher education happening because the knowledge about that was clearly on one side of the table. But when we look at who the Downing Street Special Adviser is or membership of the Expert Group, there are serious questions to be asked about opacity – and that includes the level of knowledge about high-quality teacher education amongst that group, something that's been said many times before.

Personally, I think it's that it's an ideological approach to ITE policy – with economic and other advantages for the protagonists – that is what is driving everything. There aren't open advertisements for advisors; there isn't a clear process. When advisory boards or Expert Groups are constituted, the minister decides who is included. Having a critical or dissenting voice is not something that is going to be valued in those processes even though most would agree that engaging with critical views is likely to make policies stronger.

Straightforward ideological alignment with the government is clearly a major criterion for being on the inside these days in England.

## Looking to the future

Ultimately, I think it's hugely damaging if research-intensive and highly experienced universities like Oxford and Cambridge don't offer ITE programmes. I think it damages the field of education much more broadly. I think it's important we try to maintain our position by offering the PGCE in partnership with schools and that we remain committed to teacher education. It is possible that Oxford might have to withdraw from ITE but I am sure we will still continue to educate teachers in various forms – at Masters' level, for example, or through other forms of professional development. In our negotiations or conversations with government, we knew what our fall-back position was going to be so that we didn't undermine the academic integrity of the department. I feel we ought to be trying to influence policy as far as possible from within the system but equally we cannot work with the model as it was originally proposed.

I think that so much of what has happened to ITE in England is political and that we are at a particular moment in this country's history with a new prime minister, Liz Truss, who is very open about her ideological positions. However, we are also at a time where people are fed up with the effect that successive Conservative governments have had on public services such as healthcare and education. I think that it is possible that we will have a change in direction around all of this at some point in the future. We have seen that before; these things come in waves, but they also come in cycles and different political parties have different views about how this might be done.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

# Same game, same players, different fields: Social work and teacher education in crisis

*Joe Hanley and Christian Kerr*

The crisis in teacher education this book addresses has many similarities and parallels with the experiences of other professions, including social work, which is the focus of this chapter, written by two social work academics working in England. While social work qualifications in England are generalist, meaning they are required to cover social work practice and policy in a range of contexts, such as working with children, adults and in mental health, it is well documented in both policy and practice that the profession is being progressively narrowed towards targeted, often performative, tasks and skill sets, accompanied by moves to embed a core focus on child protection in place of the broader base of expertise and capacity to work across the lifespan (Thoburn, 2017; Lymbery, 2019; Tunstill, 2019; McGrath-Brookes et al., 2021). This has also seen social work increasingly falling under the primary remit of the Department for Education (DfE), epitomized by the direct control the minister for education now exercises over the professional regulator, Social Work England, which includes appointing the chair, approving the

appointment of chief executives and having veto/modifying rights over all regulatory rules and professional standards.

This focus on working with children and the dominant role of the DfE in social work today also means that the networks and individuals influencing policy in the profession are increasingly the same ones influencing policy in education, and they bring with them many of the same ideas, stemming from the same ideological positioning. In this way they constitute a shared policy network, consisting of shared connections between individuals and organizations, but also (frequently overlapping) historical, personal and ideological connections. While education policy network connections have been explored for some time (Ball, 2008, 2009), interest in the influence these connections have in social work is relatively more recent (Jones, 2019; Tunstill, 2019), and work exploring the shared network connections across these two professions remains particularly limited, with some notable exceptions (Purcell, 2020; Hanley et al., 2021). These network connections tend to privilege ideological compatibility and shared assumptions over professional experience or background, or even meaningful engagement with the subject professions (McGrath-Brookes et al., 2021).

This chapter examines these themes through looking at areas of corresponding policy development between education and social work, with a particular focus on the networks behind them. This is not an attempt to replicate the more extensive network mapping work referenced above but should act as a window into understanding the mutual policy network that is increasingly dominating policy decisions across both professions, and the shared challenges faced. With reference to key examples, we also look at how the operations of networks result in hegemonic control over the reform of both education and social work. To put this discussion into context, we now provide a brief introduction to the contemporary social work profession.

## **The social work profession**

Social work became a regulated profession in England under the Care Standards Act 2000, which also made social work a protected title for the first time, and led to the social work degree becoming

the minimum qualification for new practitioners (Department of Health, 2002). Today, most social workers qualify through three-year undergraduate and two-year postgraduate programmes run by Higher Education Institutions, although as we will discuss, there is increasing diversity of routes into the profession (Skills for Care, 2022).

Social work continuing professional development (CPD) is also regulated in England. Under the current regulator, one of the six professional standards practising social workers are required to meet is: 'I will maintain my continuing professional development' (Social Work England, 2019). Underlining its significance, this is the only standard that social workers are required to provide evidence of to maintain annual registration. Rather than mandating a set national framework for CPD, Social Work England instead places responsibility on individual social workers to engage with 'diverse, flexible and innovative' CPD (Social Work England, 2022). However, decisions around what constitutes appropriate CPD are dictated primarily by social work employers (Rogowski, 2020). Given these employers – mostly local authorities – are heavily influenced by resource considerations driven in the main by years of politically chosen austerity, they understandably tend to favour low-cost options.

As with teaching, social work in England is characterized as being in a constant state of crisis (Dickens, 2011; Lavalette, 2019) and faces levels of habitual negative media and political scrutiny not seen in other jurisdictions, usually involving individual professionals being blamed for the impact of systemic issues rooted in government policy decisions (McCulloch, 2018; Herrero and Charnley, 2019; Jones, 2019). This discourse around placing responsibility on social workers lacks evidential basis but is promoted through self-perpetuating and reinforcing ideology and discourse (McGrath-Brookes et al., 2021; Hanley, 2022b). Some of the systemic issues facing the social work profession today include chronically bad working conditions (Ravalier et al., 2020), difficulty with recruitment and retention (County Councils Network, 2022; Johnson et al., 2022) and a lack of resources (County Councils Network, 2022; Cromarty et al., 2019). This persistent state of crisis, alongside the propensity to blame social workers for these largely systemic issues, has been habitually used to promote policy developments within the aforementioned network, including those discussed in this chapter.

## Similarities and parallels with education

What follows here is a brief introduction to key contemporary projects in the realms of social work qualifying and CPD that have notable parallels with developments in the field of education. This list is non-exhaustive and really only scratches the surface, but it does show the shared experiences and challenges across the professions, and in particular the influential networks and problematic ideologies shaping these projects.

### Frontline

A key example of these parallels between social work and education is the introduction, rapid expansion and increasing dominance of new professional qualifying programmes in social work. Frontline, focused on social work with children and families, and Think Ahead, focused on mental health social work, were both founded based on the ‘successful’ approach of Teach First, the teacher qualifying programme (MacAlister et al., 2012: 3; Clifton & Thorley, 2014: 7). Both follow the Teach First template, receiving disproportionate government funding through claiming to attract the ‘best and brightest’ by offering a well-paid route into a profession, alongside networking and leadership opportunities that are not afforded to social work students on other routes (MacAlister et al., 2012: 25; Clifton & Thorley, 2014: 5). Linked to these networking and leadership opportunities are promises and incentives imbedded in these programmes of eventually being able to parlay this experience into obtaining more lucrative employment outside of the profession. This can be understood as a form of ‘micro-philanthropy’ whereby candidates are cast as selflessly forgoing high status and pay temporarily to work with disadvantaged groups (Duggan, 2017: 135). This concept is discussed in more detail below.

The negative impacts that Frontline and Think Ahead have had on the social work profession have been described in depth elsewhere, and include inequality of access, high costs, damaging marketing activities and poor retention (Murphy, 2016; Jones, 2019; Tunstill, 2019; Scourfield et al., 2020, 2021; Hanley, 2021a). However, of particular significance to this discussion are the

network connections that link these organizations with education. This is most notable with Frontline, due to the common focus on working with children. Frontline's founder, Josh MacAlister, is a Teach First graduate and has no training or experience in social work, as is the case with the founder of Teach First, Brett Wigdortz, who has no qualification or experience in teaching. MacAlister has recounted the story of how he called in sick from his teaching job so he could attend a meeting with Andrew Adonis, former Labour minister, and Michael Gove, who at the time was Conservative Minister for Education, about his idea for a 'Teach First of social work' (Browning, 2019). At the time, Adonis was a trustee for Teach First, while Gove was overseeing rapid expansion of the programme. Adonis would later go on to act as chair of Frontline's board of trustees and continues to be a patron for the organization. Both Teach First and Frontline are also partners within Transform Society, a network of similar training providers that also includes additional Teach First modelled qualifying programmes for both police and prison officers.

The network connections do not end there. Working with colleagues across the UK we were part of a policy network mapping project in 2021 that focused on identifying the individuals and organizations most influential in children's services today (Hanley

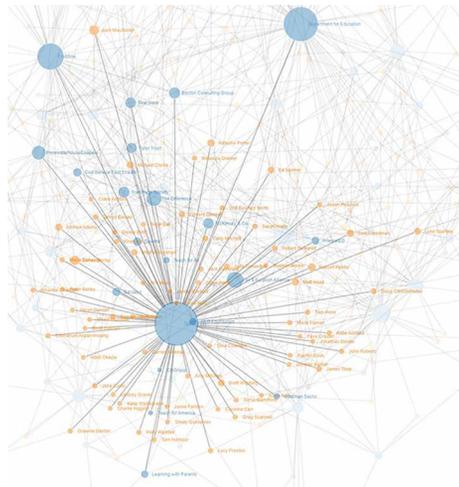


FIGURE 5.1 *Teach First.*

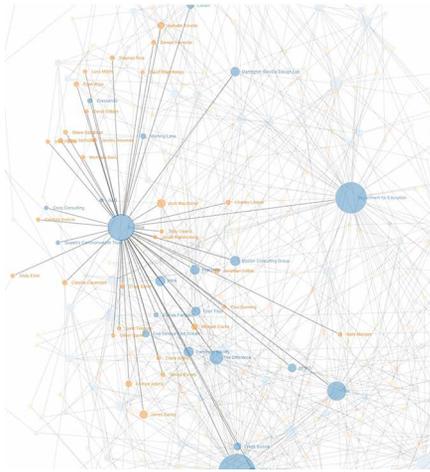


FIGURE 5.2 *Frontline.*

et al., 2021). The final product included over 1000 connections, with Teach First (Figure 5.1) and Frontline (Figure 5.2) being the first and third most connected organizations identified, respectively (the DfE was second). The mapping illustrated the extensive political, business and media connections with and between these organizations, along with several other influential individuals and organizations in children’s services. Not included in the mapping are the many personal connections that are also prominent in this network, including Josh MacAlister being married to Matthew Hood, the former CEO of Ambition Institute, the fifth most connected organization and co-founder of Oak National Academy (see Chapter 2), coming in at number 11.

## What works

Another significant parallel between contemporary social work and education reform is the emphasis placed on a rather simplistic, reductive question of ‘what works?’ In social work, this is exemplified by the creation of the What Works for Children’s Social Care (WWCSC), a research centre founded in 2017 with a stated mission to ‘generate, collate and make accessible the best evidence’, primarily

via Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) (WWCSC, n.d.). Those involved in the establishment of WWCSC included Josh MacAlister, as well as the first academic lead of Frontline, Donald Forrester, and the chief social worker for Children and Families in England, Isabelle Trowler, who had a role in designing the curriculum of Frontline and has habitually supported the organization from her role within the DfE. WWCSC is part of a broader What Works Network that is managed by the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury, and includes similar centres based in health, homelessness, economic growth and crime reduction. Notably it also includes the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), which focuses on educational achievement, and the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF).

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a detailed dissection of the narrow focus of what works ideology; however, suffice to say that the question of what works as framed by these organizations leaves out key contextual questions, in particular in relation to what counts as something that ‘works’, and what interests and perspectives are prioritized in making that determination (Biesta, 2007, 2017). Furthermore, these centres promote RCTs as the ‘gold standard’ at a time when there is increasing evidence that RCTs do not have a particularly strong track-record outside of strict laboratory conditions (Every-Palmer & Howick, 2014; Greenhalgh et al., 2014; Open Science Collaboration, 2015; Krauss, 2018; Sims et al., 2022). It is therefore not surprising that Webb (2021) has found that since the establishment of the What Works Network and the policy shift towards RCTs as the ‘gold standard’, the promised effectiveness has not materialized, and in particular in relation to supporting children, ‘effectiveness appears to have declined’ (p.14).

## **MacAlister Review**

In January 2021, then Minister for Education Gavin Williamson appointed Frontline founder Josh MacAlister to undertake an ‘independent’ review of children’s social care (hereafter the MacAlister Review), key recommendations of which pertain to significant parallels between social work and education, and if implemented will lead to social work and education policy becoming even more closely aligned (MacAlister, 2022). Major issues were apparent with the review from its inception, most notably related

to the lack of independence of the chair, a concern that was borne out in the approach the review chose to take. This involved central roles and influence for those who already had close ties to the chair and others within his network, juxtaposed alongside the limited, and heavily controlled, consultation and involvement reserved for the majority of those with a stake in the sector, including social workers and those with experience of services. These issues are explored extensively elsewhere (see: Dickson, 2021; Jones, 2021; Willow, 2021).

### ***Expanding leadership training***

The MacAlister review recommended continued investment in leadership programmes ‘at every level’ (p.192). Frontline has been framed as a leadership development programme from its inception, and Frontline recently expanded into providing leadership-focused CPD to both social work managers, through their DfE-funded Firstline programme, and heads of services, through their more recently launched Headline programme (Hidayat, 2021). Therefore, it was difficult to read this recommendation as not including a heavy endorsement of continued public funding for Frontline and its proliferation of spin off schemes. Indeed, just two months after the MacAlister Review was published, a new £7m contract for social work leadership CPD was awarded to Frontline, amalgamating and expanding their current programmes of Headline and Firstline under a combined ‘Pathways’ programme, in a move that also removed funding from a number of CPD programmes that otherwise may have been considered competitors to Frontline (Samuel, 2022a). Therefore, as with Teach First in education, Frontline now has a major role in both qualifying and CPD training for social workers.

### ***Early Career Framework***

Another proposal in the MacAlister Review was for a new Early Career Framework (ECF) in social work. This proposal was explicitly based on the recently introduced ECF for teachers, a model promoted by the EEF, part of the What Works Network discussed above (McAlister, 2022). However, an increasing number of studies are finding that far from having a positive impact on

the profession, the ECF is having significant negative impacts on teachers and their mentors. This includes a TeacherTapp study finding that four in five teachers and mentors felt that the ECF training they received was not well-designed and just one in ten feeling it was a good use of time (Ford et al., 2022). These resonate with findings presented in Chapter 1 of this book that show only 7 per cent of teachers think the ECF makes a positive difference, with concerns ranging from the training being ‘hit and miss’ to those who feel it will deter new teachers from joining the profession. Despite these issues the MacAlister Review not only recommends replicating the ECF in social work but expanding it from two to five years (MacAlister, 2022), and the government have confirmed they are taking these plans forward (Department for Education, 2023). In order to understand why the ECF in teaching was such a prominent recommendation in MacAlister’s Review, it is also worth noting that the six lead providers for the ECF in teaching include Teach First, where MacAlister was trained, Ambition Institute, where MacAlister’s husband was formerly CEO, and Capita, who are a ‘gold’ partner of Teach First (Department for Education, 2022). Once again, this suggests the prominent role of networks in shaping policy across social work and education.

### ***National evaluation of qualifying providers***

The MacAlister Review also proposed an evaluation of ‘quality’ in all initial social work education routes, notably exempting Frontline on the basis that it has already been subject to evaluation (MacAlister, 2022: 184). The review made no mention of the myriad issues raised in those previous evaluations or in the growing body of additional research and evidence demonstrating the damaging impact that Frontline is having on the profession (Murphy, 2016; Jones, 2019; Tunstill, 2019; Scourfield et al., 2020, 2021; Hanley, 2022a). While there is minimal detail about what such an evaluation of initial social work education routes could look like, we note that this recommendation comes at a time when the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Market Review looks set to shrink the number of ITT programmes by 25 per cent, just as the profession is facing a deepening recruitment crisis (Martin, 2022). Amidst this turmoil, Teach First, an organization with an explicit early remit to improve recruitment and retention in teaching, has secured a contract to

act as an ITT Market Quality Associate to support the ‘anticipated closure’ of many ITT providers (Whittaker, 2022).

Considering the way Frontline is framed in the MacAlister Review, it is reasonable to expect that they would see themselves as having a similarly advantageous role stemming from any review of this kind in social work. Significantly, in a November 2022 parliamentary debate on the MacAlister Review, Conservative MP and former Children’s Minister Edward Timpson reiterated calls for this evaluation of initial social work education, alongside praising Frontline, something he has consistently done since it was founded (Samuel, 2022b). From a network perspective, it is noteworthy that Timpson’s father, Sir John Timpson, acts as a trustee of Frontline and has recently announced that the charitable trust he chairs will be sponsoring the first annual ‘Frontline Awards’ to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Frontline’s founding (Samuel, 2022c).

### ***What works merger***

The MacAlister Review also recommended the merger of several What Works Network partners, starting with the EIF and WWCS and eventually including other What Works organizations, including the EEF (MacAlister, 2022). This is justified in the review based on the need for these organizations to have a ‘more meaningful’ role across children’s services, and would come with a vastly expanded remit (p. 202). The first merger proposed, of the EIF and WWCS, was announced to be going forward on the same day that the MacAlister Review was published, and subsequently, MacAlister was appointed as executive chair of that newly amalgamated organization (EIF, 2022). It is also worth noting that when Frontline were awarded the new £7m CPD leadership contract described above, WWCS were announced as a delivery partner, meaning MacAlister will likely continue to have some direct influence in his previous organization as well (Samuel, 2022a).

### **‘What’s wrong with networks?’**

A key rebuttal by critics of the network mapping we have previously been involved in (Hanley et al., 2021) has been to ask, in various ways, the essential question: What is so wrong with like-minded

people and organizations coalescing around ideas and policy moves that stand to benefit people? This is often attended by claims that these ideas and moves are supported by evidence, which, as set out above, are at least questionable, if not downright spurious, alongside emotive appeals to the notion that those involved are motivated only by a desire to do the right thing by children and families. From this, a seductive narrative emerges: reformists are ‘progressives’ seeking ‘radical change’ of sclerotic, outmoded systems; those who challenge them are ‘regressives’ wedded to their over-regulated and bureaucratic ways of working and standing in the way of much-needed reform. This is just one way in which *hegemony* can be seen operating in the creation, maintenance and expansion of these networks, and it is to this concept we now turn in order to set out why the concentration of influence within these networks is so problematic.

### ***Neoliberal hegemony***

Writing from his prison cell under the dictatorship of Benito Mussolini, the Italian communist and philosopher Antonio Gramsci extended Karl Marx’s and Friedrich Engels’ ideas that the power of dominant groups rested not only on the exploitation of weaker ones but on the dominance of ruling class ideas and values, which become accepted as normative (Gramsci, 1971). A key effect of the prevalence of such apparently normative ideologies was what Engels called the ‘false consciousness’ of the lower, working, classes that kept them from recognizing and rejecting their oppression (Engels, 1893). Critiques of ‘false consciousness’ rightly point to its use as justification for political indoctrination under oppressive Communist regimes (Lewy, 2017) but the basic idea that without critical awareness of the ideological forces shaping society and the lives of people in it we come to accept this social order as *just the way things are* resonates beyond the ideological confines of Marx and Engels’ theories.

Hegemonic power differs from overt, dictatorial power because to work it relies on the consent of those subject to it. Gramsci (1971) described how this consent is manufactured via the reproduction of dominant groups’ ideological beliefs within culture and society, through, for example, the media, schools, universities and other

institutions, so that they come to appear as common sense and normal. The capture and control of the media and other institutions by hegemonic forces is key to the reinforcement of the ideas and values of dominant groups and the continued manufacturing of consent.

It is therefore important to explore who are these dominant groups and what ideologies they inculcate in society. We have written extensively about the recent history of reform of children services, locating this within the wider advancement of neoliberalism in late phase capitalist societies, such as the UK and US (Kerr, 2020; McGrath-Brookes et al., 2021; Hanley, 2022b). For the purpose of this discussion, neoliberalism refers to both the prevailing economic model in Western democracies and the ideas and assumptions – about the function and value of markets, and of people and the societies they live in – that underpin and serve that model (Giroux, 2004; Kerr, 2020).

Many of the assumptions underpinning the neoliberal conception of society are, in fact, deeply contested ideas masquerading as common sense. The key underpinning idea of neoliberalism as an economic model is that a marketplace, with little or no regulation, is the ideal system to meet the needs of individuals, and the communities and nations in which they live. This is the fundamental myth that drives the privatization and marketization of public services. Marketization is good, so the myth goes, because it encourages competition which has the effect of raising quality and lowering the cost to the end user. While this might work for tinned tomatoes and high street fashion (though often at considerable cost to the rights and welfare of those involved in manufacturing processes) it is a myth that these principles when applied to, say, education and social policy, yield similar results. Even the International Monetary Fund has declared that neoliberalism has failed to deliver on its own terms (Ostry et al., 2016).

However, [neoliberalism] is not simply an economic policy designed to cut government spending, pursue free-trade policies, and free market forces from government regulations; it is also a political philosophy and ideology that affects every dimension of social life' (Giroux, 2004: 52). It is therefore appropriate to describe the global domination of the ideology of neoliberalism in Gramscian terms (Schwarzmantel, 2005). Neoliberalism is the way of looking at the world and the people in it that paves the way for such things as privatization and marketization in education, health

and social support services. This is what makes it so pervasive, and so dangerous. It is a permeating worldview – a seductive set of ideas and reflexes, remarkably efficient at spreading, replicating and adapting itself to just about any context (Giroux, 2004; Kerr, 2020). Neoliberalism derives its power from its ability to enlist, co-opt and colonize other ideas – even those from seemingly divergent political standpoints – in order to consolidate its dominant position. These include ideas that shape and inform public policy.

At its core, neoliberal ideology can therefore be summed up thus:

- a) citizens are consumers and producers,
- b) the wellbeing of individual citizens is important only insofar as to the degree it impacts on their contribution (their productivity and their consumption of goods),
- c) individuals are, ultimately, responsible for their own wellbeing, and
- d) any support provided to ease suffering will be aimed at correcting deficits/defects within the individuals themselves.

Once you start unpicking these components, you begin to see how the ideological component of neoliberalism operates to regulate and control the populace with the key aim of servicing the needs and predilections of those benefitting most from the neoliberal economic model. At the core of this conception of the world is the idea that the individual is all, and that society must be geared toward rewarding those able to capitalize on their individual agency. This idea that we can all be ‘entrepreneurial selves’ is the myth we are sold in the service of the neoliberal (and patriarchal) hegemony (Pollack and Rossiter, 2010; Jacobs, 2020; Carmo et al., 2021). In reality, this is only possible for those with the ability to capitalize on their agency in the world, which, in vastly unequal Western capitalist societies (Carmo et al., 2021), is largely contingent on social circumstances and the unequal distribution of opportunities.

### ***Doing Well by Doing Good***

This notion of the entrepreneurial self is of particular relevance to neoliberal hegemony as it relates to the reform of education and children’s social care, and the education and training of teachers and

social workers. As was already discussed, Frontline was founded by Teach First ambassador Josh MacAlister, with the support of key political allies including Andrew Adonis and Michael Gove. However, the extent of the support MacAlister received in setting up and subsequently expanding Frontline is more far reaching, the history of which is an example of how global big businesses seek to influence public policy and reshape it according to their own ideological leanings.

Both Teach First and Frontline receive donations from a plethora of private organizations, including many in the financial sector (Murphy, 2016; Kerr, 2020; Hanley, 2022b). Some notable examples include CitiGroup, Credit Suisse, Boston Consulting Group, Barclays and KPMG. These donations help them to not only provide their core qualifying training programmes, but also to extend and strengthen their influence in other areas, in particular social policy. There are valid concerns then that Frontline and Teach First, in enmeshing themselves in the web of the big money global connectivity, are key players in the advancement of neoliberal hegemony in children's services. As an illustrative example of this, the global management consultancy firm Boston Consulting Group (BCG) was a founding partner of Frontline, and has been consistently represented on Frontline's board since its inception (Owens et al., 2014). Josh MacAlister has continued a close relationship with BCG in other ways, including co-authoring with BCG a 'blueprint' for fundamentally changing the children's social care system just one year prior to being appointed to chair the MacAlister Review (MacAlister et al., 2019).

Through the likes of Teach First and Frontline big businesses can position themselves as ethical actors fit to intervene in the lives of people in vulnerable situations throughout the world. They do this under the banners of what they somewhat euphemistically call 'corporate social responsibility' or 'corporate statesmanship' (Reeves et al., 2018). These are forms of philanthropic activity by elite financial organizations predicated on the myth that it is possible for these organizations to 'do well by doing good'. The inherent paradox of this myth should be obvious. 'Doing well by doing good' essentially means profiting from social disadvantage. To do that, a business needs a replenishing stock of socially disadvantaged people, and eradicating social disadvantage therefore becomes bad for business. There is no sustainable business model in the world

built on the premise of self-defeat, demonstrable through the total lack of attention paid by ‘socially responsible’ corporations in tackling social problems at structural level (Flaherty, 2016; Giridharadas, 2019). Corporate philanthropy rests on the lie that you can get rich while helping the poor when in fact the aim and the result are to keep the poor exactly where the rich need them. Saviours need people to save. This ideological positioning can also be seen in the approach these organizations take to the individual professionals, in particular promoting ‘micro-philanthropy’, and it is to this concept this chapter now turns.

### ***Micro-philanthropy***

Frontline’s approach and justification is underpinned by the same flawed premise as Teach First: that tackling social inequality rests on the potential of society’s most talented individuals, dubbed ‘the best and brightest’ (Hanley, 2021: 504). Moreover, it is seen to be possible for these ‘leaders’ to do so while also advancing their own careers and interests, which as noted above can be considered a form of ‘micro-philanthropy’ (Duggan, 2017: 135). This involves candidates being cast as selflessly forgoing (usually only for a couple of years) high-status/high-paying roles in areas like banking, politics and tech to help the less fortunate by becoming teachers or social workers, roles that they can therefore use to demonstrate characteristics like resilience and problem solving on future job applications. This idea is prominent in the marketing for these organizations, and even the name of Teach *First* evokes the idea of using teaching as a short-term experience builder before moving on (Duggan, 2017; Hanley, 2021). A prominent example of this in action is Josh MacAlister himself, who left his teaching job shortly after starting it to use his political and business connections, facilitated through his time at Teach First, to found Frontline (MacAlister, 2012). For these reasons Frontline and Teach First are both marketed as leadership development programmes, rather than professional development programmes (Duggan, 2017). There are even built in mechanisms and partnerships to facilitate these career moves. For example, graduates of Frontline and Teach First are favoured when applying to the civil service’s own fast-track scheme, Fast Stream (UK Government, n.d.).

Frontline and Teach First can therefore be seen as marketed to ambitious, high-achieving graduates as a stepping stone to other careers, perpetuating chronic recruitment and retention issues within the profession (Gupta & SocialWhatNow, 2018). Graduates of these programmes have been particularly effective in pursuing careers that place them in influential policymaking positions. This is borne out by our network mapping project, which as noted above shows that Teach First and Frontline are the most connected and therefore arguably the most influential organizations within their respective fields (Hanley et al., 2021). This serves to further consolidate the power of elite groups while also ensuring that these schemes continue to be favoured by the government of the day. The more this happens, the more normal and common sense it appears, and challenge to this hegemonic order is thereby increasingly framed as both abhorrent and an aberration. The neoliberal order has time only for people and ideas that accord with its own, individualistic, view of the world, and in particular rejects structural analyses (which expose neoliberalism's inherent failings, contradictions and paradoxes) and any suggestion that social ills are rooted in the inequalities on which the neoliberal edifice is built.

## Conclusion

By identifying and exploring several similar and parallel policy developments across social work and education, including those perpetuated and extended by the recent MacAlister Review, we have shown how the same game, played by the same players, in the different but related fields of social work and education is, in both form and effect, the advancement of hegemonic control within children's services, broadly speaking, and that the key ideological component of this hegemony is neoliberalism. It is of serious concern that the recent developments in education the MacAlister Review proposes repeating in social work, such as the ECF and the ITE Market Review, have not improved the state of teacher education in England, but have in fact contributed to the DfE missing their secondary teacher recruitment target for 2022 by over 40 per cent (Walker, 2022). Therefore, if these recommendations, and the policy network behind them, are allowed to continue unabated, social work should expect in the coming years similarly disastrous impacts to

compound and exacerbate the existing, ongoing challenges facing the profession set out at the start of this chapter.

At the level of practice, the effect of this hegemonic control in both professions has been to create, promote and embed technicized forms of social work and teaching. This has involved the stripping out or recasting of their social justice missions and politically radical elements to align them with highly individualistic approaches predicated on selectively prescribed skill sets and behaviour modification interventions. As suggested within the discussions in this chapter on ‘doing well by doing good’ and micro-philanthropy, these new, narrowed conceptions of professional roles emerge as micro-level iterations of macro-level ‘social impact’ activities of global corporations seeking to advance neoliberal conceptions of the ‘entrepreneurial self’ as the answer to complex social issues. Through Frontline, Teach First and similar elite-targeting graduate programmes, global big money has, with the help of powerful political allies, extended neoliberal ideology into our public services through hegemonic control. The chapters in this book set out in detail the negative impact of this control on our respective professions and, crucially, on the people our professions support. The paradoxical conceit of ‘doing well by doing good’ may indeed have achieved the ‘well’ but it has demonstrably failed to achieve a commensurate level of ‘good’.

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## CHAPTER SIX

# A 'golden thread'? Teacher recruitment, retention and the market review in England

*Jan Rowe*

The growing turbulence in initial teacher education (ITE) policy in England since 2019 has produced strong state control of the content of both ITE and continuing professional development (CPD) programmes as well as their means of delivery. The origins of this control began under the auspices of the English government's Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy, published in January 2019 (DfE, 2019a). Often referred to subsequently as a 'golden thread' of policies, the measures included a new Early Career Framework (ECF) to cover the first two years of teaching; a new suite of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs); and a review of the 'Initial Teacher Training (ITT) market'. Later the same year, and before the 'ITT market review' process was started, the 'ITT Core Content Framework' (DfE, 2019b) was published, setting out the common content that ITE providers such as universities had to include as a minimum entitlement for all trainee teachers. The ITT Market Review report, finally published in July 2021 (DfE, 2021), required all providers to undergo a process of reaccreditation

(or accreditation for new providers) to be approved to offer ITE programmes from 2024 onwards.

In this chapter, I focus on the intent and the impact of the sequence of policy changes aligned to the ‘golden thread’. I argue that rather than responding to genuine market forces, the purpose of the much-vaunted ‘golden thread’ of teacher development policy has simply been to assert unprecedented levels of direct state control over the training and development of new teachers and to replace some established and experienced providers with often untried and un-tested government-favoured organizations. Schools and other educational contexts (including university departments beyond Education) remain largely unaware of the future impact of recent policy changes in ITE, and the ways in which *they* too may be directly affected by them. This chapter therefore contributes to raising awareness both of the implications of the changes for schools and universities and of the solidarity that will be needed in order to resist their worst effects. Writing as a former head of ITE at a university, I conclude with a personal reflection on the process of change, the reality of compliance and the impact of these policies on my professional experience, identity and, ultimately, career.

## **The recruitment and retention strategy**

The recruitment and retention of teachers in England has long been a matter of considerable concern, with government teacher supply targets consistently missed. ITE census data reveals that the current government has failed to meet its secondary school teacher recruitment target over several years with many subjects falling short (NFER, 2022).

The Department for Education (DfE) response to these challenges, which was set out in the 2019 Recruitment and Retention Strategy (DfE, 2019a), had four stated priorities: to reduce workload; to transform support for early career teachers; to develop more varied career paths; and to make the initial teacher application process more straightforward. As proved to be the *modus operandi* in subsequent initiatives, an ‘expert advisory group’ was selected and convened by the DfE to oversee the development of the strategy. Five of the ten invited individuals were senior leaders of multi-academy trusts. There was representation from Teach First (who as a result

of the strategy were given the go ahead to recommend Qualified Teacher Status themselves, and thus become an ITE accredited provider), and from the Institute for Teaching and Ambition School Leadership (a national education charity, benefitting from significant DfE funds, led at the time by Matthew Hood, Chief Education Officer, which subsequently closed/merged and was replaced by Ambition Institute). There was only one selected representative from a university teacher education department, Professor Samantha Twiselton from Sheffield Hallam University, who has repeatedly figured in such DfE-composed 'expert groups'. Neither of the professional organizations representing the ITE sector – the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) and the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT) – were invited to be part of the group. On its publication, Damien Hinds (the Secretary of State for Education in England at the time) called the strategy the biggest teaching reform in a generation.

## **The Early Career Framework**

The ECF reforms, considered the flagship policy of the Recruitment and Retention Strategy, represented the initial strand of the 'golden thread'. The ECF document itself (DfE, 2019c) which was published by the end of January 2019, established statutory DfE control over, and standardized approved content for, the professional development of all new teachers in England. It was promoted by the DfE as 'a new entitlement for 2 years of professional development designed to help early career teachers (ECTs) develop their practice, knowledge and working habits' (DfE, 2019d, para 1). Significant funds were made available to support it, including £130 million pledged each year by the DfE to support a reduced timetable and access to a two-year training package for all ECTs in England.

Duplicating the approach taken when designing the Recruitment and Retention strategy, the ECF document was developed in consultation with members of a DfE-invited expert advisory group (again including representatives from Ambition School Leadership and Institute for Teaching and from Teach First). Once again, representatives of both of the professional organizations representing ITE were not invited, in spite of the fact that this framework was intended to lead on seamlessly (in what came to be

known as ‘the golden thread’) from the content taught beforehand on ITE programmes, and that the stated vision was for ‘the ECF to build on high-quality Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and become the cornerstone of a successful career in teaching’ (DfE, 2019c, p. 4).

Like the frameworks that were to follow, the content of the framework and its underpinning evidence was confirmed as being ‘independently assessed and endorsed by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)’, this ‘to ensure it draws on the best available evidence and that this evidence has been interpreted with fidelity’ (DfE, 2019c, p. 2). Although the ECF is stated to have been ‘endorsed’ by a wide range of sector bodies, including the teacher unions and teacher training providers, there is little evidence of their direct involvement in its design, apart from patchy attendance at consultative meetings, where (as was my personal experience) draft fragments were presented, under embargo, for very limited discussion.

The framework structure (a format repeated in later frameworks) divides the content into eight sections. These mirror the eight Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2011), competences which are required to be demonstrated in England in order for a new teacher to be given Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) at the end of their ITE, and which are subsequently used to confirm QTS at the end of an induction period. Within each of these eight sections, the ECF sets out two types of content, in two parallel columns headed ‘Learn that’ and ‘Learn How to’. Statements listed within each section and column describe in detail the content that must be taught to all ECTs.

The early roll-out of the ECF was planned to take place in the North-East, Bradford, Doncaster and Greater Manchester from September 2020, with a national roll-out from September 2021. A tender process was launched to select ECF providers, and three pilot programmes were developed ‘to investigate the promise, feasibility, and scalability of differing models for developing Early Career Teachers, mentors, and induction leads. As a result of the tender outcomes, two programmes were developed by Ambition Institute and a third by the Chartered College of Teaching.’ (Education Endowment Foundation, 2020, p. 5), both of these organizations had been part of the invited expert advisory group developing the framework. The evaluation of the pilot was carried out by the EEF (who had endorsed the framework content to start with). The findings of the pilot highlighted concerns about the ECF which are still being raised. These included the suitability of resources and

content; sequencing that lacked the flexibility to meet the needs of individual ECTs; the additional workload; and insufficient time for both ECTs and their mentors. Significantly 'the majority of surveyed participants across programmes stated that experience of the pilot would make no difference to whether they decided to remain in teaching' (Education Endowment Foundation, 2020, p. 7).

In spite of the emerging concerns about the impact of the ECF, the national roll-out was scheduled to begin in September 2021. The DfE implemented a further tendering process in order to select the national ECF providers. Six lead providers were selected: the new Ambition Institute; Best Practice Network; Capita with lead academic partner the University of Birmingham; Education Development Trust; Teach First; and UCL Institute of Education. These national organizations were required to deliver the ECF programmes through selected delivery partners, predominantly the Teaching School Hubs which were newly designated by the DfE in November 2020 and branded as 'a network of 87 centres of excellence for teacher training and development, focused on some of the best schools and multi-academy trusts in the country' (DfE, 2020, para 1). The number of organizations who tendered to deliver the ECF programmes has never been made public; however, given the names of the organizations who achieved successful bids, involvement in the (invited) expert advisory group appears to have potentially placed some organizations at an advantage in securing the national contracts. This way of working has been characteristic of the situation in England with policy entrepreneurs dubbed as 'experts' and ultimately benefitting from taxpayer funds.

Although schools with ECTs are able to choose from three different routes for their ECT offer, DfE financial arrangements mean that only the programmes provided by the six national providers come at no direct financial cost to a school. These ECF funding arrangements, and tight control of content (via the ECF) enable the DfE to exert extensive influence over the early professional development of teachers in England. Previously, more bespoke and negotiated induction programmes, traditionally led by local authority providers (equivalent to US school districts or European municipalities), and contextualized within the areas in which new teachers were employed, have now been largely replaced by national packages, principally delivered by third sector organizations via Teaching School Hubs (who depend on the DfE for their status,

remit, and funding). As a consequence of these measures, the DfE has largely secured control over what they consider to be essential ECT knowledge and who can deliver it. Unlike previous NQT programmes, ECF providers, effectively subcontracted by the DfE to deliver statutory content, are now also subject to OFSTED inspection, which checks to ensure compliance and fidelity.

The ECF was the crucial first step in ramping up direct state control over the training and early career development of teachers under the Conservative-led governments after 2010, and also in giving greater prominence and influence to organizations which had been invited to be part of the ‘inner circle’ of ‘golden thread’ policy development. The wider implications of these first steps towards establishing increased centralized control over teacher knowledge, with content developed mainly by DfE-appointed individuals, were largely overlooked at the time. As Spendlove (2019) pointed out, there was a rush to praise the ECF as ‘bold’ and as ‘game changer’ before it had even been implemented, let alone evaluated. Concerns raised by the ITE sector that the ECF ‘risked patronising new teachers and forcing them into training they do not need’ (Rowe, 2019) were largely dismissed, but the ECF was certainly an important precursor of all future ‘golden thread’ initiatives.

## **The core content for initial teacher training**

Once control had been established over the content of early career development, the DfE turned its attention to ITE and to the second strand of the ‘golden thread’. Following in the footsteps of the ECF, the Core Content Framework (CCF) for Initial Teacher Training, (first published in November 2019 less than a year after the ECF), became a statutory requirement for all ITE providers from September 2020. Its content defines in significant detail the minimum requirement for all programmes leading to QTS. In a now familiar process, an ‘expert advisory group’ was convened by the DfE to design the framework. The ‘Learn That’ statements were simply copied and pasted into the CCF from the ECF. Partial adjustments were made to the so-called ‘practice’ or ‘Learn how to’ statements, to take account of the role of mentors and ‘expert

others' in a trainee's development. But the overall impression was of a hurriedly copied and pasted document published rapidly to evade the conventional *purdah* (a period during which governments do not introduce new policies or legislation) prior to the 2019 General Election. As with the ECF, the final version states that the 'ITT Core Content Framework and its underpinning evidence has been independently assessed and endorsed by the Education Endowment Foundation' (DfE, 2019b, p. 2). This was hardly surprising given that the references are exactly the same in both documents. Although both UCET and NASBTT were invited members of the advisory group on this occasion, their contribution could only ever be minimal, given that the CCF document was effectively predetermined by the design and content of the earlier ECF (which neither organization had a significant role in developing). This replication was presented as an alignment of experience for new teachers; an earlier stage of the 'golden thread'.

At around the same time as the CCF became statutory, a new OFSTED ITE inspection framework and handbook came into force. The inspection framework now included the requirement to check 'whether the provider ensures that trainees within a primary or secondary phase receive their minimum entitlement, which is set out in the Department for Education's (DfE) ITT core content framework' (OFSTED, 2022, para 165). In evaluating visits to training sessions, inspectors are told to consider in primary and secondary phases, how programmes deliver 'the content laid out in the ITT core content framework' (para 108); in meetings they must 'discuss how the provider ensures that it meets the minimum expectations set out in the ITT CCF, ensuring coverage of all "learn that" and "learn how to" statements' (para 112).

Although, because of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time, providers were told that OFSTED would make some allowances in the timeline for fully implementing the CCF, in practice little consideration was given. The early OFSTED reports under the newly released framework consistently downgraded previously strong providers. A Schools Week analysis revealed that, whilst under the previous framework OFSTED graded all initial teacher education provision as 'good' or 'outstanding', from the introduction of the now content-focused framework, 10 of the 22 inspected providers – which includes three inspected for the first time – were now 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' (Booth,

2021); insufficient embedding of the CCF requirements featured frequently in negative OFSTED judgements. Compliance with the CCF and fidelity to the evidence within it, are evidently (under the current ITE OFSTED inspection handbook) key components for achieving successful outcomes in inspection. Providers are advised to go beyond the CCF in designing an ambitious curriculum but must first and foremost ensure that the CCF is taught *in full* to all student teachers, irrespective of phase or subject. Particularly on pressured postgraduate QTS courses of ten months, with 120 days of placement required as a minimum, the time restrictions and limitations are palpable. Freedom to innovate, adapt, enhance is being squeezed, and in any case could potentially open providers to risk in any inspection judgements.

As was the case with the ECF, the CCF, which is the second strand of the ‘golden thread’, requires ITE providers to comply with itemized curriculum content, largely devised by a small group of DfE-appointed, influential individuals and organizations. Compliance can be heavily policed due to a revised OFSTED framework. Dissent is high stakes due to the impact of a negative inspection judgement (which can result in course closure). On ITE programmes, curriculum content and fidelity to specific research evidence is being controlled directly by the DfE at unprecedented levels.

## The ‘Market Review of Initial Teacher Training’

Although not officially part of the golden thread, the ‘Market Review of ITT’ (initially proposed in the Recruitment and Retention Strategy) is a further, and highly significant, means by which ITE is being state controlled; this time not only control over what is taught on ITE programmes, but over who can teach it and how. The Market Review proposals once again saw the appointment of a government-selected expert advisory group of familiar names, although some had now changed role. Their report was published in July 2021 (DfE, 2021).

The report recommended a nationwide reaccreditation process in England based on the group’s concerns over ITE quality. The

report set aside the OFSTED judgements which indicated that nationally ITE provision was very strong, and the review group instead emphasized the 'variability' indicated in the Carter Review (DfE, 2015) of which Professor Samantha Twiselton had also been a member, as well as the data OFSTED had collected through a remote survey of forty-seven providers carried out between January and March 2021 (the height of COVID challenges in England). Although it was titled 'Teaching teachers during covid', this OFSTED review made recommendations which had no evident link to that context, and which drew more overarching conclusions, including the finding that 'the ITE sector must now develop stronger and more ambitious ITE curriculums' (OFSTED, 2021, para 11). Surveyed providers and their school partners were, at the time, coping with the training of student teacher cohorts during a pandemic; they were led to believe that this would be the focus of any discussion with OFSTED. However, compliance with and partnership schools' knowledge of the CCF became a key discussion point, even though the statutory requirement to include the CCF was only 4–6 months old. At the time, there were suspicions from ITE providers involved in the survey that another agenda was at play, in OFSTED using the report to gather evidence in support of the DfE's reaccreditation plans. These proved accurate when substandard ITE curricula were used as part of the justification for pressing ahead with the Market Review.

The central recommendation of the Market Review group, was that 'a new set of Quality Requirements should be implemented by all ITT providers of courses that lead to QTS, and that a robust accreditation process should take place to ensure that all providers have the capacity to meet the exacting Quality Requirements in full, both at the point of accreditation and on a continuing basis' (DfE, 2021, p. 4). This resulted in an entirely paper-based accreditation process launched by the DfE with Stage 1 undertaken over two rounds across 2022. The first round concluded in May 2022 and the second round concluded in September 2022, after which the full list of successful ITE providers was published. In the list of accredited providers for 2024 (DfE, 2022a) the total number of providers that have been accredited stands at 179, down some 20 per cent on the historic total of about 240. Fifteen new providers have been approved; some of these will be amalgamations of pre-existing smaller SCITTs, but some are new entrants to the 'ITT

Market’, including Ambition Institute, whose name will be familiar from many of the DfE ‘expert groups’.

Success in the reaccreditation process required detailed demonstration of compliance with the expectations of the CCF and other 2024 DfE quality requirements through submission of answers to key questions, a detailed curriculum and mentor map and examples of resources. As the process took place through an online tendering portal, the full requirements are not in the public domain, and were only made available to applicants. Submissions were anonymized given that OFSTED were part of the evaluation of materials, and it was considered prejudicial for them to be aware of the source of each submission. A number of high-quality, long-established, and tried and tested ITE providers have not been successful in either round of Stage 1 of the reaccreditation process and from 2024 will cease to be accredited providers, including twelve universities. Their appeals against this decision were all rejected by the DfE, and legal challenge may be considered, given the substantial negative impact of this judgement, including inevitable job losses. There is no correlation between current OFSTED judgements and success in this accreditation exercise.

As of late 2022, the DfE encouraged any institutions which were unsuccessful in their accreditation applications, to partner with those who have received the accreditation. They have offered set up grants to new partnerships in those areas of England which now may well be short of ITE provision because of the outcomes of the accreditation process, which has resulted in significant geographical imbalances (DfE, 2022e). It will be interesting to see which providers move into these areas, now left short of teacher training places by the Market Review process. The DfE has also announced that School Direct (fee-funded) routes will be discontinued from 2024 (DfE, 2022d); this route currently trains 25 per cent of the current teacher workforce. This ongoing DfE policy churn continues to operate within a context of a growing crisis in teacher recruitment in England.

For providers who were successful at Stage 1 of reaccreditation, more DfE scrutiny lies ahead. Stage 2 accreditation also must be successfully achieved before a provider’s status as an ITE provider from 2024 can be confirmed. Stage 2 includes a further curriculum sample checking process (this time for materials to be used in 2024 programmes). Providers are being asked to submit curriculum

materials for review to the DfE 'curriculum checking team' related to the 'How Pupils Learn' section of the ITT Core Content Framework. The guidance states that the review 'will consider whether sampled materials fully deliver and build upon the statements in the "How Pupils Learn" section of the CCF as well as the evidence base that the provider is using to substantiate the statements' (DfE, 2022b, p. 7). Providers are advised that any additional (non-CCF listed) evidence within these materials used will be scrutinized to ensure that any 'claims or guidance derived from references from outside of those cited in the CCF, address and support CCF statements' and that 'claims or guidance that build on or go beyond the CCF are supported by suitably robust sources of evidence' (DfE, 2022b, p. 8). This level of external control, including over references, is unprecedented in universities.

The Stage 2 DfE letter which was sent to all individual providers successful at Stage 1, reminded them that the materials requested must be those that will be used with student teachers in 2024. Up to four sets of materials had to be submitted, and each will be 'triaged' to evaluate whether the Quality threshold has been met or whether there are areas for improvement. Once ratified, providers are expected not to make significant revisions to these materials before 2024 following completion of the checks. Exemplar ECF materials (provided by the DfE-approved ECF providers) have been made available as DfE examples of good practice (DfE, 2022c). According to UCET, 80 per cent of providers who have submitted Stage 2 materials have been asked to revise and resubmit at least some of them, because they have been deemed not yet fit for purpose by the DfE curriculum team.

It is hard to envisage circumstances where control mechanisms over teacher training and development could be any tighter, anywhere in the world. Providers of ITE (including universities) are being micromanaged by the state. From 2024 onwards, as well as prescribing what must be taught, the DfE are drafting much more extensive and detailed 'ITT compliance criteria' than currently exists (DfE, 2022b – Annex A). This will be explicit about compulsory aspects of even the structure of programmes, including a requirement for all programmes to include four Intensive Training and Practice Periods. It will also require (as a compliance issue) that all mentors attend significant amounts of training, following the mentor curriculum which the DfE approved at Stage 1. This level of

programme content and design detail has never previously featured in compliance criteria. Following the Market Review process, an individual known as an 'ITT associate', employed directly by the DfE, has been attached to each 2024 accredited provider. Their remit is to assess readiness to deliver the 2024 requirements, particularly in mentoring, intensive training and practice, and partnerships, three key areas of focus from the ITT Market review. Lastly, a further new OFSTED framework will be introduced in 2024, with ITE inspections scheduled to take place every three years. These inspections will of course check compliance with the revised DfE criteria and curriculum content and the design requirements as part of their remit. This raft of mechanisms will ensure that all providers are kept 'on track' and 'on message', with significant consequences if they do not continue to comply.

## Reflections

The sequence of policy changes precipitated by what was presented primarily as a Recruitment and Retention Strategy has so far had no positive impact on the recruitment or retention of teachers in England. Applications to teaching continue to decline and a recent report on the ECF concluded that only 14 per cent of ECTs and 9 per cent of mentors think that the training received as part of the ECF so far is a good use of time, while 64 per cent of ECTs disagree or strongly disagree that they have learned a lot from the ECF (Teacher Tapp, 2022). In November 2022, a survey of school leaders by the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) found that a third of leaders feared that the new pressures would have a negative impact on new teacher retention rates, with nine out of ten school leaders saying that the ECF has created extra workload for new teachers, with concerns mentors are also 'drowning' in work (Booth, 2022).

Meanwhile, those of us working in ITE have, in large part, seen our decades of experience, professional autonomy, creativity, research knowledge and practical wisdom undermined by a series of frameworks largely created by directly DfE-appointed cliques and over which the ITE sector as a whole had minimal influence. ITE in England is now subject to what amounts to authoritarian control by the state in England through validity checks, fidelity to state-approved evidence, compliance with state-specified

programme structure and design requirements, and a cycle of three-year OFSTED inspections. With no apparent irony, the state, in the form of the DfE in England, is preaching to providers about the need for robust evidence whilst choosing to ignore the abundant evidence that ITE was already of high quality and the increasing raft of evidence that its own 'golden thread' of Recruitment and Retention reforms (particularly the ECF) is clearly failing in its stated aims.

Alongside this erosion of independence for existing providers, relatively new organizations and favoured individuals have accrued considerable financial benefits and influence, whether via ECF funding, or gaining ITT accreditation for the first time (for instance in the case of Ambition Institute and the new National Institute of Teaching), or simply by having a seat on every 'expert group'. Time after time, the same organizations have been funded as lead providers of the new suite of NPQs whilst individuals heavily involved in the 'golden thread' initiatives have appeared in the New Year's Honours lists for their 'services to education'.

I have worked in the ITE sector for over twenty years, most recently as Head of Initial Teacher Education at a large urban university. Having successfully led ITE provision through many policy changes, OFSTED inspections and the COVID-19 pandemic, in August 2022 I decided to resign from my position as Head of ITE. We had very successfully completed Round 1 of the reaccreditation process but the professional prospect of managing the degree of compliance with 2024 requirements precipitated my decision. I believe that this recent period of catastrophic destruction in ITE will be highly damaging to the future of teacher education (and therefore teaching) in England. The so-called 'golden thread' has been wound so tightly around the sector that there is very little space left to breathe. The agency of ITE providers is being removed; they will soon be merely agents of the DfE.

The Market Review, the resulting accreditation process and its outcomes, are unjust, unethical and will be detrimental to teacher quality and supply, in my view. Nonetheless, to survive, providers will have no choice but to comply with the state's demands, whether from the DfE or OFSTED. Perhaps some wriggle room will be found. Nonetheless, the contortions, pitfalls and compromises that would inevitably be required, felt so likely to be damaging to my professional integrity, that I decided I couldn't lead these regressive

changes at my own university. I am fortunate to be able to occupy, for now, a different role, strategically focused on our deep-rooted partnerships with schools, aiming to sustain and develop the highly positive relationships we already share. I also hope to be in a position to continue to speak out for the ITE sector, which I believe has largely been pressured into silence through the well-founded fear of state retaliation towards their institutions through dis-accreditation or negative OFSTED judgements, as the golden thread gets even more tightly wound.

## Appendix

List of English government advisory groups and their representatives.

**1) Recruitment and Retention Strategy. Expert Advisory Group members:**

Rebecca Boomer-Clark, Director of Secondary, Ark

Jon Coles, Chief Executive Officer, United Learning

Jo Heaton, Executive Headteacher, St. Peter's Elwick Church of England and Hart Primary School

Russell Hobby, Chief Executive Officer, Teach First

Matthew Hood, Chief Education Officer, Institute for Teaching and Ambition School Leadership

Vijita Patel, Principal, Swiss Cottage School and Development & Research Centre

Lesley Powell, Executive Principal, The Academy at Shotton Hall and Chief Executive Officer, North East Learning Trust

Dr. Jeffery Quaye, Director of Standards and Effectiveness, Aspirations Academies Trust

Maura Regan, Principal, Carmel College and Chief Executive Officer, Carmel Education Trust

Professor Samantha Twiselton, Director of Sheffield Institute of Education at Sheffield Hallam University

**2) Early Career Framework. Expert Advisory Group members:**

Roger Pope (Chair), Education South West

Becky Francis, UCL Institute of Education

Marie Hamer, Ambition School Leadership and Institute for Teaching

Jon Hutchinson, Reach Academy Feltham

Stuart Lock, Advantage Schools

Reuben Moore, Teach First

Cat Scutt, Chartered College of Teaching

**3) Core Content Framework. Expert Advisory Group Members**

Sam Twiselton (Chair), Sheffield Institute of Education, Sheffield Hallam University

John Blake, Now Teach

Becky Francis, UCL Institute of Education

Richard Gill, Teaching School Council

Marie Hamer, Ambition Institute

Emma Hollis, National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers

Reuben Moore, Teach First

James Noble Rogers, Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers

**4) ITT Market Review: Expert Advisory Group Members**

Ian Bauckham, CEO of Tenax Schools trust (chair)

Professor Sam Twiselton, Director of Sheffield Institute of Education, Sheffield Hallam University

Richard Gill, Chair of the Teaching Schools Council, CEO of The Arthur Terry Learning Partnership

Reuben Moore, Director of Initial Teacher Training, Star Academies

John Blake, Head of Public Affairs and Engagement, and former Head of Curriculum Design, Ark

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

# England's essentialist teacher education policy frameworks as double texts

*Keith Turvey*

This chapter argues that the current essentialist framing of what teachers need to know in teacher education policy in England (Department for Education [DfE], 2019a; DfE, 2019b), uses these policies as double texts. That is, the ITT Core Content Framework [CCF] (DfE, 2019a) and Early Career Framework [ECF] (DfE, 2019b) prioritize certain knowledge bases whilst placing other vital knowledge and skills for the effective professional development of student teachers and Early Career Teachers, out of sight. This is done through the omission of important theory and evidence, the narrow and isolated representation of evidence from cognitive psychology (Turvey et al., 2019; Baird, 2022) and the monopoly of the narrative of evidence in teacher education and development. Through a brief analysis of the discourse of 'learning' in two centralized teacher education policies, I examine how evidence about learning, that would question the marketized neo-conservative ideologies of education are absent in policy. The effect is to deprive teachers of a rich and agentic professional development. The CCF and the ECF (DfE, 2019a; DfE, 2019b) are central policy frameworks for teacher development in England and I consider how they may operate, as

policy double texts (Schostak, 2020) to monopolize the narrative of what teachers need to know in order to become effective teachers, exploiting an essentialist philosophy of teacher education and learning in education.

## Essentialism in teacher education

Essentialism in teacher education is defined here as the reduction or omission of particular knowledge bases that teachers need to draw on to enact effective professional judgement in their pedagogical practice. The established evidence base for effective teacher education is complex and interdisciplinary (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Hoban, 2005; Korthagen, 2011; Winch, Oancea & Orchard, 2015). As Brooks (2021) argues, teachers need to build a repertoire of pedagogical strategies. This endeavour requires the development of different kinds of knowledge and skills together with dynamic Initial Teacher Education [ITE] programmes capable of responding to situated and local contexts (Brooks, 2021). Centralized teacher education policy in England has increasingly pursued an essentialist agenda of teacher as technician (DfE, 2010) prioritizing certain knowledge bases at the expense of others. In contrast, Winch, Oancea & Orchard (2015, p. 204) argue that technical know-how alone or the teacher as ‘executive technician’ is an insufficient basis to develop effective professional knowledge and judgement.

The emergence of essentialism in educational thought is mostly associated with scholar William Chandler Bagley, a professor of education at Teachers College, Columbia University (1917–1939) and before that a professor of psychology and pedagogy (Null, 2007). Null (2007) suggests that the founders of essentialism were not unified in their beliefs and philosophy of education but shared some common concerns about some of the extremes of progressivism in education. What *did* unite them according to Null (2007) was their belief in the importance of the role of the teacher, the systematic organization of the curriculum and their belief in a core body of teacher knowledge. Null (2007) portrays the historical emergence of essentialism in teacher education in the United States as a fragmented response to Dewey’s progressivism in the 1930s, but calls for essentialism as an underpinning philosophy of teacher education have also been highlighted by Ravitch (2000).

Null (2007, p. 1046) laments that despite the espoused aims of the essentialists to overcome the division between ‘traditionalists’ and ‘progressives’, the popular press of the day nevertheless portrayed essentialism as an intellectual battle between the two. This may sound quite familiar in many respects, as populist binary arguments of this nature are nothing new to those who have followed debates in education on social media in recent years. Essentialism, it could be argued, lends itself to political rhetoric through slogans such as ‘back to basics’. Indeed, the DfE and the education media in England has been dominated by an essentialist stance in opposition to progressivism in education, and championed by influential conservative ministers such as Nick Gibb throughout the era from 2010 onwards (Severs, 2022). With the advent of the CCF and ECF (DfE, 2019a, 2019b) this essentialist agenda has been extended to teacher education and development.

I argue that essentialism underpins the political manipulation of policy as a double text, because it services the elevation of an ideologically preferred body of knowledge and evidence, whilst also lending itself to rhetorical over-simplification that creates the illusion that such knowledge and evidence are beyond question or critique. This concept of policy as double text has been associated explicitly with neo-conservative political thinking, as I will examine briefly in the next section before analysing how this is illustrated in the CCF and ECF.

## **Policy double texts as rhetorical tool?**

Schostak (2020) locates the historical and political precedents of the linguistic device of ‘double writing’ and ‘double texts’ in the work of the controversial political theorist Carl Schmitt, and highlights a lineage of this concept to Leo Strauss (1952) and neo-conservative Irving Kristol’s political and philosophical interest in esoteric writing. That is, writing that is capable of delivering ‘one reading for the targeted populations, and another for the elites’ (Schostak, 2020, p. 135). Esoteric writing is conceived of as a rhetorical device in philosophy. Melzer (2014, p. 1) notes that a characteristic feature of such writing can be the intention to perpetuate ‘a fictional doctrine – the “exoteric” teaching – in place of the true doctrine that has been withheld’. In doing so, there may be various reasons, one of which

can be ‘to promote some positive political scheme’ (Melzer, 2007, p. 1015). The promotion of a particular message or ideology through the rhetorical use of language including repetition in political speeches is well documented (see, e.g. Condor, Tileaga & Billig, 2013). As David (2014) argues, repetition can help to construct a persuasive ideology. But the use of repetition within policy publications and statements themselves is less well documented.

Repetition operates on various levels. On one level and in certain contexts less can be more. As Davison (2008) noted in a rhetorical analysis of Annual Reviews, Reports and Accounts of British Telecommunications (BT) plc during the ‘dot.com’ years, communication strategies based on the repetition of lean narratives through words and pictures served to emphasize and render memorable that which can be intangible or difficult to communicate. But on other levels, linguists have illustrated how the repetition of signifiers (e.g. words, images and their associated sounds) together with their signified concepts (Saussure, 2013) performs a range of functions. Davison (2008) highlights the linguistic functionality of repetition in texts, delineating, for example, sameness and difference together with creating networks and links. Similarly, he notes (Davison, 2008) repetition’s capacity to convey exuberance and compulsion, ritual and reassurance. It is contended here that repetition in the CCF and ECF policy frameworks serves, whether intended or not, to monopolize the narrative of the field of initial and Early Career Teacher development. In monopolizing the narrative of learning it is interesting to consider the effect this creates around a narrow conception of what it is to be a teacher and learner within our current education system in England. In terms of ritual and reassurance (Davison, 2008) as becomes evident when we consider the CCF and ECF more closely and their reception by Early Career Teachers the effect appears to be one of confusion and frustration (Ellis, 2022; Ford, Allen & Wespieser, 2022).

## **A political game of narrative monopoly and exclusion?**

Despite having different titles, the CCF and ECF are essentially the same document. A comparison of the two documents using plagiarism software (<https://copyleaks.com/>) records an 84.2 per cent match between them, with 68.4 per cent of the text identical,

8.5 per cent representing minor changes and 7.2 per cent paraphrased. Between them, the CCF and ECF monopolize the narrative of what teachers are expected to know in the first three years of their career through essentially repeating and reiterating the reified knowledge base also circumscribed by the Market Review of ITT (DfE, 2021), which has required the reaccreditation of all training providers in England to ensure their curricula are based on the CCF. It is important to remember that the CCF and ECF are intended to provide the focus and stimulus for the first three years of a graduate-level Early Career Teachers' continuing professional development in England, and that the frameworks were devised by a team of experts who one might assume, knew they were repeating the same content without any progression. In this sense the repetition of the same content is a double text because it monopolizes the knowledge base whilst excluding other necessary and significant knowledge bases.

The repetition and lack of any progression are evident when one examines the collocation of important knowledge and concepts graduate trainee teachers and teachers are required to learn. Tracing the key concept of learning using Lancsbox 6.0 discourse analysis software throughout both documents reveals, *inter alia* the collocation of exactly the same concepts of working memory, long-term memory, retrieval practice and quizzing pupils for fluency, repeated without any variation or detail throughout both documents (Figure 7.1). Repeated numerous times are also statements claiming that the evidence is 'the best available' without

The image shows two screenshots of the LancsBox 6.0 software interface. The top screenshot displays search results for the term 'learn' in the 'ITT\_core\_cor' corpus, showing 105 occurrences. The bottom screenshot displays search results for the same term in the 'ITT\_core\_content\_framework(2).pdf' corpus, showing 54 occurrences. Both screenshots show identical text snippets, illustrating the duplication of content across the two frameworks. The text snippets include:

- long-term memory is likely to help pupils learn more complex ideas.
- Working memory is where information that is being actively processed is held, but its capacity is limited and can be overloaded.
- Long-term memory can be considered as a store of knowledge that changes as pupils learn by integrating new ideas with existing knowledge.

**FIGURE 7.1** Collocation query using LancsBox 6.0 (Lancaster University, 2021), of 'learn' in CCF and ECF illustrating duplication and absence of progression.

actually referencing the evidence against the concepts that teachers are expected to know. Again this aligns with a double function of these texts as both monopolizing and excluding from the narrative of evidence in teacher education and development.

I'm not arguing here that knowledge about these concepts in learning is not useful to teachers or that they cannot inform some aspects of their practice, but why such a narrow construction of learning, the lack of detail, the repetition, the absence of other important knowledge bases and the lack of any progression or critique? These questions are also being raised by the profession and Early Career Teachers themselves in England.

Recent evaluations of the ECF (e.g. Ford, Allen & Wespieser, 2022) have highlighted high levels of dissatisfaction as well as confusion as to why so much of the content of these two centralized policies is simply repeated without any sense of progression or responsiveness to Early Career Teachers' actual classroom-based needs and concerns. For example, in a large-scale survey (N = 1000) of teachers in England, Ellis (2022) reported that only 10 per cent of teachers considered the reforms represented by the ECF 'timely and necessary'. Furthermore, according to this report (Ellis, 2022) 'more than half (54 per cent) of those who are aware of the reforms are still undecided' as to how useful these reforms are with a quarter identifying the reforms as a threat to teacher supply and sustainability. In another teacher survey of the reforms and the ECF (Ford, Allen and Wespieser, 2022), 67 per cent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement 'I have learned a lot from the ECF that I didn't already know (from experience of initial training)'. Mentors and Early Career Teachers noted the repetition of content in the ECF compared to the CCF underpinning Initial Teacher Training (ITT) leading to nearly half (48 per cent) of Early Career Teachers 'skipping' some or a lot of the ECF programme.

These initial evaluations illustrate the fundamental lack of responsiveness to teachers' developmental and situated needs, but also highlight the neglect of decades of research on teachers' professional learning that has illustrated, as Korthagen (2011, p. 32) argues, that 'simply transmitting important pedagogical knowledge to teachers, hoping they will apply this knowledge in their practices, does not really work'. Also brought into focus by teachers' responses to the ECF (Ellis, 2022; Ford, Allen & Wespieser, 2022) is an ever

wider theory/practice gap evident when top-down approaches are taken to teacher education that fail to acknowledge the complexity and multidisciplinary nature of teachers' professional work that is 'influenced by the interaction of many elements such as curriculum, the context, and how students respond to instruction at one particular time' (Hoban, 2005, p. 9). Such complexities, whereby pedagogical knowledge is developed through the context- and value-laden concerns teachers harbour, are absent in the ECF and its implementation. Early Career Teachers are simply exposed to yet more of the same uncontested cognitive science they have been introduced to in their initial training through the CCF. Furthermore, the way in which learning in the ITT curriculum has been turned exclusively to cognitive science is raising concerns amongst cognitive scientists themselves.

## The turn to cognitive science

In the turn to a cognitive science-based framework for what teachers should know and understand about learning, Baird (2022, p. 38) argues that it is vital trainee teachers and Early Career Teachers 'are not misled about the basis of the knowledge underpinning the [ITE] curriculum'. The discourse of the CCF and ECF is declarative in tone, abstracting the content into lists of assertive statements under the emboldened headings that teachers should 'Learn that ...' and 'Learn how to ...' (DfE, 2019a). The exoteric and fictional message teachers could easily take from such a declarative tone within these policies is that the basis of the knowledge underpinning the CCF and ECF is uncontested and established beyond any reasonable doubt. Having discussed the rhetorical function of repetition of content between these two policies, it could also be argued that the omission of the underpinning complexities and nuances of the cognitive science encapsulated in the CCF and ECF for teacher training, also performs a rhetorical function as a double text. The omission of complexity and nuance lends itself to the establishment of the essentialist and uncontested nature of the evidence; that is, a fictional layer of certainty is associated with content and evidence. So what is missing here?

Perry, Lea and Jorgensen (2021) undertook a comprehensive review of the evidence underpinning the cognitive science promoted

repeatedly through the CCF and ECF. Perry et al. (2021) make a number of overall recommendations. For example, although the principles of cognitive science can have an impact on ‘rates of learning’, they state teachers should also ‘be made aware of the serious gaps and limitations in the applied evidence base, the uncertainties about the applicability of specific principles across subjects and age ranges, and the challenges of implementation in practice’ (Perry et al., 2021, p. 260).

They also go on to state that in relation to the significant gap between controlled lab or pseudo-lab conditions and applied classroom practice, principles established ‘do not determine strategies or specific approaches to implementation’ (p. 262). In other words, the implications from principles established in research are not straightforward and it is important that teachers are made aware of the issues of over-simplistic translation from research to practice. One such example of this is the translation of cognitive load theory [CLT] into practice through the ECF and CCF, as the provisionality of what is currently known about CLT is clearly omitted from these policies and I argue, risks both ‘obfuscation’ and undermining of any usefulness that CLT might hold for teachers (Baird, 2022).

CLT draws on theory and evidence about the limited capacity of ‘working memory’ (Baddeley, 1986) and models of human cognitive architecture, arguing it can inform the various ways in which teachers plan teaching and learning activities designed to support students in acquiring new or novel information (Paas & Sweller, 2012). CLT builds on the evolution of psychological models of cognitive architecture and pioneering research in this field (Atkinson & Schiffrin, 1968; Baddeley 1986; Baddeley, Eysenck & Anderson, 2020), which has over many years, modelled various processes and theorized components thought to be involved in memorization, a factor in learning. CLT is, as Baird points out (2022), an attractive theory, because without an understanding of psychological models and their scientific basis, its ambiguity connotes biological and neurological foundations to the evidence; an ambiguity that Paas and Sweller (2012, p. 28) dwell on, tenuously suggesting that ‘human cognitive architecture can be specified using similar structures and functions to biological evolution’. On the contrary, Baird argues (2022, p. 39) that ‘socially-constructed teaching and learning are the underlying

causal mechanisms in education’, suggesting further that the *What Works* paradigm often aligns simplistically with neuroscientific and biological explanations of causality which do not account for context. Consequently, oversimplification and potential misrepresentation can be seen in the way the evidence from CLT is translated into the CCF.

The first thing of note in the translation of the evidence from CLT into the discourse of the CCF is its misrepresentation in terms of what strategies teachers should learn in relation to CLT as it states they should learn how to ‘avoid overloading working memory, by: Discussing and analysing with expert colleagues how to reduce distractions that take attention away from what is being taught (e.g. keeping the complexity of a task to a minimum, so that attention is focused on the content)’ (DfE, 2019a, p.?).

The singular strategy of avoiding ‘overloading working memory’ by minimizing distractions or keeping the ‘complexity of a task to a minimum’ belies the complexities of CLT and learning itself.

Three types of load are elaborated upon in CLT (Sweller, Merriënboer and Paas, 1998 and 2019), namely:

- Intrinsic; for example, the inherent difficulty of a concept, process or information being learnt
- Extraneous; for example, aspects of the learning context or stimulus which do not support the learning of the material being introduced
- Germane; for example, strategies, stimuli or resources the teacher may use that support understanding of the material being taught and schema development

The interaction between these three elements of CLT is complex and captures *some of* the complexities inherent within the pedagogical decisions teachers take in considering how to model, represent or bring into contact the content of what they are teaching in ways that optimize their students’ capacity to learn. But this is a process of optimization not of merely reducing load. As Reif states, cognitive load should be ‘of *reasonable* magnitude’ not overloading but equally not ‘so small that learning becomes inefficient or boring’ (2008, p. 362). Furthermore, teachers’ consideration of the difficulty of the task (intrinsic), the control of any distractions

(extraneous) and the design of germane strategies or approaches that will support and secure the learners' understanding and schema building is also impacted by a range of other significant factors (Perry et al., 2021; Baird, 2022). Some of these factors include a critical consideration of the way that different subject domains lend themselves to particular forms of representation or activity design, a rich seam of theory and research that has been evident within teacher education and particularly in the concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge [PCK] (Shulman, 1986 & 1987), but which is also absent from the generic CCF or ECF. Similarly, the way that particular pedagogical approaches afford opportunities for greater learner agency and the development of self-regulatory capacities amongst learners may also be a factor for consideration when considering the application of CLT within different phases of education. Other factors include the importance of relationships and students' self-motivation. CLT would seem particularly mute in terms of learner self-motivation or intentionality. But then CLT is not a complete theory of learning, despite its predominance within the CCF and ECF. The absence of any critical perspective on CLT and the lack of inclusion of other important evidence-based perspectives on learning suggest again an attempt to use these policies as double texts to promote an essentialist agenda underpinned by a fictional layer of certainty not supported by the evidence as can be seen further when examining the issues of how cognitive load is measured within the literature.

Another complexity of the discourse of CLT absent from both the CCF and ECF is the issue of cognitive load and the perceptions of implied measurement that it connotes. Bokhove (2018) argues that critically engaged teachers should be aware of the limitations within CLT research with regards the predominantly self-report Likert scales used to 'measure' participants' experience of cognitive load (mental effort). Indeed Klepsch, Schmitz and Seufert (2017, p. 3) document the range of different approaches and attempts to 'measure' cognitive load in their study into the issue of measuring different load types, remarking that 'researchers stated that measuring cognitive load is one of the persistent challenges in educational research'. Sweller, Merriënboer and Paas (2019) themselves acknowledge there are unanswered questions and issues remaining unresolved with regards the various approaches to cognitive load 'measurement' whether focusing on subjective

self-report scales, secondary task techniques or more physiological approaches such as eye-tracking and pupil dilation. The provisionality and significant gaps in the cognitive science upon which the limited conceptions of learning in the CCF and ECF are built are clearly evident within the literature. But these uncertainties and methodological issues in the cognitive science literature underpinning learning in the CCF and ECF are withheld and not evident in the teacher education policy frameworks. This brings us back to the recurring question about why such an essentialist view of learning is prioritized and promoted unquestioningly within the CCF and ECF.

As noted earlier, Meltzer (2014, p. 1) suggests double texts contain a 'fictional layer' that is maintained in place of the 'true doctrine that has been withheld'. The essentialist nature of the CCF and ECF is clearly inadequate and ambiguous in the way these frameworks claim and assert their origins in the 'best available evidence' whilst the evidence itself is contested and supports only a small part of the repertoire of knowledge, understanding and skills that effective teachers draw on. As such these frameworks provide a superficial fictional layer of generic evidence and knowledge about learning whilst the contested nature of such evidence is withheld. As Baird (2022) points out, 'universal causal mechanisms are sought in cognitive science, not contextualised, dynamic and socially-constructed knowledge' that teachers develop. Respondents to the evaluations of the ECF discussed earlier (Ellis, 2022; Ford, Allen and Wespieser, 2022) are also clearly lacking opportunities for relevant and authentic professional development. From this perspective one might question how seriously these frameworks consider teachers' professional development and identities or whether they serve to merely sustain a superficial 'fictional layer' of professionalism in a climate of wider de-professionalization of the teacher workforce and general crises in education.

## Conclusion

Like Bagley in the 1930s, Null (2007) saw an opportunity within essentialism to resolve tensions between different philosophies of education and their implications for teacher education. But essentialism has dominated England's neo-conservative era of

education policy since 2010, heralded by the review of the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013), and punctuated further by Ofsted's failure to address the narrowing of the curriculum (Bousted, 2020) and now, the narrowing of teacher education and development through the CCF and ECF. This extension of essentialism to teacher education and development through the CCF and ECF merely leaves the profession vulnerable to ongoing political and ideological exploitation. Reducing and simplifying the knowledge base that graduate teachers have access to, as well as reducing teachers' opportunities to develop a rich understanding of the ways in which theory and practice are developed symbiotically within dynamic contexts, is at best naïve. I write this chapter at a time of acute and ongoing threat to social justice and equality in England as an extreme right-wing government announced the expansion of elite grammar schools amidst rising levels of child poverty (ONS, 2020; IFS, 2017) and rising mental health disorders in children aged 5–16 (NHS, 2020). Teachers and schools find themselves on the front line of these issues with less funding and resources to respond to the needs of their pupils and communities; per-pupil funding having decreased by 9 per cent in England between 2009–2010 and 2019–2020 (Sibieta, 2021). It would appear a particularly convenient moment against this backdrop, for the UK government to continue to narrow and reduce the lenses through which teachers' professional work is viewed, valued and supported.

The CCF and ECF increasingly look inadequate and naïve representations of what teachers need to know, against this backdrop of crisis in education with the rapidly growing shortages of teachers (Education Policy Institute, 2022) and the increased defunding of schools in England where those serving the most deprived areas are hit worst (Full Fact, 2020; Sibieta, 2021). For the politicians and those associated with England's education and teacher education policy failures from 2010 to the present, inequality, poverty and the uncomfortable truths about the inadequacy of policy throughout this period has become impossible to suppress. It is no longer possible for those associated with these failing education and teacher education policies to maintain a fictional veneer of success or effectiveness. The true ideologically flawed basis of these policies can no longer be obscured by the thin layer of claims about evidence-based education.

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

# Charting contested terrain in teacher education

*Rachel Lofthouse*

This is a chapter in three sections, each told through my own perspective as teacher educator with twenty-three years of experience of working in the university sector in England. As such is it largely autobiographical.

Part of the autobiographical dimension of the chapter is the metaphors of mapping, landscapes, terrain and territories. Through conversations with a colleague about her doctoral work, I have come to understand that as a teacher educator I took a topographical approach (Edwards, 2023). Perhaps this is because I was originally a geography teacher. Geographers study and explain landscapes which make up the terrain. Through the topographical lens I recognize how my professional and academic work, my perspectives on it, and the decisions I reach are continually influenced by of the various features of the teacher education sector and discipline, and by the communities of teacher educators, student teachers and mentors who occupy the teacher education terrain.

Geographers and topographers also create and use maps. Maps help me to plan journeys and to make sense of the world that I experience. Maps also help me to imagine places I will never visit. I see the waves of change in teacher education in England as a re-shaping of the teacher education terrain, and my mind naturally depicts these changes as imagined maps.

Writing this chapter has been a means of sense-making, or map-making, of the teacher education journey I have taken since first mentoring a student teacher in 1995. My experiences and perspectives are partial, and this is my narrative of the routes and the spaces I have encountered. As a committed teacher educator, I will adopt the term Initial Teacher Education (ITE), using that whenever I am referring to the discipline, its traditions and the broad policy and practice terrain. I will use Initial Teacher Training (ITT) only with regard to the specifics of the Department for Education (DfE) policy which adopt that term.

The chapter opens with my reflective account of changes to the teacher education terrain as it has been re-landscaped through policy enactment. I reflect on the journeys that I and others have taken in this terrain and outline some of the features of the landscape, its new territories and the navigations that lie ahead. My own path led me to parts of the sector populated by mentors and coaches working to support teacher learning and development. The features of the mentoring landscape, like others, have evolved over the last twenty years. The second section of the chapter offers a hypothesis of a colonization of the mentoring and coaching space. The teacher education terrain in England at all career stages, from initial to executive leadership, is now littered by training frameworks designed using questionable templates and produced by policymakers and agencies who have corralled the terrain into DfE-accredited teacher *training* territories. I will draw the chapter to a close by considering how these frameworks and the infrastructure that they create have changed the landscapes and which parts of the terrain these changes have obscured.

## **New landscapes, new maps, familiar journeys**

I have travelled through the teacher education terrain, initially navigating the landscapes as I crossed the border from schools to university in 2000, from PGCE mentor to PGCE tutor and lecturer. As my familiarity with the landscapes and communities in the terrain grew over time, I learned to tread it with more confidence and to seek out journeys that I chose for myself as a researcher,

and for my students as emerging teachers. My professional and academic interest naturally grew from initial teacher education, to supporting the learning of teachers throughout their careers.

I am grateful to have been given real opportunities to shape the landscapes of teacher education and draw up navigational tools. Between 2000 and 2015 I co-designed new Masters'-level initial teacher education provision unique to my institution which was rooted in a philosophical stance of teachers learning through practitioner enquiry. I worked collaboratively with other regional universities and school-based providers to develop ways of working in partnership and respond to the needs of student teachers. This ranged from the pragmatic, for example developing coherence across university provision to aid placement experiences in schools, to the developmental. At regional and national levels I was part of school and university teams which designed and led postgraduate professional development opportunities. New curriculum, pedagogic and partnership dimensions were developed and like most teacher educators we routinely adopted practitioner research methods to support their emergence, formation and refinement, creating genuine nuance and local connectivity in the sector.

Of course, teacher education has always evolved and those of us employed in the sector have adapted and contributed over time to the directions of travel inferred by policy changes. Some in education like to obsess about a theory-practice divide, but our work as teacher educators tends to navigate this so-called 'divide' with a degree of fluency. For at least two decades the more hazardous journey has been across the policy and practice divide. One of the consequences of this was brought home to me when I read the description of the work of teacher educators in England as dominated by relationship management (Ellis & McNicholl, 2015).

Ellis and McNichol also argued that as a sector the universities had not recognized or responded with enough force to the threats of the policy implementation of the ideologically based transition from teacher education to teacher training. In light of their conclusion it is worth noting that being an active researcher in the terrain has never been sufficient to gain the attention of the DfE. In my own experience this was first illustrated when I was part of the community of researchers conducting the 2013–2014 BERA-RSA inquiry into research and the teaching profession. This felt like a seminal moment with the potential to add detail to the

research-informed teacher education map. However, while we had collectively plotted new pathways for future policy related to the teacher profession, the terrain was already in the hands of policy makers with very different plans for the direction of travel.

Since I joined the ranks of teacher educators in 2000 multiple new routes have been added to the teacher education map, amongst them GTP (Graduate Teacher Programme), TeachFirst, Troops into Teaching, School Direct, NowTeach and teaching apprenticeships. The lure has always been widening the access into teaching, recruiting people who might not have chosen a university programme and filling specific recruitment gaps. One day I remember being told by our own university graduate progression managers that TeachFirst could advertise liberally on campus, but our own school of education could not. TeachFirst are classed as graduate employers and thus had a higher status in alumni data than our own PGCE.

I also recall a meeting in 2013 with a senior leader in a PGCE partnership school which was also a new Teaching School. Teaching Schools were DfE designated and designed to substitute the local education authority roles in developing teacher CPD, enabling school-to-school support and leading on a range of government education initiatives. They were billed as a major part of the DfE's so-called 'school-led self-improving system'. During our meeting the senior leader told me news of a DfE pilot scheme that they were signing up to called 'School Direct'. This new scheme had a focus on initial teacher 'training' in shortage secondary subjects, such as physics, maths and languages, and was to be limited to 500 trainees across England. For the school the initiative helped it meet a Teaching School key performance indicator (KPI). In that conversation we mulled over the potential implications, the likely future, the preferred future and the least welcome future, and recognized that the new School Direct initiative might have different consequences for schools and universities.

Within a couple of years of the meeting that school joined the ranks of School Centred Initial Teacher Training providers (SCITTs) recruiting enough trainee teachers to necessitate turning playing fields into an additional car park. The development of SCITTs put pressure on many university-led teacher education programmes, including the one I was leading. We were now competing for the same graduates as new entrants, and as schools

joined SCITT partnerships there were fewer placements on offer to student teachers following university PGCE routes. However, as university teacher educators we adapted, we changed the nature of provision and we forged newly configured partnerships with SCITTs, often designing new academic routes for their trainees. That was just the start. By 2021/22 over 17,000 trainees, across all phases and all subjects, followed school-led routes into teaching (DfE, 2022a).

In 2022 the map of the teacher education terrain in England was once again redrawn. In September 2022 the DfE released the results of the second round of the ITT accreditation process (DfE, 2022b). The DfE blog published to share the news stated that 179 training providers had been accredited to deliver designated DfE ITT from September 2024. This included '16 new entrants to the market', with only two-thirds of existing university and school-centred providers being reaccredited. Both my own current and former universities were accredited in the second stage of this round of accreditation. This of course is a relief, particularly for my colleagues whose roles are much more student facing than mine, but to suggest that it is 'a blessed relief' would be disingenuous. Few successful existing providers feel that this news sets them on the right teacher education path. In the week that I am writing this chapter the DfE has released the provider guidance for stage 2, with the tag line 'improvement support and quality assurance' (DfE, 2022c). The DfE has sustained a deficit framing of ITE and scattered new landmines across the terrain we must traverse.

Through its market review the DfE has built momentum leading to new teacher *training* territories, new ITE rout and new connections. These have been added to the map, while some existing teacher education features have become obscured. As UCET (Universities Council for the Education of Teachers) noted in their response

[...] a number of high quality, long-established and tried and tested ITE providers have not been successful. This will have a negative impact on teacher supply and on the life chances of children in the areas concerned. [...] The quality of ITE programmes that do not even exist yet cannot be accurately assessed through a paper-based exercise involving subjective judgements being made.

(UCET, 2022)

Two distinctive features of the new ITE landscapes already being shaped by the accreditation process jump out at me. Firstly, the dominance of conglomerations within the terrain, which now occupy large swathes of the terrain, like cities and towns merging into conurbations. By this I mean gatherings of organizations connecting different features of DfE education policy in action. In outline terms these conglomerations include several of the new providers, including Ambition Institute, with all providers working in partnership with newly designated Teaching School Hubs (TSHs) which are themselves largely centred around Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). MATs are groups of schools which have left local authority control and are now directly managed by the DfE. Similarly, the new DfE-accredited National Institute of Teaching names four of the largest MATs in England as its founding partners (DfE, 2022d). Some people in the education sector welcome these conglomerations, suggesting that they create joined up policy, and allow for ‘scaling-up’ of provision. Other people are more cautious and concerned. They worry that these conglomerations are effectively becoming powerful outposts of the DfE.

The second feature I notice on the re-drawn map is redolent of medieval maps on which dragons or other mythological creatures were placed where potential dangers were thought to exist. We now use the term ‘here be dragons’ to mean dangerous or unexplored places. ‘Cold spots’ exist post-accreditation – large parts of the country left bare of established ITT provision – perhaps here be dragons. Or perhaps the dragons are hiding in plain sight as the as yet untested new providers begin to take root in the terrain.

## **Mentoring and coaching in the terrain, wide horizons and dead ends**

At the heart of my stance towards teacher education is the knowledge that we are all present as learners and that our expertise is built on a dynamic relationship between practice and research. Like many teacher educators working in universities or school-centred teacher education my journey into teacher education began through mentoring. When I took my first university role, I was fortunate to inherit a group of subject mentors amongst whom were a core

group whose approach to mentoring was tangibly powerful and had been sustained over many years. Through mentoring they felt that they were building the intelligence into the profession which would allow new teachers to create the capacity to meet the needs of current and future pupils and students. These mentors also actively sought to integrate the new knowledge and skills that their student teachers brought into their own teaching. Mentoring thus created learning conversations and opportunities for mutual development.

This became my space; I actively worked with mentors; I privileged time to talk to them during my placement visits to student teachers. I wanted to learn from them, to use my engagement with them to help me sustain and strengthen my professional knowledge base, and to experience a wider range of schools through their narratives. My research and programme development work became mentor-centred. My work allowed me both to advocate for mentoring and to problematize it. I extended this interest to coaching in education, which I had first experienced when I was given the opportunity to develop as a teacher coach within a pedagogic research project in the late 1990s.

Thus, coaching and mentoring formed the landscape feature of the teacher education terrain most visible to me, and also formed the basis of my own research. Taking my topographical approach, I explored how coaching and mentoring practices are situated in the contexts created by DfE and school policies, the constraints of compliance and inspection frameworks, the affordances of partnerships and networks and the specific characteristics of schools and departments. Mentoring and coaching are lived through the classroom environment, the staffrooms and the unique relational dynamics between the mentor and their student teachers, the coach and their coachees.

When I moved to my current university as Professor of Teacher Education, my focus on coaching and mentoring created the foundations for a research and practice centre called *CollectivED* The Centre for Coaching, Mentoring, Supervision and Professional Learning in Education. As a centre we aim to expand the available knowledge base on coaching, mentoring and collaborative professional development through research and to develop new approaches to active knowledge exchange, and I have continued research in this field (e.g. Lofthouse, 2018, Lofthouse, 2019, Lofthouse et al., 2022).

The first five years of the CollectivED have coincided with a rapid growth in DfE-driven coaching and mentoring provision in schools. Mentoring has been allocated additional time and resource through the Early Career Framework (ECF), and each ECF provider has established new mentor training and models of practice. The ITT accreditation process required a commitment to a new training curriculum for mentors, and an obligation that mentors attend significantly more hours of training than most will ever have had the capacity to do before. This training is tightly aligned with the Core Content Framework (CCF). A number of ECF and ITT providers have adopted and adapted models of instructional coaching as their mentoring mechanism. The education publishing and CPD sectors have seen a proliferation of new books, training programmes and mentoring and coaching ‘gurus’.

You could say that mentoring and coaching have been put more visibly on the map. But the terrain is not easy. Founding CollectivED and building new communities of educators and researchers through it feels like my contribution to scholars in the field taking an activist stance. I have been influenced by reading the work of Judyth Sachs (2010) and as such focus being the role of coaching and mentoring in building ‘democratic discourses [which have] clear emancipatory aims’ and our work being ‘deeply rooted in principles of equity and social justice’ (Sachs, 2010).

As I survey the landscape of mentoring within ITT and ECF provision I recognize probable reasons for this difficult terrain. Firstly, there has been an inevitable demand to scale up mentoring capacity to meet the demands of the ECF. This challenge was identified in the annual report of Ofsted (the inspectorate), who reported:

Schools are concerned about the workload that the ECF programme creates for early career teachers and mentors. Difficulties managing workload had an impact on the availability and quality of mentoring where lead providers had not worked with delivery partners to support mentors to work with ECTs.

(Ofsted, 2022)

This pressure will be exacerbated when newly accredited ITT mentoring requirements kick in, and it comes at a time when teachers’ workloads continue to rise, and teacher retention continues

to be challenging. These dimensions of the mentoring landscape mean that fewer teachers remain mentors for long enough to develop mature practices. Mentoring becomes a transient state for many, sometimes reluctantly engaged with or adopted on route to a leadership post. While mentoring is often valued as an experience it is rarely rewarded well enough to be retained as part of a teacher's repertoire of roles.

The overarching compliance agenda in both schools and ITT also impacts on mentoring practice at a range of scales. Performative education cultures create performative mentoring practices. The mentoring map in ITT and ECF is now characterized by pathways that track progress towards Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) standards and the infrastructure of the CCF and its curriculum components of 'know that' and 'know how' which the DfE claim make up the knowledge needed in the profession.

The atomization of teachers' practice is written into checklists for performance. When I first taught a Master's-level model on coaching and mentoring teachers and leaders attending that course often experienced a light-bulb moment when we read Stephen J. Ball's paper on the 'teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity' (Ball, 2003). Non-negotiable classroom and corridor routines have proliferated and there has been an escalation in jargon associated with the 'science of teaching and learning'. Some models of instructional coaching have emerged which put 'instruction' front and centre, in a misappropriation of the word 'instructional' from its North American meaning of pedagogic to a directive and command meaning situated in a compliance culture. In Ofsted inspections of ITT (again they use 'training') student teachers might find they are expected to parrot back a definition of a decontextualized cognitive science theory, just as in primary schools an inspector might demand a child can cite the correct dates in response to a random history question. Pressure to be seen as compliant is increasing institutional anxieties at a time when a reconfiguration of inspection frameworks and protocols has been driven by a stated desire to recalibrate the system with the award of fewer 'outstanding' grades.

One way to interpret these trends is as a colonization of coaching and mentoring landscape of the teacher education terrain. The growth in mentoring and coaching has been led by DfE providers delivering ECF provision and will be followed by ITT providers managing DfE expectations of what mentors need to know and

how they need to function. Achieving this at scale and speed means that much of the nuance of the terrain has been eradicated. Mentoring is now reconfigured as a component of training new teachers to meet the knowledge outcomes of the CCF or ECF. Some instructional coaching has become distorted to suit a competency-based mentoring agenda, and is supported by digital platforms that predetermine content and sequence of teaching routines to be adopted. When mentoring is coupled with problematic curriculum frameworks it can lead us to dead ends. In workload-heavy school environments situated in abrasive accountability cultures members of the profession are unlikely to appreciate the wide horizons that mentoring and coaching can open up.

## **Beyond 'ITT': A concrete jungle and rhizomatic underworlds**

The map of the teacher education that I carry in my head features the components I have described so far. Another aspect of the map is the underpinning professional knowledge and the education research base. Depending on the contemporary policy and practice context in teacher education the map shows the breadth and height of selective features. I became a teacher educator in 2000 when my predecessor took up a director's role with the National Strategies (NS) developed by the then Labour government. In those first few years as a teacher educator the NS policy initiative and the research that supported it influenced my work. The student teachers therefore became familiar with collaborative group work, teaching thinking skills, assessment for learning and literacy and numeracy across the curriculum as they navigated their ways through the curriculum and placements of PGCE. More recently the CCF has dictated that the ITT trainees acquire knowledge of selected aspects of cognitive science, for example. Each generation of new teachers adds additional contours to the map.

Maps are always representative and selective, with the components included and design chosen for a purpose to meet the anticipated needs of the map-reader or the particular approach or bias of the cartographer. Discovering the difference between the Peters Projection and the Mercator world maps (each using different

cartographical projections and therefore portraying countries and continents in different proportions and sizes) is an important teachable moment which reaches into colonial and economic history and begs questions about social and racialized power. It challenges our view of the world and the dominant narratives we carry with us. Maps tell stories.

If a map was drawn of initial and continuing teacher education and development the story it might tell would be dependent on the cartographer. As Conservative education secretary between 2010 and 2014, Michael Gove deliberately re-drew the map. He changed the landscape and the language. He started to colonize the terrain and create new territories in the form of MATs and in promoting the role of education charities, such as TeachFirst, through new funding streams. On a key to his map Gove would have highlighted the educators whom he referred to as 'the enemies of promise' locating many of them in university education departments. I remember sitting as an external examiner in another university next to a member of staff who was wearing an 'enemies of promise' t-shirt. It was a label many of us wore with a degree of ironic pride, not because it was who we were, but because it allowed us to draw a clear boundary on the map between us and Gove's ideological myths.

Despite the years that have elapsed since Gove was shuffled out of the DfE much of the contemporary map of teacher education and CPD can be traced back to his political stance, sustained and refined through the subsequent years of Conservative rule. The infrastructure is always changing, as exemplified through the rise and fall of Teaching Schools, the dominance of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), and the role of Research Schools in disseminating EEF outputs, the squeezing out of Local Authorities from their teacher support and CPD roles, the ground gained by well-financed and heavily promoted education charities, the merging and power brokering between them is all evident in the terrain. This is perhaps a uniquely English terrain, indeed even in the other UK nations nothing compares.

If we are to believe the dominant DfE narrative of 2022 the most attractive feature of the current teacher education map is the 'golden thread' of ITT, the ECF and National Professional Qualifications (NPQs). I visualize these on the DfE-designed teacher *training* map, drawing a proverbial yellow-brick road to its hopes and dreams for

the profession. However, this ‘golden thread’ is an artefact of the ever-increasing centralization and control of teacher education and continuing professional development for new recruits and existing staff in state schools.

Funding mechanisms deployed by the DfE at a time of negligible discretionary CPD budgets in schools will funnel more teachers down this yellow-brick road. A generation of teachers will ‘know that’ and ‘know how’ in ever-decreasing circles. There is a concrete jungle of DfE-approved routes, tunnelling through and building over existing professional development programmes. It reinforces the role of the Teaching School Hubs as delivery partners of DfE-designed provision and this secures the flow of approved knowledge into MATs, standalone academies and schools wherever they are in the terrain. While DfE funding is made available when schools sign up their Early Career Teachers and aspiring leaders to the ECF and NPQ through the designated providers, those who chose to go it alone are left short-changed. Subsidized places on Master’s provision for teachers have all but vanished, and the most highly visible alternative CPD offer is based on a relentless round of conferences held on Saturdays, and mostly paid for by teachers themselves.

Returning to the topographical approach to understanding the terrain of initial and continuing teacher education means seeing beyond this infrastructure to see the fine detail. If we look beyond the new routes and territories and notice what happens in the spaces in between we do find something else. A form of teacher education undertaken in the interstices. Networks supporting the well-being, the professional development and progression of educators in minority groups, those at vulnerable stages in their careers (such as during maternity leave) and those with protected characteristics. We see social media used as a mechanism to bring people together, share knowledge and approaches, and to challenge the dominant narratives. We see virtual and school-based book clubs popping up. We find the generosity of experienced teachers and leaders opening the doors to their schools and offering essential mentoring and advice, or simply a space for solidarity.

Unlike the elements of the golden thread these additions to the map are not centrally planned, and they tend to be responsive to the real journeys that teachers and leaders find themselves on. There is a rhizomatic, organic quality to this work. It is neither linear

nor simply objective-led. This is a welcome change to much of the current education practice and policy in ITE and CPD in England, and for many in the profession it is liberating.

## Stepping forward into a future for teaching education

As a very seasoned traveller in the terrain in England I believe that there is a crisis in teacher education in England. While the maps being redrawn may look coherent and navigable, they plot narrow courses with diminishing horizons. This proposition will be contested by those holding power and funding and who are the gatekeepers to accredited and approved professional development routes. A litmus test of the present conditions could be a quick scan of the key on the current teacher education maps. On the 'official maps' the terminology is reductive rather than expansive. Those who curry favour cannot even use the language of teacher education, being obliged to refer to training, trainees, provision and frameworks.

There are dimensions of teacher education and learning which have been diminished on the new maps drawn by the current policymakers and policy enactors, but they remain in the topography of the territory and are ripe for reclaiming. I see my future journeys, and possibly those of other teacher educators in roles that increasingly combine the characteristics of architects, agitators and activists. Perhaps we can contribute most as relational activists (Dove & Fisher, 2019), engaging in behind-the-scenes work and building cross-sectional relationships and influence through practice. I see the future of CollectivED as moving in this direction. We need to dare to voice alternative narratives and help new and more experienced teachers, and even those whose journeys have led them onto new maps to create the spaces that will become fertile ground for a more agentic profession.

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## CHAPTER NINE

# The National Institute of Teaching and the claim for programme legitimacy

*Caroline Daly*

Many questions about how teacher education is conceptualized and enacted as a ‘policy problem’ (Cochran-Smith, 2005) are raised by the establishment in England in 2022 of the government-funded, non-university National Institute of Teaching (NlOT). The questions arise from the ways in which policy discourse positions the role of the university in teacher education as problematic, to be addressed by the reallocation of legitimacy, resource and influence towards non-university providers. Questions provoked by such a policy initiative (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020) require examination of: *regulation*, that is related to conferring legitimacy on the professional knowledge base for teacher education; *accountability*, and the positioning of universities as deficit contributors to teacher preparation, posing a problem to be solved by independent non-university bodies; and contested ideas about the *integration of theory and practice* in teacher preparation and how the crucial role of practice in schools is defined by those who make and enact policy in teacher education. These questions help to explore the expansion of non-university teacher education in England via the NlOT; how it is justified by policy and the lack of evidence that such

a transformation is equated with increased quality of provision. Referring to comparable shifts in the United States, Zeichner has warned about the risks and consequences of significant growth in non-university providers ‘unless and until substantive credible evidence accrues to support them’ (2016, p. 4).

## The National Institute of Teaching

The establishment of a school-led national non-university body for teacher education has been the goal of several stakeholders in the marketized landscape in recent years. In 2016, a new Institute for Advanced Teaching (IAT) was proposed by Matthew Hood’s policy paper for the think tank Institute for Public Policy Research (Hood, 2016), drawing on its enthusiasm for the ‘school-led (as opposed to academic-led)’ (p. 21) US model of non-university Graduate Schools of Education. An Institute for Teaching, with Hood as its Director, was opened as a ‘new specialist graduate school’ in 2017 with investment from Ark Ventures, the entrepreneurial arm of the international educational charity, ARK. Following failure to secure sufficient funding to operate its planned teacher education programme, in 2019 the Institute for Teaching merged with Ambition School Leadership to form a new education charity, Ambition Institute. Ambition Institute bid for the contract to run the NIoT and subsequently challenged the Department for Education (DfE) award of the tender to a collective of four Multi-academy Trusts (MATs), the School-Led Development Trust (SLDT).

The NIoT has thus emerged from the transformation of teacher education in England towards being ‘school-led’ and business-model oriented, steered by competition and collaborations among groups of education charities or trusts, engaging in new forms of ‘co-opetition’ (Adnett & Davies, 2003) as expanded market opportunities arose. Academies in England are publicly funded schools with high degrees of autonomy over the curriculum and independent of local authority control. Staff are employed by academy trusts, which are held accountable through a legally binding funding agreement with the DfE. MATs are single legal entities formed of groups of academies that have come together to form charitable companies. Each MAT is formed of a single group of ‘members’ with responsibilities for governance and finance, with

a single board of trustees. The formation of a ‘supertrust’ enabled four of the largest MATs in England to come together to bid successfully for the competitive tender for the DfE contract for the NIO T, to run teacher education programmes worth £121 million over six years. The NIO T expects to be granted degree-awarding powers for its programmes and is intended by the government to be its ‘flagship’ for implementation of its new specification for teacher education, the ITT Core Content Framework (CCF) (DfE, 2021). It has been declared as the forthcoming ‘national role model’ (Williamson, 2021, n.p.) for institutions, including universities, in how to provide accredited initial teacher education (ITE) (called ‘training’) and professional learning and development. The policy announcement by Gavin Williamson, then Secretary of State for Education, set out the government intention to establish the new provider as ‘an independent body’, to be run by a supplier or suppliers following the tender process (Williamson, 2021). This was a watershed moment for ITE in England. The successful body – unknown at the time – would exemplify how to deliver initial teacher preparation and teacher development, to ‘support other organisations to understand and implement best practice in the delivery of teacher development’. The other organizations include university education departments.

The establishment of a school-led institution intended as the national leader for initial teacher preparation reflects the deficit discourse of university teacher education departments that has underpinned Coalition and Conservative administration policy in England for over a decade. Part of this discourse attributes poor international test performance in schools to the role played by ‘academics’ in teacher education:

[W]ho is to blame for our education system slipping down the international rankings? The answer is the academics in the education faculties of universities.

(Nick Gibb, *The Guardian*, 23 April 2014)

In a context in which university education experts have been constructed as the ‘enemies of promise’ (Gove, 2013) the launch of the NIO T reflects teacher education as a persistent ‘policy problem’ (Cochran-Smith, 2005) for the neoliberal reform agenda in countries like the United States, Australia and England; a problem

to be resolved by transfer of responsibility from the public sector to non-state, private or charitable organizations operating as the ‘shadow state’ (Wolch, 1990; Ellis et al., 2021).

## The NIoT in an intensively monitored system

The NIoT is one of 179 organizations approved by the DfE to become ‘accredited providers’ of teacher education from 2023, following the recommendations of a small ‘expert group’ it commissioned to carry out an ‘ITT Market Review’ of teacher education (DfE, 2021). The Market Review played a catalytic role in justifying an extensive reform agenda, formalizing the discourse of teacher education as ‘training’ within an intensively monitored system. Its central aims (p. 3) were ‘to enable the provision of consistently high-quality training’, ‘in a more efficient and effective market’ and to ensure that teacher education providers’ programmes would be ‘in line with’ the new government *ITT CCF* (DfE, 2021). A core responsibility of the NIoT is to be a role model for others in implementing the *ITT CCF*, which sets out a new formal knowledge base for teacher education in England, based on five areas – behaviour management, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and professional behaviours. The Framework consists of a series of statements that describe what new teachers should know and be able to do (‘Learn that ...’ and ‘Learn how to ...’) and was assembled by a small ‘expert group’ and ‘endorsed’ by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), a charitable organization focused on breaking links between economic disadvantage and educational attainment. The EEF receives funding from the DfE, with the remit to generate evidence reviews and evaluations of educational interventions, alongside supporting the use of evidence to bring about change in policy and practice in education.

Fourteen recommendations were produced by the ITT Market Review, alongside a list of ‘Quality Requirements’ as criteria against which all providers of teacher education – university and non-university ‘led’ – were to be revalidated by a centralized government process. Recommendation 11 stated that ‘prospective accredited providers of ITT should go through a new, rigorous accreditation process to ensure that they are able to fully deliver the Quality Requirements’.

The accreditation process resulted in an overall reduction in the number of providers from 240 in 2021. Around 83 per cent of universities achieved accreditation to continue providing teacher education under the new model (including one new provider). The reduction in the number of providers included the de-selection of universities with track records of being graded ‘outstanding’ by the national body with responsibility for inspecting ITE, Ofsted. Controversy surrounds the haste and lack of transparency of the process (Noble-Rogers, 2022) by which universities with outstanding inspection reports failed to gain accreditation, at a time when the shortfall in recruitment to teacher preparation programmes is a major concern (Worth & Faulkner-Ellis, 2022). A process that restricted organizations’ appeal statements to 500 words resulted in no successful appeals.

## **A ‘shadow state structure’**

The establishment of the NIO T alongside the Market Review reflects questions about the ‘distribution of power and privilege’ in the public education system, raised by Ellis et al., (2021, p. 606). Recommendation 8 of the Market Review made clear that the NIO T – whichever organization was to win the contract – would be successful in gaining accreditation: ‘DfE should facilitate any accredited providers which wish to do so, to partner with an institution, such as the Institute of Teaching when it is ready, to offer their postgraduate award.’ Its projected status as the national flagship provider culminates from interaction between policy and economic processes, by which resources are redistributed towards organizations with close ideological links to dominant government policy, such as large national academy chains. In this climate of intensive policymaking and implementation, the NIO T reflects in many ways a ‘co-created shadow state structure’, which Ellis *et al.* (2021) have identified as emerging from the ‘political moment’ where government requires dependable partners to fulfil its policy agendas. These structures may take diverse forms, with varying degrees of separation from government, but what they have in common is that they are a new construct, without an institutional or operational history, brought into being as a response to ‘a need within an area of responsibility the state wished to outsource’

(2021, p. 618). Co-created shadow state structures reflect the mutual dependencies of government and organizations they are close to. In this case, the reconstitution of four of England's largest school trusts enabled them to respond to the market conditions created by government and be resourced to provide high-profile implementation of its teacher education reforms. The creation of the 'supertrust' exemplifies the policy entrepreneurship that is essential to the fulfilment of neoliberal political agendas, and also essential to maintaining the self-directing capacities of such organizations within a marketized context for teacher education and schools. Ellis and others' analysis with reference to professional learning organizations argues:

[T]he state created opportunities these organisations could utilise to startup in the market ... Co-created shadow state structures arise out of the meeting of political need and policy entrepreneurship in a context where the state seeks reliable partners, not only (perhaps not even) in terms of a record of efficiency but, critically, in terms of being able to work with given political values.

(p. 618)

## **The US new graduate school of education movement**

The policy initiative reflects key features of the new graduate school of education (nGSE) movement in the United States (Zeichner, 2016; Cochran-Smith et al., 2020) over the past two decades, in how programme legitimacy is conferred on providers who sit outside of the university sector and occupy an enabling role in government reformulation and control of the knowledge base for teacher education. The nGSEs are 'not university based but are state authorized and approved as institutions of higher education to prepare teachers, endorse them for initial teacher certification, and grant master's degrees' (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020, p. 9). There is little independent, empirical research into these kinds of new and high-profile institutions in initial teacher preparation. Zeichner (2016) has provided extensive analysis of

what he calls the ‘apocryphal claims, illusory evidence’ of the claims to quality made on the websites of independent, non-university teacher education programmes in the United States. Cochran-Smith and colleagues’ current study in the United States is a main source of emergent understanding in terms of their relationship with wider policymaking, the characteristics of teacher education which they generate and how they impact on wider conceptualization of teaching and teacher education. The first stage of this study is again based on comprehensive analysis of website information as the prime source of extant information. Like the naming of *graduate schools* of education in the United States, the title of the English National *Institute* of Teaching confers ‘institutional ground and program legitimacy’ (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020, p. 10), previously ‘reserved for schools of education at university (drawing on [Labaree, 2004; Fraser & Lefty, 2018])’. The relationships among stakeholders in these experimental forms of teacher education institution is complex and the NIOt has a university partner that will bring a quality assurance role to master’s-level accreditation. Legitimacy is thus conferred by a complex reconfiguration of knowledge bases and expertise, alongside the redistribution of access to resources. Such a reconfiguration and redistribution enables the ‘policy problem’ of teacher education to be resolved by the New Public Management of education, incorporating business and private sector models whose key features are ‘marketisation, privatisation, managerialism, performance measurement and accountability’ (Tolofari, 2005, p. 75). There is no current, independently funded research programme examining the new phenomena in England that might provide credible evidence of the kinds of impact of the NIOt and of the newly accredited national provision under the conditions brought about by the ITT Market Review.

## Policy problems

Programme legitimacy for the NIOt reflects how ‘policy problems’, identified in Cochran-Smith *et al.*’s (2020) analysis of nGSEs in the United States, have been managed in the English system.

*A regulation problem* – ‘a tug-of-war between deregulation and professionalization’ (p. 11). During the past two decades, this ‘tug-of-war’ has questioned the complex and nuanced professional knowledge base that integrates the intellectual, ethical and practical dimensions of learning to teach. It has involved the opening up and expansion of alternative teacher education models, routes into teaching and multiple provider organizations, to be regulated centrally by monitoring their adherence to standardized frameworks. The NIoT, as an independent body without an organizational history and no accumulated expertise as a teacher education provider, is now heralded as the model for others to learn how to educate teachers. Its credentials as a national authority on teacher preparation are enshrined in its remit to model the government framework for teacher preparation, the *ITT CCF* (DfE, 2019). It represents an extreme form of deregulation as a solution to the ‘problem’ of teacher education.

*An accountability problem* – policy positioning has built a discourse of lack of confidence in universities, attributing deficit analyses of pupil performance in schools to the quality of initial teacher preparation. Increased accountability is seen as the solution to this, via the datafication of teacher education, successive standardized assessment frameworks for student teachers and national inspection frameworks, including one that made direct connections between the performance of teachers in their first term in post and their initial teacher preparation outcomes (Ofsted, 2014). The NIoT pledges that it will link data on teacher and leader development on its programmes with data sets on pupil achievement, in a logic model that precisely aligns with this discourse as an indicator of quality teacher education. The values alignment with the ‘levelling up’ policy agenda in England (HM Government, 2022) is clear. Zeichner (2016) however prompts as-yet unanswered questions about the correlation of increased pupils’ scores (should they materialize) with genuinely transformed social and economic participation for marginalized and minoritized sections of society. Responsible policymaking requires analysis of the complex, multiple factors that constitute quality outcomes in teacher education and their costs and benefits.

*A theory-practice problem* – closely linked to the problems of regulation and accountability is the persistent scepticism about the relationship between theory and practice in the learning of teachers,

‘based on the critique that university preparation programs have not produced effective teachers because of the long-perceived gap between theory and practice (Zeichner, 2012)’ (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020, p. 12–13). The solution, according to the deficit discourse, is the need to increase the focus on practising teaching in school as part of initial preparation. The NIOt offers a clear break from university models of teacher education, with a main selling point that it offers ‘a fully immersive school-centred programme – aspiring teachers will be in the classroom from the very start’ (<https://niot.org.uk/programmes/initial-teacher-training>). It is unclear how ‘fully immersive’, ‘school-led’ teacher preparation offers advantages over teaching practices in schools which occupy two-thirds of the time on university models in England.

The role of research in teacher preparation is an aspect of this policy problem that has to be managed, where the distinctiveness of the NIOt from universities is essential to its programme legitimacy. The NIOt is establishing its own research agenda to inform its teacher education provision, ‘researching what works best in teacher and leader development. As soon as we have evidence showing practical ways to improve training or professional development, we will use that evidence to inform the programmes we offer’ (<https://niot.org.uk/research>). This claim to legitimacy positions the NIOt as a separate research entity, being ‘sector-led’ (indicating ‘teachers and leaders’ as sector leaders in teacher education) but with uncertain links to the international knowledge base. A core component of preparing a research literate teaching profession is access to a range of relevant, independent, peer-reviewed research of international standing that can support teachers to think critically and develop balanced, informed and ethical judgements about practice (BERA-RSA 2014). Research-engaged teacher education generates ‘practical theorising’ (Burn et al., 2022) as a core teacher learning pedagogy, located in a research culture that is broad as well as deep and which promotes critical thinking, independent analysis and the scrutiny of evidence as sources of teacher knowledge. Crucially, it counters self-confirming discourses and draws on rigorous, independent research to offer informed critiques of ‘what works’.

The NIOt is a key component of the rhetorical discourse that the ‘problem’ of teacher education will be solved by reducing the university role, in the face of a distinct lack of evidence of such a correlation. The point is not to question whether the NIOt can

provide quality ITE going forwards. Many variables will be at play here – most significantly, the expertise of teacher educators, the quality of the teacher education pedagogy, the expertise of mentors and the schools’ capacities as learning environments for a critically informed, research literate, graduate teaching profession. These variables are at play in all teacher education contexts. Several of the university providers who were required to apply for accreditation had been awarded successive ‘outstanding’ grades by the national inspection framework across primary and secondary education programmes at the time of Williamson’s announcement of the NIoT. The question must be asked – what is the problem to which the NIoT is the solution? There are serious challenges in the national arrangements for teacher education in a system that struggles to attract and retain teachers – but a lack of examples of strikingly high-quality provision within universities is not one of them. A large provider like the UCL Institute of Education, for example, has worked with around 1,400 student teachers each year and more than 600 schools, colleges and Early Years settings – managing quality provision that is maintained at scale, through successive inspection frameworks.

In her extensive analysis of political rhetoric underpinning the reform of teacher education in England, Brooks (2022) identifies the ‘precarious and partial’ use of the term ‘quality’ in political discourse in the Market Review, in conjunction with the *ITT CCF*. At the heart of the problem, according to Brooks, lies what kind of transformation from a lay person to a teacher constitutes ‘quality’. This invokes questions about the values, ethics and concepts of the knowledge and power that teachers need in order to make professional judgements and the ways in which authoritative sources of knowledge about teacher education pedagogy come to be legitimated, given authority and resourced.

## **‘Flagship’ legitimacy**

Leadership of teacher education on a national stage is built through multiple forms of sustained expertise and extensive scrutiny. It is undoubtedly an ongoing moral and practical imperative for all teacher education providers to continue seeking ways to prepare new teachers to make the most difference to the lives of the children

and young people in their care. As Ell *et al.* (2017) remind the international sector, the outcomes of teacher education can indeed be disappointing in terms of producing teachers with the research literacy, professional resilience and critical insights that are needed to ensure that their practice makes a sustained difference to the experience and achievement of their learners. The need is for greater understanding of the holistic and nonlinear factors that impact on new teachers (including their belief systems and autobiographical factors) alongside rigorous analysis of teacher education as a *system* that needs to take full account of the ‘multi-layered contexts, schools, and policy/political environments’ (2017, p. 328) that help to constitute the learning of teachers. Of equal importance are ‘the larger structures of privilege and inequality that intersect with these’. A ‘flagship’ provider is recognized across the world for quality of provision that leads values-driven, research-informed ITE that is sustainable beyond the lifetime of serial initiatives. This prepares teachers with the depth and breadth of knowledge to make teaching a career that is based on intellectual curiosity about how best to enable learners to fulfil their potentials by making careful judgements about practice, in the face of multiple challenges in unequal societies. It comes with extensive responsibility for maintaining sustained provision and exchange of ideas with world-leading teacher educators in the face of these challenges for teachers and teacher education in contemporary societies. Crucially, ‘there are no examples of high-performing education systems that have relied heavily on the kind of deregulation and market competition, grounded in test-based accountability, that many supporters of independent teacher education programs promote’ (Zeichner, 2016, p. 6).

Flagship providers of ITE are renowned throughout the world as well as in their own countries – think of Teachers College, Columbia University in the United States or the National Institute of Education, Singapore. Think of England and, among others, the UCL Institute of Education (IOE), the Oxford Deanery and many others are such examples. World-leading teacher education institutions exchange knowledge about how teachers learn and can be prepared for a satisfying career in which they wish to remain.

Gavin Williamson did not remain long in post, with five education secretaries replacing him in under two years at the time of writing. There is indeed much work to be done to support

the teaching profession and to address the reasons why so many leave, so soon. There needs to be independent research into teacher education across a vastly complex system in which there are huge inconsistencies in the ways new teachers are prepared. The forecast for recruitment to initial preparation programmes in England is dire at the time of writing, with chronic shortages of new teachers envisaged in the majority of secondary school subjects and in the primary sector (Worth & Faulkner-Ellis, 2022). The reasons are complex and deserve attention to the professional lives of teachers and their need for enduring career satisfaction and role fulfilment. This is a high-stakes context for any government to assert that a new Institute will be a ‘flagship’, supplying a much-needed model for others to follow as a resolution to perceived problems of teacher quality, recruitment and retention. Such a claim takes on international as well as national responsibilities to education. The issues are serious regarding what constitutes accountability and what legitimate base is used to assume outstanding expertise in teacher education, both in the English system and on the world stage.

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## CHAPTER TEN

# ‘Who is it that can tell me who I am?’: What the ITE reforms in England mean for teacher identity (and why it matters)

*Sarah Steadman*

Shakespeare’s King Lear poses the poignant question ‘Who is it that can tell me who I am?’ as he searches for his identity in a self-created kingdom that shuns his status and questions his power (Shakespeare, 1608/1997). Without agency, he stumbles into a journey of self-discovery, struggling to make sense of his position in a changing and politically charged world. Such complex themes of identity and purpose are pivotal to the development of teachers. As with all professions, teachers inhabit a professional identity that is dynamic, shifting in response to differing contexts and relationships. They are engaged in a process of becoming, learning what it means to be a member of an ‘impossible profession’ (Freud, 1953) where identity is simultaneously individually constructed and socially negotiated.

But just as Lear finds himself at the mercy of his newly empowered daughters, so the teaching profession increasingly finds itself victim to controlling political forces. The discourses of managerialism dominate education policy. In England, reforms to the content of initial teacher education (ITE), teacher induction and early career professional development have served to restrict the space for identity building, deprofessionalizing teachers by dictating an increasingly narrow curriculum that negates critical thinking and limits professional autonomy.

This chapter examines how the extensive reforms to ITE undermine the development of teacher identity, curtailing collective teacher agency by failing to foreground the inherently social nature of teacher learning and development. The chapter draws on data from an Economic and Social Research Council-funded project conducted at King's College London investigating the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on student and early career teachers (ECTs) during 2019–2021. Student teachers learning to teach in UK schools in both the 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 academic years experienced very challenging training contexts, posing a real risk that underdeveloped expertise could result in new teachers rapidly leaving the profession (Steadman et al., 2022). Although the stated focus of the project was on teacher quality and retention, the analysis of 110 research interviews gives insights into the identity work of a profession under pressure.

## Teacher identity

Learning to teach is an 'identity making process' (Beijaard, 2019, p.1), with students simultaneously learning how to teach while teaching others, inhabiting what Britzman terms the oxymoronic state of 'student teacher' (Britzman, 2003). As Wenger reminds us, 'because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming' (Wenger, 1998, p. 215).

Teaching is simultaneously situated in the immediate classroom context and influenced by personal, social and political contexts. It is impossible to completely separate the personal from the professional – all teachers have grown up in schools and come to the profession with past experiences, beliefs and values. The synergy

between the personal and the professional is highlighted by Beijaard (2019, p. 3), who describes how teacher learning is influenced by 'one's own biography, aspirations, learning history, and beliefs about education'. In this sense, teacher learning is identity learning, rooted in the personal and enacted in a professional arena that changes in response to social, cultural and political discourses.

The development of teacher identity is, therefore, rooted in experience and fuelled by emotion. In her book based on the personal accounts of teachers working in infant, junior and middle schools, Jennifer Nias addresses the emotional reality of classroom practice:

[N]o account of [primary] teachers' experience is complete if it does not make room for potentially dangerous emotions such as love, rage, and jealousy, on the one hand, and intermittent narcissism and outbreaks of possessive dependence on the other.

(Nias, 1989, p. 203)

This emotionality underscores the individualized experience of learning to teach, embedded in personal, social and cultural contexts. Providing opportunities for ongoing, focused reflection on what it means to be a teacher is part of the vital identity work of teacher education.

## **The pressure of ITE reform**

Teacher identity is central to establishing and sustaining a motivated teaching workforce. As Wenger comments, 'issues of education should be addressed first and foremost in terms of identities and modes of belonging and only secondarily in terms of skills and information' (Wenger, 1998, p. 263). However, in the reforms to ITE in England, the focus is firmly on 'skills and information'. The launch of the Early Career Framework (ECF) (DfE, 2019a) and the subsequent publication of the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework (CCF) (DfE, 2019b) established a three-year training and induction package for those entering the profession in England. But these frameworks are rooted in a view of what teachers need to learn in order to 'begin the journey towards becoming an

expert' (DfE, 2019a, p. 4), presenting a linear trajectory that fails to engage with the complex, contextual and invariably recursive process of teacher identity development. Arising from the selective research base of the ECF, the scope of the CCF has also been criticized as presenting, 'worryingly low expectations for a graduate profession based on superficial appropriations of what is already a limited selection of research' (Turvey et al., 2019). This promotion of a selective and narrow research base further impacts on the development of a teacher identity centred on the experiences and needs of the individual teacher, in response to the social contexts in which they work.

In addition to the launch of the new frameworks, a government review of the market for all ITE courses leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) culminated in the publication of the DfE's ITT Market Review report (GOV.UK, 2021). This report recommended the compulsory (re)accreditation of all ITE providers. As noted by Gibbons and Steadman (2023, p.92):

Reaccreditation essentially rests on the ability to submit a curriculum plan that fully embraces the CCF and which promises strong synergy between school and provider based experiences through partnership arrangements that involve substantially increased training for mentors.

The embracing of the CCF in curriculum plans negates a focus on identity, demanding the promotion of certain ways of working and thinking that stifle criticality and individuality. On a broader scale, the identity of England's teacher training landscape itself is also impacted by the market review. Only 179 providers made it through both rounds of the DfE's reaccreditation process, a significant drop from the 240 providers operating in the sector, and subsequent appeals from unsuccessful providers have all been rejected (Walker, 2022a). This culling of providers leaves potential 'cold spots' in ITE provision across England (Whittaker, 2022) while the required provision of both ITE and induction tutors for aspirant and new teachers places financial burdens on schools, potentially forcing Headteachers to make a choice as to whether they continue to offer placements for student teachers as they struggle to provide both ITE and induction mentors within already-tight budgetary constraints.

## The motivation to teach

In the making of teachers, identity matters. The process of learning to teach is more than the acquisition of identified skills and competencies. Limiting opportunities for teachers and teacher educators to direct and model professional learning and development impacts on identity and, in so doing, has the potential to impact on teacher retention. Reducing the agency of teachers in the development of their teacher identity is likely to result in a lack of personal and professional fulfilment, leading to more teachers leaving the profession and fewer deciding to enter it. As the data generated from the 110 research interviews revealed, new teachers foreground identity, seeing themselves as subject and research-informed individuals with a mission to improve the educational outcomes for young people. Teachers don't enter the profession in order to fulfil the requirements of the CCF. Instead they are invariably motivated by enthusiasm for their subject, an interest in pupil learning and a desire to make a difference. This is exemplified in the comment below from a student teacher following the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course at an English university:

I think teachers are really people who can influence students' lives, like forever, if you had a good teacher for whatever reason, you're going to remember the things that you learn or how they make you feel in the classroom.

Such intentions were equally clear in interviews with new teachers in schools, evident in this comment from a teacher who trained during the pandemic in 2020–1:

I really want to spark in every young person that knowledge that they have a little bit of light inside of them and that they can move forward with that ... that's why it's so fun because it really feels valuable and purposeful to be in that room with them.

Importantly, the comments were not characterized by idealized views of teachers and teaching. New teachers are very aware of the contextual significance of learning and many of the project

participants were quick to note the responsibilities of teachers beyond the curriculum. As one ECT stated:

[W]e can't get away from the fact that the students that I teach are about to enter into the wider world. They're not that far away from being professionals themselves and I think that we have an important role in supporting them to access that world as best they can.

When we set such views against the policy context of generic nationally distributed curriculum and induction materials, motivated by the so-called 'golden thread' of centralized teacher development, cracks begin to show. With a 'one size fits all' approach to teacher training, induction and development, is there a danger that teaching will become increasingly less attractive to thoughtful individuals? Will they feel motivated to remain in the profession? And what about the development of teacher identity?

## Identity in absentia

Despite its centrality to the process of teaching, teacher identity does not feature in the rhetoric of national educational policy. There is a complete absence of reference to identity in the Teachers' Standards in England (DfE, 2021) as noted by one of the interviewed university ITE staff:

I think the word identity doesn't feature in teacher standards, it's not a consideration when we're thinking about the professional development of teachers and I think we've got a real opportunity with this two years of early career teachers to build that in.

This opportunity is not embraced in the ITE reform documentation. The CCF defines in detail the minimum entitlement of all student teachers while the ECF is designed to underpin what all ECTs should be entitled to learn about and learn how to do. Across both documents there is one reference to identity (in the same place in each) – and it pertains to school students:

Standard 7 – Managing behaviour: Pupils are motivated by intrinsic factors (related to their identity and values) and extrinsic factors (related to reward).

This missed opportunity to address what it means to become and be a teacher is significant, promoting a view of teaching that is grounded in the acquisition of a prescribed toolkit of professional skills rather than the developmental and dynamic process of teaching. Of course, teacher educators and mentors in schools can engage in identity work, but their time is limited by the need to adhere to the prescribed content detailed in the ITE reforms.

The individualized nature of the experience of learning to teach was further highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic. National lockdowns resulted in student teachers teaching and being taught online, curtailing access to practical teaching and pastoral practices. Even within cohorts, the experiences of different students were diverse, depending on their school placements, subject and personal circumstances (Steadman et al., 2022). The variability in training experiences has resulted in an early career workforce with very different needs and this is where the provision of generic training and induction materials becomes really problematic. Although some project participants commented on the benefits of the structured approach adopted by the ECF, there was widespread agreement that its generic nature fell short of effectively addressing individual needs. The perceived promotion of a correct way of behaving in a classroom was particularly criticized by experienced school staff, as evident in this quotation from a Headteacher participant:

So that 'world class training' which I think are the exact words being used, I think it's very arrogant, very arrogant ... that idea that every teacher has got to behave the same way in the classroom in every single school across the country, I can't agree with that.

It is important to note that the project findings only responded to the first year of the two-year ECF programme and given the range of providers, it is not possible to state with certainty that experiences shared are representative of every ECF programme. But even with that caveat, there was broad condemnation of the generic

nature of materials, particularly given the varied experiences of training during the pandemic. The uniformity of expected teacher behaviour and skills promotes a view of teachers as technicians rather than critical, reflective professionals (Orchard & Winch, 2015) and serves to deprofessionalize both teachers and teacher educators. Mandating ways of preparing and inducting teachers undermines the autonomy of experienced professionals, impacting on their own development. As Buchanan (2015, p. 704) comments, ‘An individual’s professional agency is reciprocally related to his or her professional identity.’

## Mentoring and identity development

School placements are key sites for teacher identity development where student teachers are supported by their mentors to establish their teacher identities through critical reflection on both their own teaching and observations of others. Many of the interviewed staff in schools were quick to criticize the ITE reforms, reflecting a sense of resentment at the imposition of a structure that was not seen as necessary. As one senior leader commented:

Here we’re largely doing what we would have done anyway and you know I do feel slightly fed up about it because you know this is something that we have always done ... it’s a sledgehammer to crack a nut and that nut didn’t exist in this school anyway.

In the research interviews, mentors spoke of the provision of scripts by induction providers, detailing exactly how conversations with new teachers should be conducted. The practice was widely condemned by teachers involved in the project, as evident in the following comments from new teachers who trained during the pandemic in 2020–1:

[I]t’s too prescriptive. A lot of it is just generic information that obviously covers all the different standards, which I get ... but if I had a bit more time, it would be useful to use that time to maybe observe or be observed, rather than writing.

we are given pretty much a script of what to do ... I’d much rather her [mentor] observe me for five minutes and us reflect on it after or a different kind of task.

The identity, expertise and experience of mentors are undermined as opportunities for observation are curtailed by the necessity of delivering the prescribed induction package. Damningly, only 14 per cent of ECTs and 9 per cent of mentors surveyed by Teacher Tapp felt that the training received as part of the ECF was a good use of their time (Education intelligence, 2022).

## **Fostering identity through critical engagement**

Findings from the project identified the importance of fostering critical engagement with research in the field of education in developing teachers' identity and self-efficacy. In interviews, ECTs repeatedly cited the importance of engagement with academic papers and research in developing their identity as teachers, often referencing the benefits of such practice during their university PGCE courses. There was a suggestion that the induction period could helpfully include academic reading time, perhaps with the provision of reading lists themed around the Teachers' Standards. This was set against a shared feeling that some induction material was simplified to the point of being patronizing, repetitive of material already covered in their university training and rarely thought provoking.

Such desires to engage in critical readings seem to run counter to the presentation of an agreed evidence base in the ECF. As investigative reporter Warwick Mansell reported on his Education Uncovered website, the often-contested nature of evidence in education appears downplayed in the ITE reforms. Mansell reports on the controversial comments of invited speaker Professor Daniel Willingham at a DfE conference held to discuss reaccreditation for ITE providers, in which Willingham seemed to suggest that student teachers do not need to engage much with theory and could instead be handed 'half-page cribsheets on different aspects of their subject' (Mansell, 2022a). Such views have been widely condemned by university ITE providers and were not welcomed by aspirant and new teachers interviewed during the project. As one ECT commented, 'If you're a teacher as well and you can't read an academic paper, why are you here?'

Continued critical engagement with educational research is an important facet of the development of the teacher identity as newcomers to the profession learn the interplay between theory and practice. But the frameworks present a very narrow view of research, reliant on evidence ‘assessed and endorsed’ by the Education Endowment Foundation. There is an emphasis on cognitive load theory, but no discussion of how cognitive overload may differ across subject areas (Baird, 2022). The partial and selective use of theory in the CCF is demonstrative of a what works agenda that prioritizes student attainment, reminding us that ‘deciding how and what to educate teachers is far from a neutral activity’ (Baird, 2022, p. 45).

This prescriptive, selective approach is also evident in newly published materials on lesson content and format. Originally formed during the pandemic providing online resources to schools during national lockdowns, Oak National Academy has reformed as an independent public body. DfE-commissioned resources from Oak outline a generic approach to lessons, featuring progression through provided presentation, video and worksheet, bookended with quizzes to measure progress. Such rigidity has attracted much debate on social media, with teachers and educationalists questioning the lack of teacher autonomy and the apparent absence of contextual thinking. The frustration from the sector is captured in this tweet from English educationalist Barbara Bleiman: ‘Coming soon’ to a school near you ...,

Interview:

Q: How well can you follow someone else’s ppt?

Q: Are you good at marking quizzes someone else wrote?

Q: Can you teach something you’ve not thought through yourself?

Q: Can you forget what you loved about the way you were taught?

(Bleiman, 2022)

As Bleiman highlights, the use of generic resources does little to foster teacher identity, impacting on teacher fulfilment, motivation and even retention in the profession. Complex, socially constructed teacher identity is sidelined in favour of centralized

resources that have no link to personal motivation or professional experience. Reporting on the rollout of Oak National Academy's 'full curriculum programmes' for schools in the UK, Mansell draws attention to their £43m government funding and their recently published thoughts on what the priorities for five national curriculum subjects should be. Although not mandatory, these 'guiding principles' have been set out 'seemingly only in private and apparently without consultation' (Mansell, 2022b), indicative of the increasingly controlling approach to the curriculum and teaching in England that serves to undermine the development and ongoing evolution of teacher identity.

## Professional value

Understanding how teachers' experiences during their training and ECT years shape the development of their identity is important and timely given the challenging context of teacher retention in England. Although there was some rise in recruitment immediately following the Covid-19 pandemic, the most recent ITT census statistics published by the DfE (GOV.UK, 2022) show that against a target of 20,945 postgraduate secondary trainees, the government recruited just 12,356. Figures are most concerning in Physics, with just 17 per cent of the teachers needed recruited (Walker, 2022b). NFER Schools Workforce lead Jack Worth tweeted that the latest figures were 'astonishingly bad' describing them as a 'real wake-up call for policymakers that teacher recruitment and retention needs urgent attention' (Worth, 2022).

Issues of retention were evident in the research project. For many of the teachers interviewed, the lack of bespoke professional development impacted on their feelings of professional worth, purpose and motivation to remain in the profession (Steadman & Rushton, 2022). As one teacher who trained during the pandemic commented:

I think it's about valuing teachers properly and saying you are very important, which we are, and giving that importance some recognition in the form of support and CPD, not just saying we need you because you're a teacher so teach these children because that's what you need to do.

Such feelings were also communicated by mentors in schools, who shared frustrations over the prescriptive nature of the ECF, impacting on their identity and agency as supporters of new teachers:

it feels as a teacher, I feel expendable, I feel just like an expendable resource, it's just like oh we need them to do this, we need them to do that, we need them to do this and that and the other.

The profession is willing and able to support new teachers. The varied training experiences during the pandemic highlighted the need for bespoke support and development, and both teacher educators and mentors in schools continue to demonstrate the desire to work with aspiring and new teachers to develop their identity and craft. However, such support is restricted by the increasing centralization of ITE in England, limiting professional identity and agency. In the words of a school-based mentor:

I feel like it's a duty of care to these teachers to be like we see you, we hear you, we're looking after you so that you can do your best work.

## Conclusion

For Lear, the plaintive question 'Who is it that can tell me who I am?' can only be answered by himself. However, although his journey is one of self-discovery, it is a journey influenced by his interactions with others. Likewise, the development of teacher identity is a shared social phenomenon, enacted in social spaces and shaped by experiences, relationships and professional contexts. For teachers, discovery of their professional self will never be found solely in the individual mastery of the 'learn that' or 'learn how to' statements of the CCF and ECF as such an approach denies both the contextual complexity and individuality of professional identity. As Sachs (2003, p. 135) states:

teacher identity stands at the core of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act' and 'how to understand' their work and their place in society.

The key here is in the freedom to 'construct their own ideas', guided by the colleagues, teacher educators and mentors with whom they interact. The straight jacket of ITE reforms that dictate a certain way of behaving informed by a selective evidence base threatens this autonomy, reducing learning to a checklist of skills and content. In contrast, the ongoing nature of teacher learning is captured in the words of a PGCE student training during the pandemic:

everything being a work in progress, you know, not thinking I've just learned this, I'll just do this forever – actually that there's space to evolve.

In the development of teacher identity, there has to be 'space to evolve' and to reflect. This space was threatened during the Covid-19 pandemic, although the innovative stance adopted by teachers and teacher educators highlighted the tenacity and inventiveness of a profession under pressure (Ellis, Steadman & Mao, 2020). The restrictive nature of the ITE reforms in England deny such space, failing to give recognition to the social and contextually driven experience of teaching.

Identity matters in teaching. The development of a teacher identity rooted in both the personal and professional and enacted in the social world of schools is an active and purposeful venture. There is little motivation for the developing teacher in the acquisition of prescribed competencies and skills, and the promotion of such a view reduces teachers to technicians devoid of critical awareness and emotional response. The 'one size fits all' version of teacher identity present in the ITE reforms can only serve to undermine professional autonomy, threatening the recruitment, retention and fulfilment of England's teachers.

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# Language policing and colonial logics in England's ITE policy

*Ian Cushing*

In this chapter I critique an array of policies that teacher educators in England currently work with, arguing that they represent a form of hostile governance which impose and reproduce prescriptive ideologies about language. I argue that these policies are actively designed to promote and maintain white supremacy and racial hierarchies, and that perceptions about language are central to this (see also Picower, 2021; Aronson & Meyers, 2022; Sriprakash et al., 2022). I show how these ideologies surface under seemingly benevolent guises of career advancement, pedagogical excellence, scientific objectivity, research validity and social justice. This critique is offered through the framework of raciolinguistics (Rosa & Flores, 2017), which seeks to uncover how race and language have been co-constructed amidst the legacies of European colonialism, and how racialized speakers are framed as deficient, regardless of how they use language, in being compared against the normative language practices of idealized whiteness. My critique comes from my privileged position as a white, able-bodied, English-speaking male who has institutional power as a tenured academic in a European university. As Tanner (2019) argues, it is for people

like me to help expose the relationship between language, teacher education and whiteness. As a white person, I am implicated within the machinery of white supremacy, and it is from the inside of this machine that I seek to dismantle it.

Ideologies of linguistic purity have long circulated in teacher education, reproduced through policies, curricula, assessments and pedagogies which privilege idealized whiteness whilst framing the language practices of racialized communities as unsuitable for school and requiring intervention (e.g. Aggarwal, 2016; Souto-Manning, 2021). One way of interrogating raciolinguistic ideologies is by taking what Rosa and Flores (2017) describe as a raciolinguistic perspective, an analytical shift which directs attention away from the stigmatized speaker and towards the *white perceiving subject*. The white perceiving subject is an ideological position which can be taken up by any individual or policy actor, regardless of their racial and class identity. This is not simply about individual modes of perception however, but about how institutions, policies, assessments and other technologies of linguistic surveillance can be complicit in the reproduction of raciolinguistic ideologies.

A raciolinguistic perspective considers white supremacy and anti-Blackness as a normalized tenet of Western schooling (e.g. Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018; Carter Andrews et al., 2021; Kroskrity, 2021) and an endemic organizing structure of teacher education in England and the United States (e.g. Picower, 2009; Lander, 2014; Aronson & Meyers, 2022). Lander's work especially has long brought attention to how teacher education in England is a site of racial inequalities, but also how whiteness can be disrupted through critical, anti-racist pedagogies and policies. Her work resonates with scholar-activism from the United States (e.g. Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015; Lyiscott et al., 2018; Johnson, 2022; Baker-Bell, 2020a), especially that which focuses on anti-Black linguistic racism in teacher education. In this chapter, I show how raciolinguistic ideologies are central to the logics of the contemporary teacher education policy landscape in England.

## **Long histories of linguistic racism in teacher education in England**

Critiques of teacher education policy and practice in England have long shown how it can work to uphold white supremacy. Lander's (2014) and Tomlinson's (2005) historical accounts describe how

regimes of whiteness have been crafted by successive Conservative and Labour governments whilst simultaneously curtailing academic autonomy through the centralization of teacher education curricula and the ramping up of external surveillance mechanisms. They show how the increasing state control of teacher education provision since the late 1970s is concurrent with a decreasing level of attention to issues of racism and racialization in teacher education policy, resulting in fewer opportunities for pre-service teachers to adequately engage with race.

Since 2010 and the significant changes to teacher education initiated by the Coalition and Conservative government, raciolinguistic ideologies remain a central organizing logic of ITE policy. Furthermore, they have become increasingly difficult to challenge under hostile state architectures of academic surveillance which punish institutions if they are deemed to not adhere to government-prescribed curricula and pedagogies (see Smith & Lander, 2022). As part of this, the state has increasingly assigned teacher educators as responsible for fixing perceived defects in language and where they deviate from idealized whiteness. Ofsted, too, have been granted additional powers by the state to surveil the language practices of pre-service teachers and the degrees to which teacher education providers are complicit in reproducing curricula underpinned by raciolinguistic ideologies (see Cushing & Snell, 2022). In the contemporary teacher education landscape in England then, opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage with critical issues of language, race and power have been gradually replaced with the requirement to engage with mechanistic and depoliticized models of grammar, vocabulary and reading instruction. This kind of knowledge about language is favoured by the state because it attempts to create a generation of teachers who lack critical knowledge about language and have few opportunities to engage with the relationship between language, identity, power, class and race.

## **Unearthing raciolinguistic ideologies in the ITE policy architecture**

In the sections that follow I adopt a raciolinguistic perspective to interrogate the underlying assumptions about race and language in the contemporary state-level teacher education policy architecture in England. By ‘contemporary’ I refer to policies introduced as part

of post-2010 reforms, with a particular focus on changes within the last two to three years given that this has seen the major changes to teacher education policy that are the focus of this book. I also show how contemporary policy is tethered to the past, taking a genealogical stance which pays attention to ideological continuities over time and how historical formations of race and language continue to inform the present in terms of the policing of difference and deviance (Stoler, 1995). I pay close attention to power, politics and agency, in how policy components create governable subjects and coercive conditions. This is especially pertinent given the ways in which teacher educators in England have been subjected to a recent spate of hostile policy components designed to deprofessionalize, disempower and intimidate. This includes the introduction of new inspection frameworks (Ofsted, 2021), professional standards for teachers (DfE, 2011), prescriptive state-designed curricula for teacher education providers (DfE, 2019), and requirements for institutions to apply to the government to maintain their status as providers of teacher education programmes (DfE, 2021a). An overview of the policy components examined for this research is given in Table 11.1.

**TABLE 11.1** The contemporary teacher education policy architecture

Component	Year	Author	Summary
Teachers' Standards	2011	DfE	A set of professional standards and expectations that all pre- and in-service teachers are required to demonstrate compliance with. Teacher educators and school-based mentors are expected to monitor compliance with the standards.
Core Content Framework (CCF)	2019	DfE	A document mandating the 'minimum entitlement' for the national pre-service teacher education curriculum. Ofsted monitor teacher education providers' complicity with the CCF.

Review of teacher education curricula	2019	Perry et al.	A literature review commissioned by Ofsted and carried out by academics at Sheffield Hallam University. The review informed the development of Ofsted's 2021 inspection framework.
Inspection framework of initial teacher education	2021	Ofsted	A document which sets out Ofsted's principles and methodologies for the inspection of teacher education providers.
Initial teacher education compliance criteria	2021	DfE	A document outlining the mandatory criteria that teacher education providers must adhere to in relation to recruitment procedures, school-based placements and assessment.

Across these policy components, I looked closely at how pre-service teachers and teacher educators were positioned as language policy actors who were expected by the state to reproduce raciolinguistic ideologies in their own practices, and conform to the linguistic patterns of idealized whiteness determined by the white perceiving subject.

## Standards and surveillance

This section discusses the place of standardized English within the teacher education policy architecture, and how this is used by the state as a means of upholding white supremacy. Within a raciolinguistic framework, standardized English is conceptualized as a social and colonial construct which is built on the production of idealized, hegemonic whiteness in opposition to racialized others (Flores, 2016; Kroskrity, 2021). Histories of the invention of standardized English show us how it was – and continues to be – a variety based on the language practices of the white middle-classes, and that its use is ideologically connected to perceptions of purity, status, power, educatedness, intelligence and moral standing (Bonfiglio, 2002; Cushing, 2022b). Put this way, perceived deviations from

standardized English have come to carry ideological associations with deficiency, inferiority, laziness and ignorance. Race and white supremacist structures play a central part in the upholding of these ideologies, given that speakers who are negatively racialized are more likely to be perceived as producing language which deviates from standards defined by white power (Baker-Bell, 2020a).

All pre-service teacher education programmes in England are legally obliged to follow a set of state designed criteria to remain compliant, with failure to do so carrying the threat of de-accreditation. Racialized perceptions of language are integral to this compliance. Pre-service teachers have their language policed and evaluated as part of their application to a teacher education programme (such as through interview tasks which might assess their competency in standard spoken English), in lesson observations as part of their school placement experiences, in university presentations, in their final portfolios, and as part of job applications. The state operates as a white perceiving subject throughout this entire trajectory, instrumentalized as a policy component which sets out instructions which teacher education providers must adhere to if they are to remain compliant (DfE, 2021b). As part of what the DfE call the 'intellectual and academic capabilities' that all teachers are required to demonstrate, it is stated:

Speaking, listening and communicating are fundamental to a teacher's role. Teachers should use standard English grammar, clear pronunciation and vocabulary relevant to the situation to convey instructions, questions, information, concepts and ideas with clarity.

(DfE, 2021b)

Policy here places the responsibility on the speaker to modify their language practices in line with the expectations of the white perceiving subject, and so works as a sonic border control mechanism for entry into the teacher profession. Once they have gained entry to a teacher education programme, pre-service teachers have their speech further scrutinized via the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2011). This is a set of state designed professional benchmarks for pre-service teachers against which their progression on a teacher education course is monitored by school-based mentors and university-based teacher educators. Only those

that are deemed to have met the standards are categorized as a legitimate professional and granted a teaching qualification. The Teachers' Standards have a long history – with their first inception being under Thatcher's government in 1984, with different iterations produced by successive governments. Smith's (2013) diachronic study of these shows how, over time, the standards are consistent in the fact that

maintenance of the status quo is also assured by complete avoidance of the need for collective responsibility or responsibility of the state for the eradication of social and economic inequities and the elimination of discriminatory practices at a societal as well as an institutional level.

(Smith, 2013: 443)

The standards are also consistent in their reproduction of raciolinguistic ideologies about the quality, articulacy, grammaticality and correctness of speech. The requirement that teachers use standardized English has remained a central aspect of this, through both Conservative and Labour-designed policies which have placed an increasing emphasis on technicist notions of linguistic performance whilst gradually erasing any references to social justice and race equality. Consequently, whiteness is centred as the normative standard for pre-service teachers, in terms of identity, pedagogy and language (see also Lander, 2014; Smith, 2013).

In the current version of the standards, teachers must 'demonstrate an understanding of and take responsibility for promoting high standards of literacy, articulacy and the correct use of standard English' (DfE, 2011: 10–11). In interviews<sup>1</sup> I ran with racialized pre-service teachers, they described how the Teachers' Standards are used by white school-based mentors as a justifying mechanism for the hostile policing of speech. One of these pre-service teachers was Mariatu, who reported experiences of sonic surveillance in being instructed by her mentor to 'speak much clearer' and 'always use standard English when speaking' because she was perceived to be in audible breach of the Teachers' Standards. Even though Mariatu described her own speech as broadly in line with standardized

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<sup>1</sup>Ethical clearance was granted for these interviews and all names are anonymized. See Cushing (2022b) for the complete details about this process.

English, her mentor refused to sign her final paperwork off until it was deemed that she had modified her speech to, in Mariatu's words, 'sound even more like the white teachers'. Mariatu's case highlights the fact that as part of raciolinguistic ideologies, the production of language by racialized speakers will never be perceived as fully appropriate. Furthermore, and as evidence of raciolinguistic double standards at work, Mariatu also described how the same mentor had never made comments about the language practices of a white pre-service teacher, despite this teacher using non-standardized patterns extensively in her speech. The Teachers' Standards are a prime example then, of a policy enacted by the white perceiving subject to both justify and normalize raciolinguistic ideologies in practice.

## The white ears of Ofsted

The subtitle of this section is an intertextual reference to Cushing & Snell (2022), where we analysed thousands of school inspection reports to show how the schools inspectorate has operated as institutional language police since their foundation in 1839, and that this is a normalized part of their institutional culture. The schools inspectorate have a majority white and economically privileged workforce (Ofsted, 2020) and play a powerful, agentive role in the teacher education policy architecture, given that they inspect teacher education providers and enact judgements on what constitutes high-quality language education. Our work showed how Ofsted's recent policy moves are anchored in anti-Black and deficit-based ideologies of marginalized families and their supposed failures to prepare their children for school. A large part of these supposed failures relates to language, such as the (mis)perception from Ofsted that racially marginalized and low-income children do not use enough words or the right kind of words, and that this poses a limit to what they can do in school (Spielman, 2018).

Although Ofsted's subscription to raciolinguistic ideologies underpins much of their current policies, the inspectorate's work on teacher education has a much longer and colonial history. This includes the inspection of teacher education provision in many former British colonies. Raciolinguistic ideologies were a fundamental organizing logic of this work, with the inspectorate acting as agents of British linguistic imperialism who sought to

erase the use of indigenous languages in schools by replacing them with English-only instruction (see Fletcher, 1982: 283–4). My own archival work of colonial inspection reports revealed similar ideologies, such as in a 1953 report on teacher education in East and Central Africa, where it was recommended:

[A] policy should be followed which leads to the eventual elimination of Swahili from, all schools where it is taught as a lingua franca. [...] In Kenya, a policy of gradual elimination over the whole territory could be followed. [...] The training of teachers in the vernacular only should be stopped and great attention given in all training colleges to the study of English so that all future teachers emerge qualified to teach English in the schools.

(Nuffield Foundation and Colonial Office,  
1953: 84)

These practices continue to underpin Ofsted's contemporary work in England, with intimidating judgements about language particularly reserved for institutions serving working class and racially minoritized pre-service teachers. Bradford College, for example, a teacher education provider in the North of England with a community of largely South Asian students from low-income backgrounds, has repeatedly received hostile comments from Ofsted about the purportedly defective language of its students and staff, especially in relation to the perceived absence of correct, clear and accurate speech. For instance, in three consecutive reports of Bradford College the inspectorate claimed:

The training does not ensure that all trainees can use standard English consistently [...]. A small number of undergraduate trainees do not model accurate standard English in their teaching.

(2006)

This point for improvement identified at the last inspection, however, remains an issue because there are too many trainees on the course who make errors in their written and/or spoken standard English.

(2010)

A small minority of trainees do not use standard English when they speak. [...] During training sessions, subject tutors do not insist on the correct use of English when trainees are sharing their thoughts with the group.

(2017)

It is crucial to emphasize that these raciolinguistic ideologies from Ofsted exist not just in individual reports of teacher education providers, but are actively written into their broader policy architecture under a guise of research-informed practice and academic robustness. For instance, in 2019 Ofsted commissioned a literature review of teacher education curricula (Perry et al., 2019), which is lacking in its discussion of race and racism (neither word appears a single time). The review includes uncritical references to influential North American men (notably Doug Lemov and E.D Hirsch) whose work reproduces patriarchal, pathological and white supremacist ideologies about the language practices of low-income communities of colour (see, for example, Cushing, 2021; Hodgson & Harris, 2022). Lemov's *Teach Like a Champion* pedagogy, widely critiqued for its reproduction of anti-Black epistemologies, is actively endorsed by the Department for Education (DfE), whilst Hirsch is the de facto architect of the 2014 national curriculum in England. Hirsch's (1987) model of *Cultural Literacy* – a manifesto for what he calls the teaching of 'intellectual capital' in schools and on teacher education programmes – is rooted in colonial logics of language and nation building, especially in terms of constructs such as academic language, standardized English and the native speaker. And just as the inspectorate argued for monolingualism to be the norm in their colonial work, Hirsch frames multilingualism as a threat to the 'national literate culture' of North America (1987: 93) and something that 'enormously increases cultural fragmentation, civil antagonism, illiteracy and economic-technological ineffectualness' (1987: 92). Hirsch's work is also prominent in Ofsted's (2022) so-called research review on English in schools, especially in terms of the 'word gap', a raciolinguistic construct which frames the vocabulary size and quality of low-income, racialized children as deficient (see Aggarwal, 2016; Cushing, 2022a; Johnson & Johnson, 2021). In this way then, Ofsted's contemporary work on teacher education can be seen as a continuation of their colonial activities which actively seeks to suppress language practices which are deemed to be deviant from educational spaces.

## The CCF and the (re)normalization of deficit discourses

One of the most significant components in the new teacher education policy architecture in England is the CCF, which sets out the ‘minimum entitlement of all trainee teachers’ (DfE, 2019: 3) and is used by Ofsted in their inspections of teacher education curricula. The CCF relies on crude overtones of a ‘what works’ approach to curriculum building which overlooks critical questions such as what works for who, and who gets to decide what counts as what is working (see Silova et al., 2020).

The CCF reproduces raciolinguistic ideologies through its deficit framings of language, in which marginalized children’s language practices are perceived as lacking and that school is a place where these shortcomings can be fixed – especially when such solutions are grounded in the reproduction of idealized whiteness (see Lewis, 1966). For example, the CCF instructs teacher educators that their curricula must include opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop the literacy capabilities of children. This includes:

- Teaching unfamiliar vocabulary explicitly and planning for pupils to be repeatedly exposed to high-utility and high-frequency vocabulary in what is taught.
- Modelling and requiring high-quality oral language, recognizing that spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing (e.g. requiring pupils to respond to questions in full sentences, making use of relevant technical vocabulary).

(DfE, 2019: 15)

‘Literacy’ is framed here as an autonomous and technicist project which exists separately from social context, culture, politics and power (Souto-Manning, 2021). It is underpinned by a US/Euro-centric (and by extension, white-centric) idea of what counts as ill/iterate (Smith et al., 2019) whilst reproducing deficit discourses in its failure to recognize what all children can already do with their language. For example, the assumption in the CCF is that linguistic constructs such as ‘high-utility vocabulary’, ‘technical vocabulary’, ‘full sentences’ and ‘high-quality oral language’ are

empirically audible categories which some people are capable of using, and some are not. For those who are deemed to be incapable of producing such categories, they are marked out for remediation through pedagogical interventions such as explicit vocabulary teaching and the policing of deviant speech. Recent work in educational linguistics has exposed how constructs pertaining to ‘high-utility’ and ‘academic’ vocabulary are manifestations of raciolinguistic ideologies which are tethered to long histories of colonial governance as well as reproducing the same kind of deficit discourses which characterized education policy in England and the United States in the 1960s and 70s (see Flores, 2020; Baker-Bell, 2020b).

Those deemed to be displaying ‘non-academic’ language are marked out for correction, especially under the logics of the so-called ‘word gap’, which claims that the life chances of marginalized communities can be improved if their vocabularies were to increase. The word gap has its origins in North American educational research from the 1990s, which posed that working-class, Black families produce smaller and lower-quality vocabulary than white, middle-class counterparts – and that these purported discrepancies were the core reason that marginalized children struggled in school. These reductionist stances overlook broader issues concerned with structural racism and intersectional inequalities. For example, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), who reviewed the CCF, pose that explicit vocabulary instruction is the solution to improving not just literacy, but also social inequalities more broadly:

Improving young children’s vocabulary is often a high priority, particularly when teaching students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are more likely to have a less extensive vocabulary.

(EEF, 2018: 8)

Here, the EEF adopt a deficit stance on the language practices of working-class families, assuming that their vocabulary size is impeded by their social status and that their supposed linguistic inadequacies are the reason they might struggle in school. As others have noted (e.g. Flores, 2020), deficit stances simply work to maintain a narrative that working-class children lack adequate language and are in need of linguistic remediation, despite them

simply using language in ways which do not conform with white, middle-class ideals. Put this way, the EEF's stance on language reproduces discourses of stigma against working-class (and racialized) communities, which have long taken place in schools (see also Tyler, 2020). Ofsted, too, subscribe to word gap narratives as part of their 'social justice' agenda, amidst their belief that if marginalized children would simply change their language, then this would allow them to break free of their class and race-based oppression (see Cushing, 2022a).

## **Conclusions: Finding and widening cracks in the system**

This chapter has contributed to a long conversation about teacher education and racism in England, by placing a focus on oppressive language ideologies within the contemporary policy assemblage that teacher educators work with. I have argued that these policies are underpinned by raciolinguistic ideologies which frame the language practices of racialized communities as deficient, when compared against the language practices of idealized whiteness. This critique comes at a time when ITE policy in England is driven by a set of deracialized policies (Smith & Lander, 2022) amidst the so-called 'what works' agenda (Atkinson, 2000) and state narratives which are attempting to discredit university-based ITE work. The serious limitation of the 'what works' agenda is that it fails to ask critical questions about what works for *who* and under what conditions, with the state crafting a policy narrative where only certain pockets of research come to be seen as valid for teacher educators to take notice of. In turn, this narrative has delegitimized more critical and anti-racist work on the grounds that it is anecdotal, of little practical relevance to teachers, and ideologically skewed. Shahjahan's (2011) critique argues that 'what works' policies are built on the logics of European colonialism, in which non-European knowledge is constructed as inferior, and in which anti-racist efforts in education are subjugated, silenced and discredited. As such then, this chapter has joined global demands for the decentring of whiteness in teacher education (e.g. Kholi, 2008; Picower, 2009; Baker-Bell et al., 2020; Borelli et al., 2020; Carter Andrews et al., 2021; Souto-Manning, 2021;

Aronson & Meyers, 2022; Johnson, 2022; Smith & Lander, 2022) in placing a focus on language and how the contemporary teacher education policy architecture in England reproduces raciolinguistic ideologies. Issues of language have long been understood as key to social justice struggles (see Charity Hudley & Flores, 2022), but social justice will never be achieved when the responsibility is placed on marginalized speakers to modify their language to conform with the benchmarks of idealized whiteness. Teacher educators must continue to interrogate state-designed language policies and question the underlying assumptions these policies make about the language practices of all marginalized communities.

Teacher educators must look for what Lillian Weber (1997) calls *cracks in the system*: ideological and implementational spaces which allow for the enactment of anti-racist efforts even when the wall seems tall and impenetrable. Policy actors in the form of teacher educators yield resistant power in their capacities to forge policies from within the system itself, especially in terms of how they might draw on their expert knowledge of the pre-service teachers they are working with and the unique context of the local school network which forms part of their community. Once teacher educators see themselves as language activists then, they must be prepared to undo their own ideologies about language. This work begins with interrogating the ways they may have been socialized into reproducing normative beliefs about socially constructed linguistic borders and categories which have the potential to harm the most marginalized members of a community. Teacher educators must be prepared to reflect on how their own modes of perception have the potential to cause harm to marginalized speakers, especially when working with state-crafted policies which push them to hear the language practices of marginalized speakers as deficient and incomplete. In taking this raciolinguistic perspective, teacher educators can begin to inhabit new perceiving practices which go beyond simply advocating for linguistic variation but interrogate the very colonial foundations which raciolinguistic ideologies are built on.

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## CHAPTER TWELVE

# ITE in England: A cautionary tale for Europe

*Maria Campbell and Fiona Crowe*

We preface our reflection on the chapters in this book as observers from Ireland, outside the English system of teacher education, by identifying three provisos. Firstly, we are choosing to address one thread of the many excellent arguments presented. Secondly, we are using the lens of our Irish experiences as teacher educators and European-engaged researchers to contextualize our reactions and reflections on the book. Finally, our discussion is undertaken against the backdrop of the pervasive argument used to support the English reform agenda that education alone should provide the solution to all societal dilemmas and ills (Braun & Ball, 2011).

Our response draws upon an explicit point raised by Spendlove in his chapter, that events or happenings posed as ‘disasters’ or ‘crises’ can be used by governments to justify the stealthy implementation of authoritarian reforms. Baird, in her chapter, indicates that this reform by stealth approach constitutes gaslighting. Spendlove indicates that England’s drop in international education rankings, was posed as a disaster by government. By posing England’s drop in the 2012 PISA literacy and numeracy rankings as a disaster, the argument seems to be that the English government used this as a pretext to blame (primarily) university-based teacher educators for their poor preparation of teachers who, in turn, were unable to teach effectively.

In a context where both England and Ireland performed poorly (from 2009 onwards) in comparison to previous PISA cycles and where an increasing marketization agenda is in play, our discussion focuses on the response and subsequent actions of both governments to this drop in international rankings. More specifically, we discuss how the subsequent steps taken by the Irish government, including an international review of Irish ITE and two cycles of accreditation of ITE by the newly established Teaching Council, either resonate with or are contrary to actions in the English context. Finally, we trace the trajectory of policy and practice reforms within Irish ITE from 2010 to ‘what is currently happening’, comparing the similarities and varied reactions to similar stimuli.

## **A different approach to reform**

The first question we pose in our response is why was the drop in international rankings viewed as being so important that they could be depicted as a potential disaster by governments? We argue that nation states are continually faced with ensuring economic prosperity while simultaneously safeguarding the well-being of the nation, by ensuring all people feel valued, included and enabled to participate in a democratic society. We maintain that how governments choose to react and the policies and practices that ensue undoubtedly reflect the thinking and priorities of governments. According to Sahlberg (2023), the requirement by all members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to undertake PISA testing every three years, ‘created a new international education race’ (p. 2), with PISA results used to inform ‘national economic and social policies and strategies ... and linking a select number of educational performance indicators to economic prosperity’ (Sahlberg, 2023). Consequently, a drop in PISA rankings has been viewed as relating to or reflecting declining economic performance going forward (Sahlberg, 2023).

In discussing the Irish state’s response to the country’s drop in Ireland’s drop in international literacy and numeracy rankings in 2009, it is important to note that Ireland experienced the largest drop of all OECD countries, going from a ranking of fifth to seventeenth (Cosgrove et al., 2010; Perkins et al., 2010). This dramatic drop in rankings coincided with Ireland’s major economic

crash in September 2010, which resulted in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stepping in and taking de facto fiscal control to stabilize and restore the public finance market following an international rescue package of €85 billion (Breen, 2012). Thus, the government's response to the drop in rankings was against the backdrop of an urgent priority to meet targets determined by the IMF as to how and when money would be released into the Irish economy. In this context, while a series of educational reforms ensued, it is noteworthy that blame wasn't overtly placed at the door of Irish ITE. Government agencies acknowledged issues raised by researchers and teacher unions such as increased inward migration, greater inclusion of learners with special educational needs in mainstream schools and poorer engagement by schools with PISA testing, as reasons for our sudden drop in ranking (Flynn, 2010; GOI, 2010; McNamara et al., 2011; Cosgrove & Cartwright, 2014, p. 4). However, from 2010 the Department of Education and Skills (DES) indicated that change was needed and in response to the drop in rankings they were 'leading a programme of reform ... which would include improving learning outcomes in the area of literacy and numeracy' (INTO, 2014, pp. 20–1). The power of PISA is such that most nation states cannot afford to not respond to rankings.

ITE was identified by the Irish DES as another space where their reform agenda needed to be embedded. The government sought and engaged outside international ITE experts and commissioned a report reviewing the national system of ITE led by Professor Pasi Sahlberg published in 2012. Norway took a similar approach to their reforms of upper primary/lower secondary ITE in 2017 (Cochran-Smith et al., 2020). By contrast, many of the contributors to this book indicate that the experts appointed by the English government to inform the ITE reform process were primarily from inside the country and lacked expertise in teacher education. Rowe, for example, describes the constitution of these expert advisor groups as fundamentally flawed, and characterizes the expert advisory groups on ITE as having up to 50 per cent constituents from private providers who were also bidding on government tenders. Baird also raises serious concerns about the opacity in relation to 'the level of knowledge of high-quality teacher education' of the experts on the panel. In summary, we perceive the different approaches to reforming ITE involved one government (Ireland) transparently

seeking expertise from international teacher education experts while the other (England) opaquely sought support from those who did not always command wide acceptance within the country as experts.

Many of the subsequent Irish government responses and actions in relation to ITE, could be viewed as affirming and enabling ITE providers to support the development of agentic, research literate teachers. In operationalizing the International ITE Review recommendations (GOI, 2012), the Irish government looked to adopt European practices evidenced to be successful, particularly the Finnish ITE model. This model incorporated a strong focus on research-driven ITE within a university setting with a view to producing research literate teachers with a minimum postgraduate level 9, Master's qualification (within the European qualifications framework). Furthermore, the Irish DES recommended consolidating ITE providers (as the Norwegian government also did) to build greater capacity to engage in research in higher education, across the continuum of teacher education from early childhood to further education (GOI, 2012). This focus on research was also intended to offset the casualization of ITE staffing, thus ensuring all ITE programmes were staffed by 'full-time university lecturers ... conducive to high quality outcomes, particularly in the area of research ... properly integrated into the scholarly culture of the university' (GOI, 2012, p. 21).

Further reforms extended the duration of ITE programmes; the concurrent three-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programmes for primary level were extended to four years and the consecutive one-year Postgraduate Diploma in Education for both primary and post-primary to a two-year Professional Master of Education. We consider that this reform and those above affirmed the importance the Irish government placed on the 'quality of ITE provision' (GOI, 2012, p. 18) and its place in a university setting. These efforts to strengthen ITE within the university contrast with many of the contributors' accounts of what occurred in England during the same period.

However, other responses and actions by the Irish government could be viewed as aligning with the 'move' in England to control and standardize ITE. In order to ensure a strong literacy and numeracy focus in ITE – or a 'back to basics' emphasis as outlined by Turvey in his chapter – the then Minister for Education Mary Coughlin stated, 'The development of new policies that

are focused on literacy, numeracy and mathematics is paramount from my perspective' (GOI, 2010a). We suggest that this reform agenda was operationalized by the Teaching Council in the subsequent criteria for accreditation of ITE in 2011 as evidenced in the mandatory criteria, and which were perceived as being reflective of a high-stakes new public management, accountability-oriented and market-driven approach (Conway & Murphy, 2013). Prior to 2011, Irish ITE providers experienced relative autonomy as their programmes were accredited within their university. Consequently, teacher educators felt disempowered by the level of prescription and move to standardization in the 2011 TC criteria for accreditation (Conway & Murphy, 2013). Conway (2013) describes this development as a 'teaching crisis discourse' (p. 55), something new to the Irish education landscape but common in other countries over the previous twenty years, a point particularly highlighted by Spendlove in relation to England. Finally, in relation to standardization, it was interesting that the Irish government did not privilege either the publicly funded or the three privately funded ITE providers, Hibernia College and the two Montessori Colleges. All ITE providers were bound by the same Teaching Council regulations and accreditation criteria.

## Concluding thoughts

The points raised in the book caused us to consider what were the reasons for the similarities and differences to both the Irish and English governments' responses to a drop in international rankings and consequently, what might lie ahead for ITE in Ireland. We suggest that the Irish education system and by default, teacher education, looks to very different horizons for inspiration than appears to be the case in England. In response to the drop in international educational rankings, Irish policymakers have looked inwards to stakeholders and outwards to education experts in Europe and beyond for insights and solutions for perceived educational problems (Printer, 2020). Many of the contributors to this book indicate that an unusual cadre of experts (a 'familiar cast of characters', as Ellis and Childs put it) were chosen by the English government to provide solutions for perceived societal as well as educational problems. We were also struck by the extent

to which the many educational stakeholders were disempowered throughout the reform process in England. For example, the English government presented solutions to the ‘disaster’ posed as ‘common sense’ which enabled them to ridicule dissenting voices. Academics in education faculties of universities were posed as the ‘enemies of promise’ (Spendlove, citing Gove, 2013) and alongside teacher unions were further disparaged as ‘the Blob’ (as indicated by Benn). In this context, we can understand how the purpose of ITE reforms could be viewed by teacher educators as creating a more biddable and unquestioning teaching workforce with a basic set of skills (Turvey) or simple toolkit (Baird), happy to support and advance the government’s non-negotiable agenda.

In efforts to mitigate this disempowerment, both Lofthouse and Baird indicate that new networks of stakeholders have the potential to gain some degree of leverage and to intervene into the reform agenda discourse in England. We as Irish teacher educators experienced how networking of stakeholders in partnership could offer leverage. Due to the Teaching Council’s underpinning principle of foregrounding partnership in the second cycle of ITE accreditation process commenced in 2018, our experience differed to that of the first cycle in 2011. The coming together of stakeholders such as heads of ITE provision, school management bodies, headteachers and parents’ associations to consult, lobby and debate the criteria resulted in some modifications to the final criteria published in 2020. Thus, Lofthouse and Baird’s contentions were true in our experience, albeit within a very different political and cultural climate to England now.

To conclude, we view the arguments presented by the contributors to this book as a cautionary tale. While our response has focused on how the construction of a ‘disaster’ or ‘crisis’ was used to introduce particularly authoritarian ITE reforms on a questionable pretext, the points raised in the book cause us to look on in trepidation as our nearest neighbour drives forward ITE reforms where the various stakeholders, including teacher educators, are so disempowered and excluded from the process; indeed, they are entirely subject to it. In a global context where education reform is now a continuous process, and Ireland struggles to balance economic prosperity while safeguarding the well-being of the nation, the points raised in this book highlight the importance of Irish teacher educators uniting and, crucially, working with other stakeholders to ensure their collective

research-led expertise informs future ITE reforms. Irish teacher educators need to make both their expertise and contribution visible at the same time as learning from new engagements with different communities, inside and outside the university system, speaking more in public about issues that matter. As higher education-based teacher educators, we must continue to foreground the argument that education alone cannot provide the solution to all of society's ills but that our expertise and willingness to listen is critically important to the success of the whole of Ireland's education system. We alone cannot 'solve' issues of social change but our expertise is part of a national infrastructure that needs to be strengthened and not diminished.

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# A ‘trained’ or ‘educated’ teacher workforce in a polycrisis? A view from Australia

*Martin Mills*

The reflections presented in this short chapter have been influenced by my three years of working in England at the UCL Institute of Education (IOE) as the Director of the Centre for Teachers and Teaching Research at the time of the significant reforms (2018–2020) examined in this book. I came to the position with a long history of involvement in teacher education in Australia. Over a twenty-year period I had lectured in teacher education courses, been a Director of Teacher Education and had been Head of School at The University of Queensland (UQ). At the time of my appointment to the IOE, UQ had recently completed its teacher education accreditation process following a number of significant reforms in Australia (see Alexander & Bourke, 2021). And while these reforms are clearly burdensome on universities and represent a threat to the autonomy of teacher education academics, they do not have the same level of danger as those being implemented in England. Not yet anyway (see Mayer & Mills, 2021 for a comparison of ITE policies in England and Australia). It is for this reason, as Ellis and Childs indicate in the

very first sentence of this book, why ‘teacher education in England is worthy of close examination by international researchers’.

As the contributors to this volume indicate (see, for example, those by Rowe) the intrusion of the state into teacher education has been significant and since 2019 has reached unparalleled levels. Teacher education policies representing this intrusion build on the *Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy* (DfE, 2019a) and consist of the *Early Career Framework* (DfE, 2019b), the *Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework (CCF)* (DfE, 2019c) and the *ITT Market Review*. This set of policies prescribes what and how initial teacher education is to be delivered and who is to be accredited to deliver it. The disturbing consequences of this intrusion are well covered in this book (see also, Hordern & Brooks, 2023). Not the least of these is the decision by some universities to depart the initial teacher education space and in some cases to have the accreditation of their programmes removed (see Baird this volume). What was a manufactured crisis about the quality of initial teacher education in universities (see Spendlove this volume) has fast become a real crisis about the quality of education that future teachers will receive in England.

To my mind, there is not just this education crisis in England. There is a polycrisis: a situation where several seemingly unrelated crises are occurring at once and where attempting to address one may have adverse effects on another. Current education crises in England include, but are certainly not limited to, a shortage of qualified teachers to work in its schools; student outcomes from schooling shaped by location, income levels, race and ethnic backgrounds, with similar factors affecting young people’s experiences of schooling, including school exclusions (exclusions from schooling occur at a significantly higher rate than other UK jurisdictions – see McCluskey et al., 2019); teachers from marginalized backgrounds experiencing racism in their workplaces; and, the focus of this book, the crisis caused by the degree of intervention by government into teacher education. I will try and pull some of the threads of these disparate education crises together in the conclusion to show how they are implicated in the current teacher education crisis.

One of the things that most struck me on my arrival in England was the pervasiveness of the terms ‘teacher training’ and ‘trainee teacher’, terms used not only by government, but also by some colleagues in the field. While Australian governments seem to be

aware that 'teacher education' is preferred over the common usage of 'teacher training' and 'pre-service teacher' over 'trainee teacher', this is certainly not the case in England. Terminology is important. 'Teacher training' discourses underpin attempts to ensure that teachers are 'classroom ready', to steal a phrase from a relatively recent and highly influential Australian report on teacher education (TEMAG, 2014), when they take up their first teaching position. It is a teacher training discourse that shapes this notion of classroom readiness, where 'classroom ready' implies newly graduated teachers being prepared with the skills to be able to control their classes and have command over the disciplines that they are teaching. This discourse is evident in the *ITT CCF* (DfE, 2019c), which has 'been designed to support trainee development in five core areas – behaviour management, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and professional behaviours' (DfE, 2019c, p. 4). As such, the focus in teacher education reforms shaped by a training discourse through the CCF is on behaviour management, writing lesson plans, constructing assessment tasks and guaranteeing teachers' subject disciplinary knowledge (not educational disciplinary knowledge – see Furlong, 2013). And professional behaviours relate to a form of professionalism that can best be described as organizational or managerial (Evetts, 2013; Sachs, 2016). I will return to this.

I was also struck by how difficult it was to make sense of the pathways into becoming a teacher in England. When the DfE *Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy – 2019* indicated that it would simplify the process for becoming a teacher it had a point. However, as with many of the DfE responses to various education crises, the solutions were grounded in approaches that treat education as a 'market' and undermine rich considerations of education and what it means to be an educator. There are so many pathways to becoming a teacher in addition to those offered by universities, and it all feels a little ad hoc: School Direct, Teach First, Now Teach, School-centred initial teacher training (SCITTs) (see Thomas, Rauschenberger & Crawford-Garrett, 2020 for an examination of the Teach For All organization). That teacher education, and more appropriately teacher training in this instance, can be conducted solely by schools without any significant engagement with a university is still foreign to those working in schools in Australia. Three-year degrees allowing teachers to work in primary schools is equally strange, and the one-year postgraduate certificate in education in Australia has long been

replaced by a two-year postgraduate Master's of teaching (although the teacher shortage crisis has promoted a rethink of this). These non-university-based pathways are shaped through teacher training discourses that work on the assumption that teachers need to be trained rather than educated.

'Teacher education' discourses, in contrast, imply a much broader understanding of what it means to be a professional teacher. Within such a discourse, teachers are constructed as intellectual workers who make considered decisions on the basis of diverse disciplinary knowledges developed out of a rich history of research combined with their own knowledge and understanding of pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, related policy frameworks and their own classroom contexts. As such they will, for instance, have the requisite tools with which to ensure their classrooms are places of high intellectual engagement, at the same time as having a critical eye on whose knowledges are present and whose silenced within the formal curriculum, and being aware that student outcomes are not solely a matter of effort but also symptomatic of pervasive social injustices.

Teacher education also encourages pre-service teachers to consider what it means to be a member of what Judyth Sachs (2016) refers to as a mature profession. For Sachs a mature teaching profession is one that is valued, respected and trusted, and where teachers 'are creative designers of curriculum and innovative pedagogues' (p. 422). She goes on to argue that there are two important dimensions to this view of teacher professionalism. The first is a research literate teacher profession where teachers are both critical consumers and producers of research (see also BERA/RSA, 2014). The second dimension, she argues, is the creation of trust between stakeholders that enables teachers 'to take risks in shifting boundaries that can act as impediments to change' (p. 422). Both of these dimensions of being a professional are undermined but training discourses.

Furthermore, I would contend that a mature profession takes responsibility for ensuring that its members are supported, and injustices are addressed. Whilst schools are important sites of learning, they are also workplaces. Within such workplaces there are many injustices that impact upon teachers from marginalized backgrounds. While in England, I was involved in a project examining the schooling experiences of teachers from Black and

minority ethnic backgrounds (see Tereshchenko, Mills & Bradbury, 2020). Many of these teachers were experiencing racism, covert and overt, daily and were considering leaving the profession. Where in current approaches to 'teacher training' do 'trainee teachers' consider the school as a workplace and how to address and challenge discriminatory practices? This requires more complex thinking and professional judgements that will be shaped by context and broader understandings of what it means to be part of a teaching profession.

While I clearly have a vested interest in this assertion, teacher education as a mature profession belongs in universities. The education of future teachers cannot be farmed out to organizations that seek to train teachers to meekly follow a set of prescribed standards. While appropriately constructed standards – and as the chapters in this book indicate, the ones in England are far from such – can provide a framework to shape professional decision making, they can also lead 'to a teaching profession who are timid in their judgements, whose skills are reduced and whose perception in the community is that of technical worker' (p. 417). If, however, as both Sachs (2016) and the BERA/RSA (2014) report argue, teachers need to be research active as knowledge creators as well as knowledge consumers, then those research capabilities are best developed within a university environment. Such an environment is not one that aligns with training discourses.

The 'Carter review of initial teacher training' (*ITT*) (Carter, 2015) in a footnote noted:

[M]any refer to initial teacher training (ITT) as initial teacher education (ITE). We have chosen in this report to refer to ITT as this was the term used in our Terms of Reference.

(p. 16)

While seemingly passed off as a trite matter of nomenclature, the willingness to unquestionably accept this terminology reflects the ways in which all of the subsequent recent reforms have worked to undermine English universities' approaches to educating teachers. Earlier in this article I suggested that there is a polycrisis in education. The crisis being created by government intervention in ITE, one that is working to construct teaching as a technical endeavour, will work to exacerbate many of the other education crises in the education system in England.

Addressing the diverse inequities in the education system will require teachers who have a grounding in educational sociology. Individual children cannot be supported without knowledge of educational psychology. Understanding the purposes of differing approaches to pedagogy and assessment, and the differences between the formal and enacted curriculum will enable teachers to address the diverse needs of the students in their classes. Being an informed professional who can contribute to public debates about policy will require some grasp of educational policy and history of education (e.g. what are the implications of current calls by members of the Conservative Party to expand the number of grammar schools?). The teacher shortage crisis will not be addressed by a de-professionalizing process which constructs teachers as technicians rather than intellectuals. Currently in Australia, the teacher shortage is turning heads towards approaches that can prepare teachers quicker, that can allow more internships so that pre-service teachers can plug some of the gaps in the workforce and enable alternative providers of teacher education to train teachers whilst also being employed in schools. The experience of England has to serve as warning to Australia, as elsewhere, of how *not* to proceed down this teacher training route.

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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# After the crisis: Towards teacher development 3.0

*Viv Ellis*

An occasional response to books like this one, that examine a policy problem from a critical perspective, runs along these lines: ‘So what would *you* do, then? What’s *your* solution to this problem?’ Such responses are based on two false premises: first, that analyses and critiques of policy are somehow illegitimate unless they offer an ‘answer’ to the particular construction of the problem that the policymakers have made; and second, more fundamentally, that critics should accept the precise construction of the problem that the policymakers have made to start with.

The purpose of this book has been to bring the state’s authoritarian interventions into ITE in England to wider attention, nationally and internationally, among teachers as well as researchers. It has aimed to examine the policies and policy trajectories from multiple critical perspectives and to situate what has been going on in England in context – historically, internationally, as well as in terms of broader social policies in England. This purpose is legitimate and conventional. There is no obligation on us, or authors of other critical policy analysis texts, to accept the premises of those who wish to shut down critical discussion of the policies and initiatives they support.

That said, most of the contributors to this volume have been active in the ITE and teacher development space for many years, engaged in research and innovations in teaching, and active in the public sphere making what amount to alternative proposals – or at least, offering a radically different, evidence-based programme (e.g. Rachel Lofthouse through the Centre for Coaching, Mentoring and Professional Education, CollectivEd – <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/research/collectived/>). Some of the authors contributing to this book were part of another collective known as Teacher Education Exchange, established in 2016, initially through the Teacher Education Advancement Network (TEAN) in England, under the leadership of Dr Alison Jackson, and then independently. As a collective, Teacher Education Exchange consisted of Viv Ellis, Kenny Frederick, Simon Gibbons, Ruth Heilbronn, Meg Maguire, Ali Messer, David Spendlove and Keith Turvey and, in 2017, we published a pamphlet entitled *Teacher Development 3.0: How We Can Transform the Professional Education of Teachers* (Teacher Education Exchange, 2017). During the life of Teacher Education Exchange, the pamphlet garnered about 3000 ‘reads’ on ResearchGate and members of the collective spoke at meetings around England, raising awareness of the research and evidence underpinning our alternative design principles for teachers’ professional learning.

In this final chapter, I want to summarize what our arguments and proposals were in *Teacher Development 3.0* and direct interested readers to its availability online where it can be freely downloaded at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318277094\\_Teacher\\_Development\\_30\\_How\\_we\\_can\\_transform\\_the\\_professional\\_education\\_of\\_teachers.](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318277094_Teacher_Development_30_How_we_can_transform_the_professional_education_of_teachers.)). In my overview summary here, I will refer readers to the pamphlet where the principles are substantiated through extensive references to research and evidence. First, however, I will address two key points that extend beyond educational principles into the economic, political and cultural conditions required for the formation and implementation of good ITE policies. They are critically important points to make, re-focusing our analysis and agenda for change on the broader environment for education policymaking.

## Towards good ITE policies

To make good policies for ITE and continuing teacher development requires more than just having a sound basis in the best research and evidence. It would be naïve to assume that good policies can emerge from malign political and cultural conditions (e.g. characterized by populism or authoritarianism). Hence the importance of making the following two points:

### ***1 Improving teaching quality will not solve the structural economic problems in societies***

It might seem strange to have to state this explicitly but the elision of measures of the health of the economy and improvements in teaching quality have become so embedded in social policy discourses in England (and elsewhere) they have become normalized, and alternatives rendered silent. Challenges to this elision and the assumptions that flow from it have little traction in a political and cultural context in England where economic redistributive measures have been curtailed and thirteen years of Conservative governments have followed their instincts to cut taxes for the richest members of society – and enact austerity measures that disproportionately affect the poorest – using the argument that the benefits to the rich will ‘trickle down’ to everyone else. According to this argument, to promote ‘social mobility’ (a highly problematic concept given that making people mobile, often out of their communities, is not likely to contribute to the health – economic and otherwise – of those communities), you need merely to improve teaching quality and school leadership so that more young people can be appropriately credentialed, making them more competitive in the (national) job market.

The claims of ‘trickle-down economics’ have been thoroughly debunked, most recently in a major piece of research by Hope & Limberg (2022) (see also Piketty, 2014; Elliott, 2015). Based on their analysis of fifty years of economic data across eighteen different countries, Hope and Limberg concluded that ‘major tax cuts for the rich push up income inequality, but do not boost economic performance’ (p. 555). Tax cuts for the rich have had no

effect on either unemployment or economic growth, according to their longitudinal analysis. The International Monetary Fund also concluded in 2015 that paying the 20 per cent poorest in societies more (i.e. increasing their incomes through a variety of means) was more likely to stimulate economic growth, directly in the communities that need it, than tax cuts for the rich (Elliott, 2015). So the first point I want to emphasize is that we reject the claim that improving teaching quality will significantly address the substantial structural economic problems facing post-Brexit England. Different *economic* policies will do that and policymakers' attention should turn to that arena if they are serious about addressing the underlying problem they have identified. It is of course vitally important to improve the quality of teaching as it is the most significant in-school variable for good outcomes for students. And ITE has an extremely important role to play in improving the quality of teaching. But policies directed at improving teaching quality in schools are not a substitute for good economic and fiscal policies.

## ***2 Strengthen public institutions, enhance their responsibilities and promote deliberative democracy***

Since 2010, the increasingly authoritarian English state has had an increasing problem with experts and expertise. During the height of his support for the Brexit campaign in 2016, former English Education Secretary Michael Gove memorably announced 'people in this country have had enough of experts' (Mance, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the disastrous consequences of such a populist attitude, further exposed when a tranche of WhatsApp messages sent by former Health Secretary Matt Hancock were leaked by a journalist in 2023. Referring to Sir Jeremy Farrar (then the Director of the Wellcome Trust, the largest medical charity in the UK) and his public criticism of the state's abolition of Public Health England, the lead public health body, in August 2020, Hancock wrote:

We need a Jeremy Farrar handling strategy. He is totally offside, a complete loudmouth, has little respect amongst serious scientists.

Did he approach us before doing Ridge? He needs to be either inside the tent and onside, or outside and commentating. He adds no value internally' [Matt Hancock WhatsApp message, 20 April 2020; cited by The Lockdown Files team, 2023]

Farrar went on to become the Chief Scientist of the World Health Organization. Public Health England was abolished, its functions largely taken over by 'a new organisation run by Mr Hancock's friend, Baroness Harding' (The Lockdown Files team, 2023).

The Hancock WhatsApp messages give a crucial insight into how key departments of state in England have been working – albeit heightened by the pandemic conditions. First, there has been a deep distrust of people with expertise who disagreed with policies. This led to the kind of denigration of character seen in the message quoted above (and seen in briefings to the media) about Sir Jeremy Farrar and the dismissal of the person's expertise without recourse to evidence. 'Experts' were only acceptable when they agreed with government policies or stayed silent if they didn't. That's not a neutral attitude towards dissent but a hostile one, and one betraying a significant lack of confidence and competence among political leaders. Second, the state has often decided to do its work on the basis of relations that can be described as cronyism, surrounding itself with a compliant and loyal coterie, who can be rewarded with 'V.I.P lanes' for procuring personal protective equipment (Transparency International U.K., 2022) or, indeed, awarded contracts for teacher development initiatives (Ellis, Steadman & Mansell, 2021). This is the context in which 'expertise' was sought for the ITE policies that are the focus of this book.

Although in and of itself, this 'problem' with experts is worrying, particularly as it reflects on the character of the Conservative political class in England, the underlying issue is bigger and even more serious and arises out of both the political culture that has been encouraged by Conservative politicians and their abolition of key public bodies, organizations and agencies that maintained oversight of specific policies, their formation and implementation, that were accountable to parliament. As discussed in Chapter 1, the education state in England has been transformed so that it is now essentially the Department for Education that directs (or micromanages) the majority of policy initiatives in-house, supported by a compliant

and substantially less independent schools' inspectorate, Ofsted (Mansell, 2022).

Good policies (including those for ITE) will be supported by conditions within which public bodies have been strengthened, their independence and capacity for oversight fiercely protected not weakened or destroyed. Good policies are also more likely to be created under conditions where democracy is, to use a phrase promoted by the Royal Society of Arts, 'more than a vote' (Patel, 2017). There are two dimensions to this argument – an institutional one in which representative bodies, non-governmental agencies, civic institutions, and, yes, universities are valued for their expertise and insights and *held to account* for their responsibilities; and an individual one in which people have a much greater stake in public decision-making by being closer to the spaces and people where the decisions are made. These kinds of conditions require a degree of maturity and confidence on the part of political leaders that hasn't been observed in England for some time; a maturity and confidence that involves being able to listen to, learn from *and* challenge experts and expertise in an environment where politicians feel a broader, societal level of accountability rather than just relying on the barometer of the ballot box once every five years (the general election cycle in England). Sometimes the English like to think that they are above questions about their democratic system, the integrity of public policy processes and the risks of cronyism. The OECD has reminded its member states that these questions are relevant to all:

[P]reventing undue influence and striving for greater integrity in public-decision making must be a top priority. This includes implementing basic standards around integrity, conflict of interest and lobbying, and upgrading frameworks to safeguard the public interest in the increasingly complex landscape of lobbying and influential actors and practices.

(OECD, 2022, np)

So, in addition to not being afraid of experts, the broader conditions for good ITE policies (as well as other social policies, as Kerr & Hanley, this volume, showed) must aspire to a more open and 'deliberative' or 'agonistic' processes (Lederman, 2014) of governing in a democracy. The object is neither the endorsement of a particular political leader's preconceived ideas nor the pursuit of an illusory consensus that seeks to contain all perspectives equally but rather

the airing of differences and contradictions for wider deliberation (see also Parkinson & Manbridge, 2017) among a wider range of stakeholders. It needs to be emphasized that this is not a fanciful and unattainable ideal; the reforms to Norwegian upper primary and lower secondary ITE from 2017 onwards showed several of the characteristics of such an approach (APTE, 2020).

Having briefly made these two important points about what are effectively pre-conditions for good policy, I now offer a brief overview of how an alternative agenda for change might be developed and informed, following the crisis that is currently unfolding. For a fuller discussion and references to the relevant research, please see the freely available *Teacher Development 3.0* (Teacher Education Exchange, 2017).

## Teacher Development 3.0

In *Teacher Development 3.0: How We Can Transform the Professional Education of Teachers*, we argued that the ways in which we prepare, support and develop the teaching profession needed to change. We did not seek to defend universities but nor did we join in with the attacks from those in the reformist camp who wanted to see universities ‘exit the market’ for ITE. Our purpose in writing the pamphlet was to stimulate debate about innovation in the university contribution to what we believe should be a profession-led agenda for teacher development. To distinguish our position from reformers who proposed a narrowly instrumental ‘Teacher Quality 2.0’, we proposed instead ‘Teacher Development 3.0’ around a set of *four design principles*.

### ***The four design principles and four guiding questions for Teacher Development 3.0***

In terms of implications for ITE policies, these design principles propose a shift in the way we think about teaching as a profession as well as the relationships between schools and teachers and the communities, parents and children they serve. We are interested in more than structures; design principles speak to values too and these values underpin the specifics of the policies that flow from them.

## Design principles

- 1 **Plan for a *long-life teaching profession*** – We argued that it was time to ditch the burnout mindset that has so often accompanied ‘urgent’ reforms to teaching and teacher education – the kind of mindset that praises overwork, unsustainable work patterns, ‘relentless’ pace, and that implicitly (if not sometimes explicitly) scorns a view of teaching as a professional job that can be managed within reasonable time expectations. Unreasonable expectations and a manic culture of unsustainable work in many schools in England creates immediate challenges to teacher retention but also longer-term challenges about capacity within the system overall (see Spendlove, this volume). England has the youngest teaching workforce across the OECD (OECD, 2023) and given that we know that teachers can improve their practice over time and deepen their expertise, and share it with others, it is vital that we start to promote teaching as a long-term public service career option rather than a short-term, unsustainable, manic ‘mission’. Planning for teaching to be a ‘long-life’ profession first means making schools safe spaces for *teachers* to learn. Second, it would involve creating new career pathways for experienced teachers to act as consultants and professional developers while remaining active teaching in classrooms themselves. And thirdly, and more fundamentally in terms of culture, it would involve developing policies that regard teaching as a professional career, one in which the individual teacher has both responsibilities to the students they teach, their families and society more broadly, but the *right* to be provided with rich and self-directed opportunities for further training and professional development, opportunities in which they become the generators of new knowledge and contribute to the evidence base rather than the evidence base (such as it is) just being presented to them (see Turvey and Lofthouse, this volume). This radically different approach to early career professional development should be a key concern for all policies on teacher retention whilst also having major implications for how new teachers are prepared during their

ITE programmes. Simply telling new teachers – as well as more experienced teachers – that this (CCF, ECF) is all that the state has decided they need to know will not lead either to a workforce committed to further development of their practice or an adequate number of teachers in the workforce to begin with.

**2** *Put schools and teachers at the heart of their communities*

– Schools in England have been encouraged to see themselves as apart from the communities their students come from. Different kinds of language, modes of dress, patterns of social interaction can be enforced by schools in sometimes explicit attempts to distance the student from their own social and cultural background (see Cushing, this volume). Instead, we argued that schools need to recognize, acknowledge and work with the social, cultural and intellectual resources within their wider communities in order to build the trust that is essential for a genuine profession of teaching and to ensure the provision of a richer more holistic education. This means ensuring that teachers' professional development (pre- and in-service) takes seriously the need to support and extend community links that will benefit everyone. Finally, it means ensuring that student teachers are exposed to the benefits of seeing schools at the centre of their local communities – not as an add-on but as partners in making education effective for everyone. For some, this design principle may appear to be just 'warm and fuzzy' words about young people's home backgrounds or even a relativist argument against 'real' knowledge. Rather, as a principle for the design of a public education system, it puts knowledge and the curriculum at the centre of the relationship between schools and the societies they serve.

**3** *See education as cultural and societal development* – We argued that we need to take a longer term view about what we mean by a 'good education'. Teachers need to be prepared and continually supported to educate the kinds of people we will need in the twenty-first century rather than the nineteenth, as sometimes appears in England. Equally, rather than seeing schools simply as places where

individuals can receive credentials, teachers need to be prepared to provide education much more broadly as a public good and one of the key ways in which we can change societies for the better. From this perspective, teachers are then regarded as significant figures in the development of cultures and societies, not only as deliverers of lessons (now sometimes already scripted) and managers of ‘behaviour’. We could start by deciding the aims of education and ask which human qualities and capabilities we wish to nurture and what kind of society we hope for. How we then prepare a teaching profession to realize these aims becomes the shared challenge.

- 4 **Provide a continuum of professional learning** – In rejecting one-time, front-loaded approaches to ITE, our argument may at first sight appear to align with the English government’s aspiration to a ‘golden thread’ of teacher development, running from initial to early career to advanced professional qualifications. Our proposal in *Teacher Development 3.0* was profoundly different in at least two respects, however. First, what teachers learn and how they learn it needs to be more expansive, nuanced, up-to-date and relevant than the repetitive drilling of the same out-of-date ideas dressed up as ‘cog sci’ that characterize the content of the CCF and ECF, as Rowe (this volume) explained. We argued that the continuum that needs to be planned – extending the initial preparation into the early career and beyond – had to be on the basis that ongoing coaching and mentoring was ‘profession-led’ but also that the progressively expanded new curriculum content was more explicitly deliberated by the profession and also more accountable in terms of young peoples’, their families’ and their communities’ priorities and interests. We argued that universities needed to be more imaginative about how they contributed to this ‘long, thin’ teacher development alongside school-based profession leaders themselves. We saw this extended partnership between universities and the profession as crucial to helping to build capacity within the profession to know its own knowledge base, contribute to it – and critique it. In other words, a radically different

‘continuum’ to that required by the CCF and ECF (see Ellis, 2022 for results of our representative survey of teachers in England and their views of the ECF).

Rather than short-circuiting what Pauline Lipman called an important ‘non-reformist’ reform process (Lipman, 2011), and so rather than coming up with our own list of content or competencies, in *Teacher Development 3.0*, our initial focus was on the design principles above, seeking to plan for what we referred to as ‘architectural change’ – that is, change at a cultural as well as the system-structural level. We also posed four guiding questions, arising out of the design principles, to inform the subsequent levels of planning.

## Guiding questions

### I. Curriculum: What (and whose) powerful knowledge for changing times?

One view of school knowledge is that it is fixed and that what is therefore needed is to ensure that it is as widely available to the population as possible. The risk with this approach is that we risk teaching to an imagined past without looking around us to see how the world and its knowledge have changed. This is an argument for taking what we teach in schools seriously and helping to develop people’s capacities to evaluate what we know critically and to develop new knowledge. Preparing teachers as *curriculum-makers* rather than deliverers is a critically important part of ITE under *Teacher Development 3.0*.

### II. Twenty-first-century assessment: How do we reconnect to our expertise and go beyond levels and grades?

The kinds of knowledge about assessment and the skills of assessing learning that teachers need in order to teach really well go way beyond the technical details of awarding levels or grades or making summative judgements of any kind. Extending and challenging young people’s learning before, during and after the moment of classroom interaction requires greater expertise than is expected by

the English reforms and is critical to developing excellent teaching. There is a proud tradition of work on assessment of this kind in England and we need to re-connect with it. Regarding assessment as serving the needs of learners and learning and not only responding to accountability demands will be an important principle for preparing teachers under Teacher Development 3.0.

**III. What do we mean by ‘subject knowledge’ and what is its relative importance in learning to teach?**

Although we tend to talk a lot about ‘subject knowledge’ and its importance in learning to teach, we usually refer to proxies such as prior qualifications or ‘audit’ tick lists. Research tends not to support simple associations between academic qualifications and teaching excellence across all subjects. Instead, we need to work out what we mean by *professionally useful knowledge* and how this can be developed in practice. The research evidence confirms that people without first class degrees and PhDs can (and do) become excellent teachers. We need to know how this happens so we can plan for it at scale rather than pinning our hopes only on an academic elite that the state wishes to attract into teaching. Regarding the development of *professionally useful knowledge* among beginning teachers is a key principle for planning ITE *at scale* under Teacher Development 3.0.

**IV. Beyond ‘behaviour management’: How to prepare teachers who understand that school ethos and climate really matter?**

Ethos is vital to the success of a school and is recognized as such by students, parents and teachers. It includes creating safe, orderly, respectful workplaces but goes way beyond the application of a few ‘behaviour management’ techniques. Building relationships within an organization of any kind is critical to that organization’s success but even more so with schools as institutions that compel young people’s attendance and participation. Preparing teachers and school leaders to build outward-looking, respectful and humble organizations that become excellent through dialogue with students, parents/carers and the community we identified as a core task for any organization aspiring to non-reformist, Teacher Development 3.0 changes we were proposing.

## Conclusion

In *Teacher Development 3.0*, we argued that it was time for universities to be genuinely innovative in the ways they designed their ITE programmes; that it was time for universities to work with the profession *as universities* and for university-based teacher educators to play to their distinctive academic and research-based expertise. By 2017, English universities had already shown themselves to be particularly adaptable in responding to wave after wave of sometimes chaotic and destructive reforms. Indeed, sometimes universities had shown themselves to be nimbly opportunistic in jumping on any new policies created by the encroachment of marketization and privatization in the higher education sector. But we argued this agility had been driven by a compliance mindset rather than an innovation one.

In the pamphlet, we said that university-led teacher education had done what it had been asked to do and done it well. But we didn't think it had shown enough imagination in designing new programmes that could meet the challenges we presented in *Teacher Development 3.0*, challenges both specifically educational and societal. We argued for 'architectural change in teacher education'. We said it was time to rethink the professional education of teachers at a very fundamental level.

But not like this. Not like the post-2019 ideological vandalism imposed on universities, schools, teachers and teacher educators in England. Not in ways that destroy critically important parts of the educational infrastructure that have allowed the system to operate at both quality and scale. So, we return to what was the purpose of this book – to bring what has gone on to wider national and international attention; to examine the most radical, destructive policies in the history of ITE in England and to offer critical responses from multiple perspectives.

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