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## **Recent developments in teacher training and their consequences for the ‘University Project’ in education**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper discusses one of Furlong’s major areas of work, the theory and practice of teacher education. Taking up where our joint publication Teacher Education in Transition: Re-Forming Professionalism? (Open University Press 2000) left off, it examines how accelerated moves towards school based teacher education, as well as increased school autonomy, are impacting upon notions of teacher professionalism and professional formation in England. It looks at how in this context a ‘core’ professionalism mandated by central government through its teaching standards is being supplemented or even replaced by a series of ‘local’ professionalisms and the ‘branded’ professionalisms of Teach First and Academy chains. The paper then considers the implications of these developments for the future of Education as a subject of study in universities and, in particular, for the vision set out in Furlong’s recent book Education: an anatomy of the discipline (Routledge 2013a).*

**Key words:** Universities; Teacher Education; Autonomous Schools; Academies; Professionalism; Branding; Educational Studies

### **Introduction**

This paper discusses the role of higher education in the education of teachers in England and the nature of educational studies in British universities. These inter-connected issues are ones that both John Furlong and I have grappled with throughout our parallel and sometimes intersecting careers. Not surprisingly, given our common background in the sociology of education, both of us bring a sociological perspective to our understanding of the challenges we have faced as teacher educators in universities and this is reflected in this article.

### **Modes of Teacher Education**

John Furlong and I first worked together on the Modes of Teacher Education (or MOTE) project, which was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, and which

culminated in a book entitled *Teacher Education in Transition: re-forming professionalism?* (Furlong et al, 2000). One of the first outputs of that project in 1992 was entitled *Initial Teacher Education in England and Wales: A Topography* (Barrett et al, 1992) and I begin this paper with a brief update of that topography, as much has changed in teacher education in the past twenty years. Our topography predated devolution and what follows relates to England rather than England and Wales and describes the landscape of English teacher education in the years leading up to the election of the Coalition government under David Cameron in 2010.

At that time, there were three main routes into teaching in England, all of which led to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS):

Partnerships led by higher education institutions (HEIs)

These provided both undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. The former included three- and four-year BEd and BA courses. The number of undergraduate trainees had decreased from 9,770 in 1998-99 to 7,620 in 2007-08. So most trainees, around 27,000 a year, now followed one year postgraduate courses, called the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at Masters-level or the Professional Certificate in Education (PgCE) below Masters-level.

School-centred initial teacher training schemes (SCITTs)

These were consortia of schools that offered training towards the PGCE. They accounted for around 5% of trainees per year. With SCITTs, the consortium itself arranged the training and channeled the funding for placements, as compared with

HEI-led partnerships, where the university arranged placements and channeled the funding to schools. Nevertheless, universities validated the SCITTs' PGCEs.

#### Employment-based routes (EBITTs)

These involved 'on-the-job' training and fell into three groups: the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP), Overseas Trained Teacher Programme (OTTP) and TeachFirst. They all led to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and some, including TeachFirst, also led to a PGCE, an identical qualification to the other routes.

In total, in 2009-10, there were 234 providers offering routes into teaching, including 75 HEI-led partnerships, 59 SCITTs and 100 EBITTs. However, some of these providers had a very small number of trainees. HEIs were responsible for the vast majority of trainees: in 2009-10, for example, they trained 78.7% of the recruits to teacher training programmes, compared with 16.7% in EBITTs and 5.6% in SCITTs.

With regard to the quality of the training provided at that time, Ofsted judged that 90% of provision was good or better. Between 2008 and 2011, during Christine Gilbert's regime as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI), 49% of HEI-led partnerships, 36% of SCITTs and 18% of EBITTs were rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted, so the evidence at that time suggested that HEI-led partnerships provided higher quality training than school-led partnerships and employment-based routes (HMCI, 2011). Although Smithers & Robinson (2011) rightly pointed out that, of the top ten providers during the same period, four were SCITTs, four were university-led partnerships, and two were EBITTs, large differences in scale and cost meant that HEI-led partnerships still trained the vast majority of students on these highly-rated programmes and did so most cost effectively.

Whether or not it was true to claim that British society or the English *school* system was broken, it is hard to argue on this evidence that the teacher training system was broken when the Coalition government came to power. Quality was not manifestly poor, despite what we were often led to believe by certain politicians and popular newspapers. On the contrary, it had only recently been claimed, on basis of the sort of evidence presented above, that England had some of the best qualified and best trained teachers ever (House of Commons, 2010).

### **Coalition reforms**

However, there were those who argued, not unreasonably, that standards were still not good enough compared to the country's leading competitors internationally. In this vein, the incoming Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, and the new Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw, decided that things needed to change. The latter also expressed some doubts about the rigour of previous Ofsted inspections of initial teacher education and, following consultation on a new framework for teacher training inspection, significantly raised the threshold for courses to be awarded an 'Outstanding'. Those with less than a 'Good' grade were put on notice to make rapid improvements or lose accreditation.

Meanwhile, more substantial changes in the topography of initial teacher education were also afoot. The Coalition Government's White Paper 2010 on *The Importance of Teaching* encouraged more school-led initial teacher training in England, including the creation of around 500 Teaching Schools, schools rated by Ofsted as outstanding in teaching and learning that could potentially take over leadership of teacher training from the universities. The extent to which, the scale on which and the speed at which this was likely to happen

remained unclear but there was no doubt that this was the direction of travel favoured by the government and that some Conservative Ministers would have liked – and would still like - to see more than half of new teachers to be trained under school-led routes before the end of the present parliament.

The main vehicle for realising this change has been School Direct, a scheme which involves training places being allocated to schools who then cash places in with a university or other accredited ITT provider to deliver a training package for a teacher whom the school subsequently intends to employ. When the policy was first announced, it was restricted to under 500 places and was designed to meet teacher supply needs that were not being met through existing mechanisms. Subsequently, it has been reinvented as the main vehicle for putting schools in the lead in teacher training and making HEIs more responsive to the needs of schools. Its share of postgraduate trainee numbers was increased to 7,000 in 2013-14 and over 15,000 in 2014-15. Even though in allocations of teacher training numbers for 2014-15 HEI-led partnerships still have a majority of places, some individual HEIs have lost virtually all their core numbers and many will be dependent on gaining School Direct contracts for survival.

Nevertheless, Ministers also said that universities should remain involved in all routes, if only through accrediting the qualifications they award. In addition, they proposed setting up a small number of University Training Schools with three core functions of teaching children, training teachers and undertaking research. These seem to have been directly inspired by the Finnish model, but they, like the Finnish system as a whole, are arguably out of step with the main thrust of British government policy which is to put schools rather than universities firmly in the lead.

However, in 2012, the House of Commons select committee for Education came out more strongly in favour of a continuing role for universities in teacher education partnerships and argued that ‘a diminution of universities’ [current] role in teacher training could bring considerable demerits’ - and they specifically cautioned against it. Furthermore, they argued that training should ‘include theoretical and research elements [as well as significant school experience]...as in the best systems internationally and [indeed] much [current] provision here’ (p 32).

The government had never provided a formal response to the previous committee’s report on teacher education in 2010 and that may have been one of the reasons why the new committee chose to return to the subject in 2012. But select committees have limited influence; much more significant is the stance of the government itself and its agencies. Until recently, the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), successor to the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) first established in 1994, was the ‘national agency and recognised sector body responsible for the training and development of the school workforce’, including teachers. From April 2012, the functions of the TDA and some of those of the simultaneously abolished General Teaching Council for England, were taken back into the Government Department for Education in a newly formed Executive Agency called the Teaching Agency. Then, in April 2013, the Teaching Agency was merged with the National College for School Leadership to form a new super agency within the Department for Education called the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

While many took these developments to demonstrate that the government was taking more direct control over teacher training, the truth was, of course, that governments of various

political hues have controlled teacher training quite tightly for many years, albeit through ‘arms lengths’ bodies. Trusting teachers, let alone teacher educators, has not been at the heart of British Government policy since the 1988 Education Reform Act, but recently there has been more rhetoric from both Labour and Coalition governments about handing power back to the professionals - or at least to schools and their head teachers. This is all consistent with the combination of state control and market forces that has dominated English school policies in recent years (Whitty, 1989; Whitty et al, 1998). As I shall indicate in what follows, there have been parallel developments in relation to teacher training.

### **Making sense of changes in teacher training policy**

In a somewhat schematic characterisation of the recent history of English schooling (Barber, 2005), Michael Barber, former professor of education, government advisor, McKinsey Partner and now special advisor to the Chief Executive of Pearson, described the period prior to 1979 as one of ‘uninformed professionalism’ in which unbridled teacher autonomy reigned. This, he argued, was replaced under Margaret Thatcher’s government by ‘uninformed prescription’ or dubious practice imposed from above.

If I think about my own experience of teacher education from the early 1970s to the turn of the century, governments certainly moved away from trusting the teacher trainers to providing increasingly detailed central prescription. As far as I can remember, when I took up my first job as a teacher educator at the University of Bath in 1973, I was left entirely to my own devices in deciding what I should teach my students on the Postgraduate Certificate in Education course. Although we had an Area Training Organisation and associate tutors in schools, the course content was entirely determined by university staff and we were definitely in the lead.



The first significant change came after 1984 with the establishment of CATE – the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education – which assessed all courses of teacher training against nationally defined requirements and all higher education institutions engaged in teacher education for the schools sector were inspected by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate against those requirements (DES, 1984). Over the years those requirements became increasingly detailed and expressed as competences and then standards that had to be met by all students awarded Qualified Teacher Status. From 1992 onwards, all university-led courses had to be run in formal partnerships with schools and a number of new routes to Qualified Teacher Status were introduced, including some led by schools rather than universities. It was also around this time that Ofsted and the then Teacher Training Agency, were created. Since then the percentage of teachers trained on alternative routes has increased from about 2% in 1997 to 20% in 2009, while trainees on all routes including HEI-led partnerships became school-based for the majority of the time.

Barber (2005) claimed that, in the period after 1997, Tony Blair’s New Labour government, to whom he was the chief advisor on school standards and effectiveness, heralded an era of ‘informed prescription’. In teacher education his claim was that research on what works informed the TDA’s teaching standards and Ofsted inspection criteria as well as the National Strategies for literacy and numeracy, which had improved the system as a whole. However, he implied that, as a result of the re-education of teachers (and teacher trainers) through these national policies, the government would soon be able to relax central controls and rely instead on the ‘informed professionalism’ of teachers. This rhetoric was evident in the final years of New Labour and even more strongly in the pronouncements of the Coalition government.

Yet it is not quite as simple as Barber's typology suggests. In fact, as implied earlier, we can see in teacher training policy yet another example of the neo-liberal combination of the strong state and the free market. In the latest teaching standards, and the new Ofsted inspection criteria, we now have a somewhat narrower prescribed core requirement than before, but even greater prescription and policing of its detail in relation to specifics like the teaching of reading by phonics and the management of pupil behaviour. This constitutes the official 'national' professionalism, as I have put it.

But true to the marketising approach to the reform of the school system, there will now be more autonomy beyond that prescribed core, as autonomous schools are encouraged to take on more responsibilities for teacher training. Back in 2000, I had predicted that we would see the emergence of a variety of 'local' professionalisms associated with individual schools or consortia of schools:

To some degree, schools and teachers appear to have been 'empowered' to develop their own 'local' professionalisms. On the other hand, centrally specified competences and standards mean that local professional freedom is actually quite tightly constrained by the demands of the 'evaluative state'.

(Whitty, 2000)

In practice, in the years immediately following that claim, it was the constraints of the evaluative state that came to dominate under the Blair government. In this connection, Furlong (2008) has argued that, while there were some positive aspects of Blair's legacy for teachers, they were also 'much more managed than in the past', suggesting that powerful mechanisms had been put in place to ensure that teachers, in their day-to-day practice, would

‘conform to the centrally prescribed policy agendas and strategies, whether or not they agreed with them’ (pp. 736-7). Yet Furlong also pointed out that some of the world’s leading education systems were now adopting less constrained versions of teacher professionalism, for example Singapore’s adoption of a more open form of teacher professionalism in its ‘thinking schools’, thus raising some doubts in his mind about whether the highly regulated New Labour approach was entirely appropriate for a 21st-century profession.

As I suggested earlier, there has since been some easing of direct central control at least at the margins even in the English context, so the prospect of more ‘local professionalisms’ is again on the agenda despite the backtracking during the Blair years. However, it is far from clear how or in what sense these ‘local professionalisms’ will be *informed* professionalisms to use Barber’s term. If, as the present government sometimes implies, professional wisdom lies exclusively in schools, university generated research on teaching and learning may not be regarded as having a significant contribution to make to the professional formation of teachers.

Meanwhile, there has been an additional development. This is what I have termed ‘branded’ professionalisms, drawing upon a literature that explores how knowledge intensive firms like Deloitte use their brand as a platform for a common identity and consistent expectations (Elliott, 2008). In education, autonomous schools, or Academies in the English case, are increasingly being linked into chains, like the ARK and Harris Academy Chains, which are hoping also to take on more responsibilities for teacher training either by becoming accredited providers themselves or by franchising other providers, including universities, to train the particular sorts of teachers they want. So we may soon have distinctive ARK teachers or Harris teachers, alongside an existing example of ‘branded professionalism’ in the

case of Teach First teachers. In some ways, the concept may even be a throwback in that we have had Froebel teachers in the past, and even perhaps Oxford internship teacher with recognisable characteristics, but few if any other universities have yet succeeded in branding their teachers in this way.

Although there is no reason why leading universities could not be among the new ‘branded professionalisms’, it is noteworthy that in the USA, one of the strongest examples of branded professionalism is the Relay Graduate School of Education, a collaboration by three Charter Management Organizations (the equivalent of English academy chains), which explicitly positions itself as a response to ‘a nationwide failure by most university-based teacher education programs to prepare teachers for the realities of the 21st century classroom’ (Relay GSE publicity, 2013).

### **Future scenarios**

So where might all this be leading? David Bell, former Permanent Secretary at the DfE, has offered his own reflections on the English school reforms of recent decades. He suggested that we were probably moving towards a ‘system of many small systems’ in English education:

‘Messiness’ in terms of structures will be a natural by-product of radical structural reform as we move from a standardised national system to a system of many small systems. I don’t have a single, solution to offer, nor do I necessarily think there should be one, as the end-point of these school reforms hasn’t been reached yet.

(Bell, 2012)

He was thinking here of small systems of schools in particular, with Academy Chains, a few effective local authorities and federations of schools led by Teaching Schools or successful individual school leaders. Interestingly, his use of the term ‘messiness’ resonates with Stephen Ball’s characterisation of post-modern educational systems (Ball, 2011). He did not specifically refer to teacher education but it will be clear from my analysis above that teacher education may itself be moving towards a system of small systems of the sort Bell envisages.

However, there is an even more extreme scenario, which might be the eventual endpoint of the developments described by Bell. The Coalition government decided that its new Free Schools would not have to employ qualified teachers and could instead employ whoever head teachers regard as most suitable. It has subsequently made a similar change for Academies, which now constitute a majority of all secondary schools in England and an increasing number of primary schools. Thus, the officially prescribed training requirement discussed above will apply to a diminishing number of schools in future, as will the National Curriculum. There is also to be a significant deregulation of training requirements in the FE sector. So this could be just the start of a deregulation of teacher education, effectively ending even the core national professionalism associated with the pre-service award of QTS, and leaving teacher supply and teacher quality to market forces.

Meanwhile, a requirement on the Secretary of State to plan the teaching workforce has been quietly removed from the statute book and the head of the newly merged Training Agency and National College suggested at the 2013 North of England Conference that such planning should be left to localities:

In the future I would like to see local areas deciding on the numbers of teachers they will need each year rather than a fairly arbitrary figure passed down from the Department for Education. I have asked my officials...to work with schools, academy chains and local authorities to help them to devise their own local teacher supply model. I don't think Whitehall should be deciding that nationally we need 843 geography teachers, when a more accurate figure can be worked out locally.

(Taylor, 2103)

In that case, of course, there would effectively be no overall system of small systems – just schools and families of schools, an echo of Mrs Thatcher's alleged comment that there was no such thing as society, just individual men and women and families (Thatcher, 1987).

It is probably not a coincidence then that this is the very scenario favoured in the 1980s and early 1990s by New Right pamphleteers of both neo-liberal and neo-conservative varieties. As I said at the time in my inaugural lecture at Goldsmiths College in May 1991:

The neo-conservatives regard most of the existing curriculum of teacher training as dispensable, so in their ideal world the prescribed curriculum would only be a good dose of 'proper subject knowledge'. The neo-liberals would allow schools to go into the market and recruit whomever they wanted, but would expect them in practice to favour pure graduates...over those who have 'suffered' from teacher training...

There is general agreement amongst both groups that, say, two or three years of subject study in a conventional vein is sufficient academic preparation for would-be teachers and any training necessary can be done on an apprenticeship basis in schools...

(Whitty, 1991, p.5)

I also suggested that one of the reasons why some members of the New Right could believe, at one and the same time, in permitting the entry into teaching of people with little or no training, while imposing increasingly stringent criteria upon the content of established routes into teacher training, lay in its belief that there were ‘enemies within’. At one level this was a general argument about producer interests, but it was also a more specific attack on the alleged ideological bias of teacher educators. Indeed, a recurring theme in the pamphlets of the New Right pressure groups at that time was the need to rid the system of the liberal or left educational establishment, which was seen to have been behind the ‘progressive collapse’ of the English educational system and which ‘prey to ideology and self-interest, is no longer in touch with the public’. It was therefore ‘time to set aside...the professional educators and the majority of organised teacher unions...[who] are primarily responsible for the present state of Britain’s schools’ (Hillgate Group, 1987, cited in Whitty, 1991, p6).

Twenty years later, of course, the attack has come not from New Right think tanks but from a government minister, Michael Gove, who seems to have learned the script. Indeed, he employed similar rhetoric to those earlier pamphleteers in an extraordinary attack in the *Daily Mail* on so-called Marxist teachers and teacher educators, including Furlong as it happens, who he characterised as ‘the enemies of promise’ (Gove, 2013a). Other contemporary commentators on the right have gone even further. Again echoing earlier claims from the New Right pamphleteers that aspects of teacher education courses can be ‘harmful’ (Dawson, 1981) or ‘undermining’ (Lawlor, 1990), Charles Moore recently asked in the *Spectator*:

Why not introduce a rule which states that no one with a formal teaching qualification is allowed to teach in any school unless he or she can prove compensatory qualifications from other fields? These could include having worked for at least two years in a private-sector job, or served in the armed forces or possessing an honours

degree from a Russell Group university. After quite a short time, no one would want to apply for formal teaching qualifications any more and the whole system which has guaranteed mediocrity and worse in the state system for 50 years would fall apart.

(Moore, 2013)

In that same inaugural lecture back in 1991, I drew attention to some flaws in the New Right argument even from their own position, pointing out that, if their critique of teacher training was right, schools surely needed to be purged of teachers who had ‘suffered’ from teacher training before they could themselves be entrusted with teacher training. Furthermore, I pointed to the practical problems of handing all initial teacher training over to the schools, arguing that such a shift would involve significant changes in the structure of the teaching profession and the culture of schooling at a time when schools were already having difficulty coping with existing educational reforms.

Although some might argue that these considerations still apply today, a lot has changed in teacher education in the last twenty years. Many of the more legitimate criticisms of university led teacher training have already been addressed through constructive engagement between government, universities and schools. I argued in 1991 that higher education institutions should actively embrace school-based training and partnership working, and most have subsequently welcomed multiple training routes and worked ever more closely with schools. And inconvenient a truth as it may be, some university departments of education were involved right from the start in the development of Teach First, one of the teacher training routes consistently praised by government ministers including Michael Gove.



Yet current policies are being rolled out in a manner that risks losing from the system some of the best HEI practice that has developed in recent years. Cuts in secondary ITT numbers have already impacted on many HEIs and most institutions are likely to face cuts in core numbers in the future as a result of the new and more demanding Ofsted inspection framework and the increasing emphasis on school-led training routes. The biggest impact is likely to come from the rapid roll-out of School Direct. Even if overall numbers allocated to HEIs by one means or another are retained, the volatility of funding from year to year and between different subjects and universities could be quite considerable. The implementation of School Direct has also been problematic - as was clear from a report in the *Times Educational Supplement* (Maddern, 2013).

Many of the official pronouncements about it have misrepresented the nature and quality of existing HEI-school partnerships. For example, the first inspection results under a new inspection framework for teacher training were described in an Ofsted press release as evidence of the superiority of school-led routes and it was issued in the same week as an announcement of a tranche of new Teaching Schools. In its original form, later amended on the website (Ofsted, 2103), the Ofsted press release included spurious interpretations of limited data and at least one factual error and omitted to mention anything that reflected well on HEIs or badly on school-led teacher training schemes.

A report in *The Times* at that time suggested that HMCI Sir Michael Wilshaw saw a connection between the allegedly inferior teacher training inspection results from HEIs and the letter from 100 education academics attacking the government's National Curriculum (Hurst, 2013). Regardless of the strength of their arguments, many of the signatories to that letter were retired and very few were involved in the design or delivery of initial teacher

training, so could hardly be held responsible for the quality of current teacher training programmes. Whether or not Ofsted's own stance was politically motivated, as implied by the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET, 2013), there is much to suggest that the government's policy on teacher education is ideologically driven rather than informed by evidence about the quality of training in different routes, despite the government's avowed commitment to evidence-informed policy (Goldacre, 2013).

Nevertheless, it seems to me unlikely that extreme deregulation will prevail, particularly if current Ministers move on. My own expectation is that the future of teacher education in England will fall closer to that implied in a question that Graham Stuart, Conservative Chair of the Education Select Committee, put to a witness who appeared before his Committee in 2011. He asked:

might we not see a concentration of fewer, higher-quality, more assured HEIs? Aren't there rather a lot at the moment, and some of them are pretty dubious on economics, viability and other issues? May we not see a consolidation at one level of HEIs, while spreading the engagement of schools? That is the Government vision, isn't it?

(House of Commons Education Committee, 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2011)

Certainly, the chances of initial teacher education being maintained in all current higher education institutions are remote. Some will leave the scene as result of judgements about their quality or the impact of competition but this is unlikely to be the only consequence of current policies. It is also likely that some research-intensive universities will decide, as one witness hinted at that same Select Committee hearing, that the new arrangements for university involvement in ITE may prove just too onerous to justify remaining in that area of work. The transaction and opportunity costs entailed may put at risk other elements of their work, including high quality research. The University of Bath is the first research-led

university with an Outstanding Ofsted grade for its teacher training provision to announce its withdrawal and has been closely followed by the Open University. Warwick University has separated its teacher training work from other aspects of educational studies. Other universities are monitoring the situation carefully, particularly in the light of major reductions in core teacher training numbers for those courses not rated by Ofsted as Outstanding.

### **Prospects for the study of Education in English Universities**

At a conference in January 2013, I predicted that, as a result of the developments discussed here, some English higher education institutions would abandon teacher education, some would embrace School Direct with enthusiasm, private ‘for profit’ providers as well as Academy chains would enter the field and compete nationally, some education research and education studies degrees would move to social science departments, some key ‘full service’ Education departments would remain in Universities and new institutional, regional, national and international partnerships would develop (Whitty, 2013). Most of these things are now happening, including the entry of Hibernia College Dublin into the online teacher training market in England.

A year earlier, a working group that I chaired, set up to consider the implications of changes in teacher training policy for the research mission of university schools of education, had suggested that ‘education departments in all universities need to consider urgently what future they envisage for themselves’ (BERA-UCET Working Group on Education Research, 2012). This has now become urgent as, if we will soon have more education departments that are not centrally engaged in initial teacher education or even in teacher education at all, there is a need for a debate about the nature and purpose of education departments and perhaps a rethinking of their relationship to other university departments. This might enable them to move on from their work always being centrally driven by changing government policies on

initial teacher education, and allow them to ask some more fundamental questions about their mission.

In this connection, Furlong has recently performed a great service with his book *Education: an anatomy of the discipline*, sub-titled *Rescuing the university project* (Furlong, 2013a). It brings together a whole host of information about the history of education as a discipline of study in the UK. Those early parts of the book chart the history of teacher education and educational research in the different parts of the UK and provide us with an ‘anatomy’ or topography of our field as we find it today. Not surprisingly in view of what I have written earlier, concerns about current nature of university involvement in initial teacher education and about the state of educational research, and what the future might hold, figure prominently in Furlong’s analysis.

His work occupies similar, though not identical, territory to David Labaree’s *The Trouble with Ed Schools* in the USA. The summary on the cover of Labaree’s book runs as follows:

‘The American Ed School...gets very little respect. [Other] Professors portray it as an intellectual wasteland, teachers decry its programs as impractical and its research as irrelevant, and policy makers castigate it as the root cause of bad teaching and inadequate learning’

(Labaree 2004, cover notes)

As we have seen, not dissimilar perceptions lie behind official policies towards university-based teacher education in England, but they also feature in Furlong’s own analysis of the tensions and contradictions within UK schools of education. This is not surprising given the

similarity of the mission of schools of education in Britain and the USA, where such departments have been the main contexts for the practice of what Furlong characterises as the professionally oriented 'discipline' of Education.

However, a big difference between his analysis and Labaree's lies in Furlong's positive commitment to the concept not only of education as a professionally oriented discipline but also, despite recent challenges, a belief that even in England (and more certainly elsewhere in the UK) 'the future contribution of our universities to teaching and research in education will be a positive one' (p.200). By contrast, Labaree seemed himself ambivalent, even pessimistic, about the possibilities for the American schools of education he was writing about.

Furlong feels that university-based educationists have too often failed to make their case to their detractors and stakeholders, but he thinks they can and will be able to do that if only they can develop and articulate a common purpose. Education as a field of study 'urgently needs to find a voice', he says. It needs to set out a vision for itself; it needs to state what its distinctive purpose or purposes should be within a university in the modern world (p.19), and what makes it important that it should be in a university - even while recognising that his own preferred concept of the university as committed to the maximisation of reason is itself under threat. As a result, he argues for a re-tooling of teacher education, knowledge mobilisation and educational research. His core message is that 'those studying Education ... need the opportunity to engage with evidence, to challenge underlying assumptions, to debate ends as well as means'. That, he says, is what the university-based study of Education offers to 'the teachers and lecturers who will educate our next generation' (Furlong, 2013b).

The English situation is particularly challenging for Furlong's vision in the light of the developments discussed earlier in this article. There are still those who would like to take teacher education out of the university and who do not really value the sort of educational research that goes on in universities. Indeed Secretary of State Gove has himself claimed only recently that:

In the past, the education debate has been dominated by education academics - which is why so much of the research and evidence on how children actually learn has been so poor. Now, thankfully, teachers are taking control of their profession's intellectual life, taking the lead in pioneering educational research and creating a living evidence base...

(Gove, 2103b)

I suspect that Furlong's own vision of what schools of education could be is more likely to be realised if there are fewer of them in the future, as predicted in the question put by Graham Stuart and quoted earlier. So Furlong's vision of schools of education of the future firmly located within a research-led university context committed to the pursuit of reason but working closely with schools as partners may well happen in some universities. This is likely to include Furlong's own university, not least because Gove has given it a favourable mention in a speech that was otherwise largely critical of university education departments:

The best higher education institutions welcome our changes because they know that discriminating schools will increasingly choose partners in HE who deliver the best quality training and development. Many have in fact been working hand in glove with schools for many years, and School Direct is just an extension of what they already do. Oxford University, for example, has collaborated with local secondary

schools on an internship programme called Oxford City Learning for many years now, and School Direct places have simply been incorporated within that successful scheme.

(Gove, 2013b)

Gove also suggested that such approaches involve giving aspiring teachers ‘the opportunity to work in a great school from day one, just like student medics in hospitals - learning from more experienced colleagues and immediately putting their new skills into practice’. Not only does this significantly misrepresent the nature of medical training, it also ignores the extent to which programmes such as Oxford’s entail not just ‘clinical practice’, but ‘research informed clinical practice’. The distinctive nature of the latter approach has been central to an inquiry chaired by Furlong on behalf of the British Educational Research Association and the Royal Society of Arts (BERA, 2013).

However, what struck me in reading Furlong’s own book (Furlong, 2013a) is that perhaps not all schools of education *should* aspire to one model. Even for those universities that remain in teacher education, there are potentially now more possibilities than in recent years.

Whether we ascribe the diversification of training routes to neo-liberal ideology or the postmodern condition, institutions could actually find the new landscape to their advantage. For years teacher educators have complained about increasing standardisation constraining innovation and creativity with unintelligent accountability system replacing trust in professional judgement. The present government says the intention of its reforms is to enhance professionalism, so why not see whether the new found freedoms can be used to further alternative educational projects?

Furlong's book reminded me just how short was the period, essentially only the mid-1960s to the early 1980s, when schools of education could be characterised as academic and irrelevant in the way that their critics are prone to and it was arguably the extension of that one model throughout the land that contributed to its being discredited. Similarly the narrowly utilitarian turn to the practical that replaced it after 1985 has been so damaging partly because it has been imposed on virtually every department, certainly in England.

Furlong quite rightly mines history for another model. However, he underestimates the possibilities for finding other models elsewhere. The very different approaches to the study of education found in France and Germany and other parts of continental Europe hardly figure in our own debates in England (Schriewer and Keiner, 1992). Furlong does mention the French and German models in passing but ultimately joins those who look to Finland, Singapore and Shanghai for his own preferred way forward. I would hope that out of the situation he describes, we will get something like the model he advocates emerging in some universities but also the (re)emergence as well of some other models that have hitherto been suppressed.

Despite its centrality in recent English debates, even the close connection between teacher preparation and educational studies is not historically or geographically universal. Indeed, in some countries, and even in a few universities in the UK, educational studies is not directly linked to teacher training at all. So just as different brands of teacher professionalism are now emerging, we may have a future with diverse brands of education studies in universities. Furlong and I are currently undertaking a small research project, supported by the British Academy, to examine how the field of educational studies is constituted in other jurisdictions with a view



to placing a wider range of possibilities on to the agenda for English universities.

We hope to report on that in future publications.

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