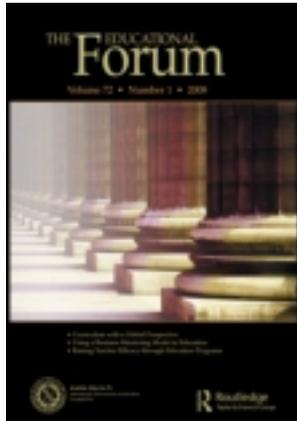


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Globalisation, Neoliberalism, and the Reform of Teacher Education in England

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Globalisation, Neoliberalism, and the Reform of Teacher Education in England

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Abstract

Over the last 30 years, teacher education has become a major area of government policy in many countries around the world. One of the key factors driving this change has been the growing significance of globalisation, “imagined” by most countries as necessitating the pursuit of neoliberal policies. But neoliberalism itself is not static; interpretations vary between different countries and change over time as a result of political processes. This article takes the case of England, focusing in particular on ways in which neoliberal teacher education policies changed and developed during the new Labour administration (from 1997–2010) and are changing again under the present Coalition government. Both administrations have been fundamentally committed to the pursuit of neoliberal policies, but their interpretations of neoliberalism have varied significantly; as a result, their policies on teacher education are also very different. Despite the very real material changes brought about by globalisation, the article concludes by emphasising the significance of national politics in the development of teacher educational policy.

Key words: *England, globalisation, teacher education policy.*

Examining teacher education through social and ideological lenses means identifying the larger social structures and purposes within which it is embedded, as well as unpacking the cultural ideas, ideals, values, and beliefs to which it is attached. ... Thus teaching and teacher education are inherently and unavoidably political.

—Cochran-Smith (2005, p. 3)

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Something dramatic has happened to teacher education policy in the last 30 years. Up until the 1980s, in virtually every country around the world, teacher education was a relative backwater in terms of educational policy. How teachers were selected, prepared, and further developed during their careers was hardly something that attracted much interest beyond teacher educators in universities or teachers themselves. As long as the supply of teachers with basic qualifications was adequate to fill classrooms, then governments, ministers, and political commentators showed little interest in knowing much about the topic.

Today, as one international report after another makes clear (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD], 2005), teachers are now seen as *the* key resource in ensuring the global competitiveness of each nation state's education service. How teachers are selected, trained, and developed as professionals are now essential concerns for every national educational system that wants "to come out on top" (Barber & Mourshed, 2007).

Underlying these changes is the fact that over the last 30 or so years, education as a whole has become increasingly bound up in the processes of globalisation. In a world of intense competition among nations, education increasingly plays a key role. National prosperity, social justice, and social cohesion are all seen to rest on the shoulders of education (Lauder, Brown, Dillabough, & Halsey, 2007). And the competitive success of each nation's education service now can be measured in precise terms by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results (OECD, 2010). It is because the teaching profession is now seen as the key element of global competitive success that teacher educational policy itself has become increasingly influenced by the processes of globalisation. But what exactly is globalisation, and in what specific ways has it come to affect teacher education?

The starting point of this article is the recognition that whatever the underlying material changes of globalisation, as a process, it is almost universally "imagined" as necessitating neoliberal policies. Neoliberal policies shape many nation states' aspirations for reform in education systems generally, and in teacher education in particular. However, such an observation does not in itself fully explain the differences that are observed among different countries in relation to teacher education policy (Furlong, Cochran-Smith, & Brennan, 2009), nor does it help to explain changes over time as new administrations develop different ideologically driven visions of precisely what neoliberalism might entail in implementation.

Although teacher education has been "centre stage" in England for over 30 years, this article takes a look at a shorter time frame. While briefly sketching the legacy of the Margaret Thatcher/John Major years (1979–1997), it focuses mainly on changes over the last 15 years, comparing the policies of both the new Labour administrations of 1997–2010 and the current Coalition administration. In so doing, it aims to explore changing interpretations over time as to what neoliberalism actually is. It also shows how national policies have had to change and develop as successive governments have struggled to realise their particular interpretations of neoliberalism. As Cochran-Smith says, teaching and teacher education are "inherently and unavoidably political" (2005, p. 3).

Globalisation and Neoliberalism

To understand a nation's policies on teacher education, examining globalisation through the lens of neoliberalism is helpful. The work of Rizvi and Lingard (2010) provides some insight into how these two themes work together in education. Globalisation, as Rizvi and Lingard admitted, is a highly contested notion. Drawing on the work of Held and McGrew (2005), they suggested that at least three different interpretations of globalisation are identifiable within public discourse. There are *globalists*, such as Giddens (1990), who argued that globalisation emerged as the result of changed material realities. New technologies and new patterns of communication have helped to reconfigure time and space; as a result, new patterns of social interaction have emerged, producing a significant reconfiguration of the organising principles of social life and the world order.

At the other extreme are the *skeptics*: those who argue that the term globalisation is largely ideological and, as such, has limited explanatory value. Hirst and Thompson (1996) suggested that the impact of globalisation has been largely exaggerated, and there is nothing new about global changes that have occurred since the end of the 19th century.

Between these two extremes are *transformationalists*, such as Rizvi and Lingard. They argued that globalisation does indeed have a material reality. Drawing on the seminal work of Harvey (1989), they suggested that in the age of globalisation, time and space have become compressed through better communication, virtual contact, cheaper travel, and digitisation. They also described how capitalism has taken advantage of these possibilities, stretching the reach of markets and bringing the whole globe into its sphere of influence. However, Rizvi and Lingard also argued that there is nothing inevitable about the ways in which the material changes underpinning globalisation impact the economy, politics, and culture. Their impact, they suggested, varies considerably as a result of history, ideology, and a range of other political and structural processes.

In trying to understand the impact of globalisation, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggested that public discourse about globalisation is often both descriptive and normative at the same time. As well as describing the material changes that underpin globalisation processes, public discourse frequently invokes the "necessity" of neoliberalism. Initially associated with Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, over the last 30 years neoliberalism has been adopted by political parties of the centre, the traditional left, and also the right; as Noam Chomsky (1999) has argued, it has become the defining political and economic paradigm of our time. In this way, globalisation and neoliberalism have grown intimately entwined.

These ideas, Rizvi and Lingard argued, are now common sense when thinking about globalisation. Drawing on the work of the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, they argued that neoliberalism has become the "social imaginary" of globalisation:

A social imaginary is a way of thinking shared in a society by ordinary people, the common understandings that make every day practices possible, giving them sense and legitimacy. It is largely implicit, embedded in ideas and practices, carrying within it deeper normative notions and images constitutive of a society. (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 34)

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It was Rizvi and Lingard's distinctive position that globalisation is, for governments and for international agencies, as well as for ordinary people, "imagined" as entailing neoliberalism; as such, it becomes part of the general population's common sense: it becomes a necessity. Promoted by governments and international agencies such as the World Bank and the OECD that insist there is no alternative, promoted by the global media, and promoted by the flow of people and ideas from business schools and think tanks, Rizvi and Lingard argued that these accounts are presented in a language that demands the implicit consent of national governments and ordinary people alike. In these ways, "The neoliberal social imaginary of globalisation is designed to forge a shared implicit understanding of the problems to which policies are presented as solutions" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 36).

But importantly, this is not to argue that neoliberalism has had the same effect in different countries and in different historical periods. In examining contemporary policy in teacher education across the United Kingdom (Menter, Brisard, & Smith, 2006), there is ample evidence that different countries within the United Kingdom, let alone internationally, have interpreted neoliberalism in different ways. Ideas about neoliberalism itself also have changed over time. In its first formulation in the Thatcher and Reagan eras, known as the Washington Consensus (Dale, 1999), neoliberalism had a number of key themes: the rule of the market; the need to cut state expenditure on services such as education, except where it could be justified in economic terms; consumer choice in public services; and deregulation and privatisation, with the role of the state reduced to managing the awarding of relevant contracts and ensuring that no single monopoly provider gains too much power in the market. Later interpretations are exemplified in England by new Labour's Third Way policies and in the United States by the Clinton administration; those ideas involved a variation on the initial principles in that there was a continuing and ever-growing role for the central state in supporting markets, particularly in key social policy areas such as education and health. Today in England, these principles are being refashioned yet further by the current Coalition government.

On the surface, the three consecutive new Labour administrations and the current Coalition that have pursued reform policies have much in common. They have all deliberately challenged the role of universities in teacher education, pursuing instead what Hoyle (1982), with considerable prescience, described back in 1982 as "the turn to the practical."

They have also justified the need for reform in relation to a common problem—how to raise achievement for all in order to meet the challenges of globalisation. But as we will see, the ways in which new Labour and the current Coalition have gone about that task have been very different. Both administrations can be seen to have "imagined" a necessary response to globalisation in neoliberal terms. That too is something they have in common. But, as this article will show, their interpretation of what neoliberalism is has been somewhat different. They have therefore "imagined" very different things for the teaching profession; this in turn has had major consequences for the policies on teacher education they have pursued.

New Labour, Neoliberalism, and the Search for a “New Professionalism”

New Labour came to power in Britain in 1997 and remained for more than 12 years—first under Tony Blair as Prime Minister and then under Gordon Brown. Its distinctive political ideology was the so-called “Third Way.” In its early years in office, there was considerable debate as to whether or not Third Way policies represented a continuation or even an extension of what Margaret Thatcher’s previous Conservative administrations had begun (Mahony & Hextall, 2000; Power & Whitty, 1999). The reason for that debate, I would suggest, is because both continuity and change were taking place. A new vision existed, or at the very least a new rhetoric. However, to a significant degree, that new vision was assembled by building on much that Margaret Thatcher had achieved. As Newman (2001) stated at the time, “The Third Way attempted to forge a new political settlement by drawing selectively on fragments and components of the old, and reconfiguring these through the prisms of a modernised economy, a modern public service and modern people” (p. 46). Modernisation, as Newman (2001) stressed, became the core concept for new Labour; it was seen as essential because of the massive changes overtaking society. He wrote: “Modernisation is situated in a number of structural forces—globalisation, competition, and meritocracy—that are collapsed into a single unifying theme. Globalisation occupies a special place at the core of these series of narratives that construct an imperative to change” (p. 48).

Sociologist Anthony Giddens (2000), who was profoundly influential in the thinking behind the new Labour project, made a similar point when he stated that the primary purpose of Third Way politics was to restructure social democratic doctrines “to respond to the twin revolutions of globalisation and the knowledge economy” (p. 162). And in that modernisation project, education had been seen as of crucial significance and remained so throughout the whole new Labour period. It was a national campaign spoken about on many occasions with passion and commitment.

But why was educational reform so important for new Labour? As Tony Blair said in his introduction to the green paper *The Learning Age*, “Education is the best economic policy we have” (Department for Education and Employment [DfEE], 1998a). In other words, education under new Labour moved from being simply a social policy to being social and economic at the same time.

Because education was so important for new Labour, like the rest of the public sector, it had to be modernised to meet the needs of the modern state. But how was that modernisation to be achieved? New Labour’s approach to public service reform had many points of continuity with the previous Conservative regimes, including a continued focus on market mechanisms and the forms of new managerialism associated with them. The neoliberal critique of the public sector was accepted as largely correct, and there was a new realism about the necessity of markets; in the words of Giddens (2000), “There is no known alternative to the market economy any longer” (p. 164). Labour, therefore, retained an emphasis on competition as a lever both for ensuring greater efficiency and quality in the delivery of services and as a means of securing innovation. It also continued with the forms of new managerialism developed under the Conservatives that were seen as necessary

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for the maintenance of such markets, though new managerialism was now presented as an entirely natural, rational, and commonsense response to inevitable forces beyond the control of any individual state (Hughes, 2003; Newman, 2001). As a consequence, new Labour reinforced many of the core principles of previous Conservative government neoliberal reforms in education. Where it differed, however, was its view that taken alone, markets would not achieve all that was needed. Again, as Giddens stated, “Modernising social democrats are not believers in *laissez-faire*. There has to be a newly defined role for an *active state*, which must continue to pursue social programmes” (Giddens, 2000, p. 7, emphasis added).

This notion of a market-based approach to the management of the public sector, combined with strong government intervention, characterised much of the new Labour project. As Robertson (2007) noted, the new direction in policy was not a rejection of the broad trajectory of neoliberal economic policy, but rather its deepening and widening. Robertson quoted Joseph Stiglitz (2002), chief economist at the World Bank at the time, who emphasised that society now had broader objectives than merely the economic—they included better living standards, better health, sustainable development, more equitable development, and better education. In this new post-Washington Consensus, all of these different areas of social policy were important; all of them needed to be brought into the sphere of neoliberal policy reform.

Modernising Education and the Teaching Profession

If Labour’s plans for the modernisation of education were to be achieved, then the teaching profession and teacher education were going to be of key importance. Teachers themselves had to sign up to the government’s national objectives; they too had to be modernised. As Tony Blair (DfEE, 1998b) said:

I have always said that education is this government’s top priority. The teaching profession is critical to our mission. ... this Green Paper sets out the government’s proposals to improve the teaching profession.... [It represents] the most fundamental reform of the teaching profession since state education began. (p. 5)

Throughout the new Labour period, the aspiration to reform the teaching profession was a remarkably consistent one. The aim, set out originally in a green paper (DfEE, 1998b) just one year after new Labour came to office, was to change the rules of what teacher professionalism actually meant in order to harness that professionalism closely to the government’s own educational reform agenda.

For a government bent on fundamental, centrally driven educational reforms, there were a number of problems with the teaching profession, the most pressing of which was teachers’ perceived lack of accountability. Even before he came into government, Tony Blair was explicitly invoking an earlier Labour Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan (in Blair [1996]), to argue the need for teachers to be far more accountable to their schools, their parents, and communities, and, above all, the government. And if that meant challenging traditional notions of individual professional autonomy, then so be it.

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From the very start, therefore, new Labour was confident that what was needed was a new professionalism relevant to the 21st century. That was the bold vision announced in the original green paper of 1998, and that vision remained remarkably consistent throughout the new Labour administration. Significantly, this new professionalism challenged the notion of individual autonomy among teachers. As the green paper put it, “The time has long gone when isolated, unaccountable professionals made curriculum and pedagogical decisions alone without reference to the outside world” (DfEE, 1998b, para. 13). Instead, the green paper argued that modern teachers needed to accept accountability; take personal and collective responsibility for improving their skills and subject knowledge; seek to base decisions on evidence of what works in schools in this country and internationally; work in partnership with other staff in schools; and welcome the contribution that parents, business, and others outside schools can make to its success.

Being professional, from this point of view, was not therefore something that could be achieved by the individual teacher; it was not based on the traditional vision of a professional—someone with *individual* knowledge, *individual* autonomy, and *individual* moral responsibility (Hoyle & John, 1995). Instead, teachers needed to accept a more externally managed vision of their own professional expertise.

In reality, the aims of the green paper took more than a dozen years to achieve, and the policy went through a number of different phases, each with different implications for the form and content of teacher education.

Seeking the New Professionalism—Phase One

As I have documented elsewhere (Furlong, 2005; Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting, & Whitty, 2000), the story of teacher education reform began in England under the previous Conservative administrations of Margaret Thatcher and John Major. Their governments opened up teacher education to the market, insisting that student teachers spend more and more time in schools rather than on their university campuses. Their governments also put in place a joint funding and regulatory body—the Training and Development Agency for Schools ([TDA] 2007; formerly known as the Teacher Training Agency [TTA]) and the national inspectorate, Ofsted.

Through the joint operation of these two agencies, along with regular inspections and competitive league tables linked to differential funding opportunities, the Conservatives developed a system of initial teacher education that was highly centralized and responsive to policy change. Market sensitive, financially dependent universities showed themselves to be only too keen to respond to the changing demands of these national agencies. By the end of the 1990s, the government, and particularly the TDA, had largely achieved its goals of building a common system with common standards and procedures among universities offering initial teacher education. As an incoming government, new Labour was well-placed to be able to build on the achievements.

In terms of governance, the instincts of these earlier Conservative administrations and that of Labour were similar. Throughout its period in office, new Labour insisted on the maintenance of a competitive market in teacher education; as a result, it continued

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to encourage competition with universities, the main providers. Schemes run by schools themselves (e.g., School Centred Initial Teacher Training [SCITT]) were strongly encouraged, despite their consistently low ratings by Ofsted, and new routes into teaching were developed with the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP), an employment-based route, theoretically for older entrants; TeachFirst, another employment-based route for new graduates wishing to experience teaching for a year or two; and the flexible Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE), a teacher education programme that could be taken on a flexible part-time basis. Inspection and the publication of results also remained core parts of the management strategy. Following Giddens's first line of argument that there is no alternative to markets, a highly competitive market was maintained as the first and unchallengeable principle of management of the sector. However, by the end of the 1990s, when a command economy had been achieved, Giddens's second principle—direct intervention by an active state—became possible; in this context, that meant defining the content of teacher education itself.

Until 1996, the content of teacher education had been only broadly prescribed. During the mid-1990s, in particular, the most important influence was the market, to which students were increasingly exposed. In sharp contrast, policies in the late 1990s sought to exploit the new control of the system to begin specifying the content of professional education in much more detail. Two strategies evolved. The first was the issuing of a new circular, Circular 10/97 (DfEE, 1997), which transformed the previously specified competencies into more elaborate standards. The second was the development of an 85-page National Curriculum for initial teacher education, specifying in great detail the content that had to be covered by trainee teachers in English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology.

The English curriculum was especially controversial, with its insistence on whole-class teaching and the detailed coverage of the teaching of reading through phonics. But because courses were subject to high-stakes inspection by Ofsted, universities had little choice but to follow this new, externally defined curriculum. In the core areas that the National Curriculum covered, it was now the government that had a key say in what new teachers learned in their courses about how to teach, as well as what to teach.

Seeking the New Professionalism—Phase Two

In reality, the National Curriculum for initial teacher education, with its controversial specification of how to teach core subjects, was short-lived. After five years in office, the Labour government issued new documentation (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2002) that abandoned the National Curriculum, perhaps recognising that if the new professionalism was to be achieved, then more direct strategies of intervention across the teaching force as a whole were needed. This, I would suggest, was an important turning point, marking the beginning of a move away from seeing initial teacher education on its own as the main strategy for challenging teacher autonomy. This, in turn, had major implications for universities and their approaches to teaching professional education courses.

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Instead of focusing on initial teacher education, and in an attempt to ensure that *all* schools improved year after year, the government developed what it called its “high challenge, high support” strategy (DfEE, 2001). First, the government set ambitious targets:

Our education system will never be world class unless virtually all children learn to read, write and calculate to high standards before they leave primary school. We have therefore given top priority to a national strategy to achieve this goal, setting ambitious national targets for 2002: that in English 80 per cent and in mathematics 75 per cent of 11 year olds should meet the standards set for their age. These targets are staging posts on the way to even higher levels of performance. (para. 1.15–16)

The government devised a series of prescriptive strategies that involved intervening in the detailed processes of how to teach, not just for teachers in training, but for all teachers. In a move that also saw a major reassessment of the importance of educational research (Blunkett, 2000), these new prescriptive strategies were to be based on research evidence.

In new Labour’s first term in office, these interventions focused on the development of the Primary Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (DfES, 2006). In what was an unprecedented and highly controversial move, through these strategies, for the first time a government took it upon itself to define what effective pedagogy should be in relation to these two key aspects of primary teaching. Although not formally statutory, the fact that the literacy and numeracy strategies became key components within Ofsted inspections meant that, in the vast majority of schools, they were in effect compulsory; it was a brave head teacher who chose not to follow the detailed government “advice” set out in these strategy documents. During new Labour’s second term of office, this approach was extended to secondary schools with the Key Stage 3 strategy (Blunkett, 2000). Later, children’s welfare came to the fore through the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2003), and finally the focus was on the personalisation of learning. Over time, the new Labour government’s substantive agenda changed as its policies evolved; what did not change was its aspiration to use targets and research-based prescriptive strategies in the development of more direct control of teachers’ classroom practice.

And what were the implications for initial teacher education of this rather different approach to reforming teacher professionalism? Instead of a National Curriculum for initial teacher education, in 2002 the government returned to a more general, much shorter list of standards accompanied by guidance that linked these standards to the national strategies (DfES, 2002). At the same time, it encouraged more schools and local authorities to enter the training field. The employment-based Graduate Teacher Programme was expanded substantially during this period, eventually reaching 18% of provision by 2007; school-led SCITT schemes also continued to be encouraged, despite continued questions about their quality. Training now could be provided in any number of ways. It could be provided by

... schools working with a Higher Education Institution (HEI) as the accredited provider on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes; or several schools working

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together, with or without the involvement of an HEI, to provide school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT); or a school or schools working together, sometimes in partnership with an HEI, local authority, or commercial organisation to provide an employment-based route to qualified teacher status. (TDA, 2007, p. 1)

As a result, the idea that universities and schools might have different perspectives and different forms of knowledge to contribute to teacher education was increasingly squeezed out. New Labour policies insisted that all providers were identical. Now that practice in schools was increasingly centrally defined, all were capable of delivering an effective training on the technical list of standards that trainee teachers needed to meet. With this move, the TDA and a growing number of providers came to see teacher education as largely unproblematic—that getting it right was a technical matter, ensuring that there were the right number of school places for training and that teachers, in whatever scheme they worked, had the time and skills they needed for mentoring (Furlong, Campbell, Howson, Lewis, & McNamara, 2006).

Seeking the New Professionalism—Phase Three

Toward the end of new Labour's period in office, there was growing evidence that, taken alone, this target-based strategy was not going to be sufficient (Hargreaves, 2003). Despite some improvements, the anticipated annual increase in measured achievement was not fully realised. Fueled by the post-PISA analysis and by international reports such as the OECD's *Teachers Matter* (2005) and the McKinsey Report (Barber & Mourshed, 2007), the focus to increase school achievement shifted from targets to teacher quality, a focus that gave some new opportunities for universities. As the OECD (2005) report stated, "All countries are seeking to improve their schools and to respond better to higher social and economic expectations. As the most significant and costly resource in schools, teachers are central to school improvement efforts" (p. 1).

As a first response, the government began to experiment with increasing quality by the recruitment of high flyers into the profession with the establishment of the TeachFirst initiative, a development of Teach for America. Then, following a visit to Finland by Lord Adonis, the then Schools Minister, government became convinced that the answer to further achievement gains was to make teaching a master's-level profession; all teachers should have the opportunity to study for a master's degree at some stage during their careers. If teachers in Finland, which was so successful in competitive international assessments such as PISA, had this opportunity, was this not the key to success in raising teacher quality? The English Master's in Teaching and Learning (MTL) was conceived.

In headline terms at least, the MTL was to be a very different approach to raising achievement from that which went before, as a government publication reported at the time:

World class teaching is characterised by a sophisticated understanding of effective classroom practice, highly skilled professional expertise and high quality engagement with children, young people and their parents and carers. The MTL will develop and build on these characteristics. (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008, p. 3)

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Once again, it would seem that the ordinary classroom teacher was emerging as *the* key figure in the raising of achievement—someone who was highly skilled, who had access to research-based forms of professional knowledge, and who was able to deploy that knowledge in complex and uniquely different classrooms settings.

In line with this changing vision, the MTL was developed with a number of key principles that drew on research about the conditions for effective professional learning for teachers. The focus was to be on early professional development; it was to be largely school-based, though with strong university support; school-based work was to be supported by a coach; and the whole programme was to be personalised.

The MTL therefore signalled a distinctively different approach to professional learning from the recent past; it also reimagined a new role for universities in professional education. Did that mean that, after 12 years in office, the Labour government intended to abandon its commitment to the new professionalism? Was there to be a return to a more individualised conception of teacher professionalism? The truth is that behind the positive headlines of the new master's degree were a number of important tensions—tensions that, had the MTL survived, would have made it difficult to deliver some of its aspirations. This is because the new degree, which was intended to have a common framework across the whole of England (TDA, 2009), was written with two different voices.

On the one hand was a progressive commitment to make sure that the MTL was indeed tailored to individual learning needs; it was to be “a personalised professional learning journey” (TDA, 2009, p. 6). At the same time, however, the programme had to align with induction and performance management requirements. Programmes had to include work on the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, and on personalisation. Everyone also had to consider the role of assessment data in evaluating effective learning. Despite the avowed commitment to a personalised learning journey, the government insisted that students on the MTL address nationally defined priorities.

The aim of the MTL was not to abandon the new professionalism. Instead, the ambitious hope was that by giving teachers opportunities to research, evaluate, and critique these national priorities for themselves in their own classrooms, they would, over time, develop the personal commitment needed to make them effective. They needed to learn for themselves how personalisation could work in their classrooms; they needed to know for themselves how to use performance data to increase measured student achievement. Rather than abandoning the new professionalism, the English MTL implied an ambitious new strategy for achieving it through a more personalised learning experience.

The aspiration to establish a single degree with common content and assessment procedures across the whole of England was an enormously ambitious one. It also was enormously difficult; the negotiations between regional groups of universities and the TDA were complex and protracted. But for the first time in a generation, the MTL offered a new vision for the role of universities in professional education. It recognised that, at the master's level at least, the universities did have something important, something

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essentially distinctive to contribute. Whether this reformation of teaching as a centrally defined master's-level profession could have been achieved, we will never know. The Labour party lost the election in 2010 and, within a few months of coming to office, the incoming Coalition government abandoned the MTL and the vision of the new professionalism.

Looking Back at New Labour

During new Labour's period in office, key policy drivers were put in place in relation to teacher education. Certainly the government acknowledged teacher education as a key element in its response to the pressures of globalisation. The unrelenting focus on developing a new professionalism for teachers with greater accountability to nationally set targets was rhetorically driven by concerns to ensure the international competitiveness of the English school system. The surface story, particularly toward the end of the party's period in office, might have been the need to increase England's position on international league tables such as PISA. But behind that concern lay a much more powerful competitiveness that saw achievement in education as centrally implicated in global economic competition, which brings back Tony Blair's mantra about education and economic policy. The search for the new professionalism and its implications for teacher education were a central part of this story.

Reflecting on how that was to be achieved and the role of neoliberal policies in that process is also important. Neoliberal policies—the maintenance of a competitive market in the provision of teacher education—were of central importance to new Labour. Globalisation was consistently imagined by new Labour in neoliberal terms. But neoliberalism, in contrast to the current government, was not seen by new Labour as an end in itself. Markets were not expected, independently of government, to deliver the right sort of teacher education. The competitive market among providers of teacher education was seen under new Labour as a tool of governance. Intense competition among resource-hungry, entrepreneurial providers was encouraged because it gave government the opportunity to intervene on an unprecedented scale in defining what teacher education and indeed what professional practice should be. This emphasis on centralised provision, made possible by a competitive market among a widening group of financially dependent providers, was the hallmark of new Labour's policies. And the challenge to this approach is becoming the hallmark of the Coalition government that replaced that party.

The 2010 Coalition: Neoliberalism Reformed?

This White Paper signals a radical reform of our schools. We have no choice but to be this radical if our ambition is to be world-class. The most successful countries already combine a high status teaching profession; high levels of autonomy for schools; a comprehensive and effective accountability system and a strong sense of aspiration for all children, whatever their background. Tweaking things at the margins is not an option. (David Cameron, Prime Minister, and Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister, [DfE], 2010, p. 4)

The United Kingdom's first Coalition government since the Second World War came to power in 2010. The coalition is dominated by the Conservative party, supported by

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the much smaller Liberal Democrat party. Significantly, the Liberal Democrat leader, Nick Clegg, was appointed as Deputy Prime Minister, though in many public spheres, including education, Conservative policies are what have held sway. Just six months after coming to power, a new white paper, *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010), was published, signalling a radical new agenda for schools and teacher education. Once again, teacher education was set to change.

One of the distinctive features of the new Labour education policy was that, in relation to teacher education, it was straightforward and linear. The biggest challenge to the UK economy was globalisation, and education was central in responding to that challenge. To respond to globalisation, education had to be remodeled along neoliberal lines. Therefore, the teaching profession had to be reformed; a new professionalism had to be developed to ensure that teachers would take on government-defined strategies and targets. The best way to make sure that the teaching profession did this was to maintain competitive markets among schools and providers of teacher education. While schools were required to meet targets, have inspections, and be ranked on league tables, universities and other providers of teacher education were required to deliver teachers willing and able to embrace this centrally defined, target-driven culture.

What is quite different about the Coalition government is that its analysis of the challenges within the English educational system is more complex and multifaceted than the previous government. As Bochel (2011) noted, social policy under the Coalition is complex and dynamic. However, the government's answers to these problems are largely one-dimensional; they primarily put their faith in what the market can deliver.

Coalition discourse about education is built on at least four core concerns. The first, like new Labour, focuses on global competitiveness. Again, as the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister commented:

So much of the education debate in this country is backward looking: have standards fallen? Have exams got easier? These debates will continue, but what really matters is how we're doing compared with our international competitors. That is what will define our economic growth and our country's future. The truth is, at the moment we are standing still while others race past. (DfE, 2010, p. 1)

But despite regular comparisons to the United Kingdom's global competitors, few of the policies seem directly and specifically focused in this direction. For the Coalition, the primary purpose of education is profoundly *not* utilitarian; in marked contrast to new Labour, education is not directly part of economic policy. Rather, education is about the preservation of the nation's cultural heritage. Beyond the general urging to be among the best in the world, there is little appetite to adapt the educational system to the needs of a 21st-century global economy, or indeed any economy.

The second concern, often spoken about with force and passion, is inequality. Again and again since coming to office, ministers and senior officials have spoken of the failures

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of our current system to deliver equality of outcomes. As Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, stated:

No country that wishes to be considered world class can afford to allow children from poorer families to fail as a matter of course. For far too long we have tolerated the moral outrage of an accepted correlation between wealth and achievement at school; the soft bigotry of low expectations. (DfE, 2010, p. 4, emphases added)

But despite the passion, to date there has been only one policy directly focused on addressing inequality, and that is the so-called “pupil premium,” which provides additional school funding for students from poorer backgrounds. But because of overall cuts in school budgets as a result of the recession, the vast majority of schools, even those with large numbers of disadvantaged students, are facing substantial cuts rather than increases in their budgets (Richardson, 2010). Therefore, if a reduction in inequality is to be achieved, it will be done as an outcome of other strategies aimed at more general educational improvement.

In sharp contrast, a great deal of activity has been taking place in relation to a third dimension of their policy discourse—one that has strong links with Margaret Thatcher’s administration in the 1980s. This third dimension has been the need to return to more traditional neoconservative notions of knowledge, where schooling is fundamentally concerned with the maintenance and transmission of an agreed upon cultural heritage. As Nick Gibb, the Minister for Schools, explained: “I believe strongly that the teaching of knowledge—the passing on from one generation to the next—is the fundamental purpose of education” (Gibb, 2010a). Or as the Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove (2011), who expressed it more colorfully in a recent speech to Cambridge University, said:

We may not all be able to inherit good looks or great houses, but all of us are heir to the amazing intellectual achievements of our ancestors. We can all marvel at the genius of Pythagoras, or Wagner, share in the brilliance of Shakespeare or Newton, delve deeper into the mysteries of human nature through Balzac or Pinker, by taking the trouble to be educated. (emphasis added)

Policies designed to achieve these ends include the development of the new English Baccalaureate, which is not a qualification in itself, but a performance measure of how many 16-year-olds achieve five higher-level General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) passes in traditional school subjects such as English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, and either geography or history. And in an extension of such thinking, in 2012 it was announced that some 3,000 pseudoacademic vocational qualifications would be downgraded, and thus no longer eligible for inclusion in school league tables (Vasagar, 2012). At the same time, the National Curriculum is being reformed to focus on “the essential knowledge and understanding that all children should acquire” (DfE, 2011a, para. 12).

All of these measures are intended fundamentally to reshape the content of schooling on narrower, more traditional lines. Indeed many secondary schools, aware of the

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implications of the English Baccalaureate, already have started to reduce the numbers of teachers they want to employ in subjects such as religious education, citizenship education, and a whole range of vocational subjects that are no longer part of “the canon.” This, in turn, is having major consequences for universities that prepare such teachers.

A final concern is the over bureaucratization of day-to-day life in schools. Instead of trying to prescribe the detail of teaching and school management from the centre, the Coalition government has talked about the importance of devolving as much power as possible to the front line while still retaining high levels of accountability. The Coalition’s stated aim is to “cut away unnecessary duties, processes, guidance and requirements, so that schools are free to focus on doing what is right for the children and young people in their care” (DfE, 2010).

Interestingly, the principles of reform in the structure and governance of education are common across much of the public sector, including health and social welfare. In 2011, the Coalition published the white paper *Open Public Services* (Cabinet Office, 2011), which set out its view on how to achieve better public services. At the heart of the white paper (Centre for Market and Public Organisation, 2011, p. 1) are five principles:

1. Greater choice wherever possible
2. Decentralisation to the lowest appropriate level
3. Diversity of provision by opening up public services to for-profit and not-for-profit providers
4. Fairness and, in particular, fair access
5. Accountability, with an emphasis on local democratic accountability

In short, the answer to improving the quality of education is the same answer as it is in health or social welfare. It involves a rolling back of the state and establishing a diversified market of provision underpinned by rigorous, but simple, accountability structures. Like new Labour, neoliberalism is central to government thinking. It is the market that will deliver greater equality, global competitiveness, and more traditional (neoconservative) forms of teaching and learning. But now, rather than being the means whereby government can impose its will in a centralised way, neoliberalism is understood in more traditional terms. It is being presented as the key to a new localism, with an aim to abolish centralised bureaucracies and allow a wide variety of agencies to deliver state services. This “Big Society” is David Cameron’s (2010) big idea, and it is an idea that is central to the reform of schools and teacher education.

Unlike under Margaret Thatcher, public services, especially health and education, *are* important; in this, there is continuity with new Labour. But it is a revitalised public sector based on the principles of open public service that will deliver what is needed. In education, these principles will deliver the raised levels of achievement needed to ensure global competitiveness; they also will ensure greater equality of achievement, even for the most disadvantaged sectors of society, and will allow the natural flourishing of neo-conservative visions of teaching and learning.

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Underlying these different political aspirations is the expressed need to deal with the consequences of the banking crisis of 2008. Shrinking the state, and moving more services and reduced services away from government goes hand in hand with saving money. In these circumstances, rolling back the state is both financially and morally justifiable for the future health of the nation.

In higher education, these ideas already have found expression in the end to public subsidy of undergraduate teaching, except in subjects where there is a perceived direct link to the economy—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (the STEM subjects). From now on, students will have to pay the full market rate for their university education through a complex programme of loans. And to increase competition, private universities are expected to grow in number. In the schools sector, these same principles underpin a commitment to the establishment of publically funded free schools where, as in Sweden (Allen, 2010), parents and other not-for-profit groups can now apply to establish a state-funded independent school. Also, all existing schools now can apply to be established as an academy so that they are entirely independent of their local authority.

The Coalition and Teacher Education

Certainly neoconservative thinking on teacher education policy was evident from the start. Nick Gibb, Minister for Schools, for example, was reported as saying to his civil servants just a few days after coming into office, “I would rather have a graduate from Oxbridge without a PGCE teaching in a school than a physics graduate from one of the rubbish universities with a PGCE” (Gibb, 2010b). Less confrontational, but equally significant, was Michael Gove’s (2011) announcement that one of his flagship policies, the development of free schools led by parents and others as independent state-funded schools, would not be required to employ qualified teachers. Such schools, he suggested, need to be free to employ inspirational teachers from wherever they can find them. For the Secretary of State, teaching, it would seem, is a combination of inspiration and a craft: “Teaching is a craft and it is best learnt as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman. Watching others, and being rigorously observed yourself as you develop, is the best route to acquiring mastery in the classroom” (Gove, 2010).

And these ideas of personal inspiration and teaching as a craft have found expression in two complementary policies. The first has been the expansion of TeachFirst, the scheme initially devised by new Labour to attract high flying new graduates into teaching. And a new and similar scheme also has been announced, TeachNext, which is a new entry route for career changers including men and women returning from the armed services. Even with expansion, the number of these programmes is likely to be small, but the government’s public commitment to them is symbolically significant.

To attract the most academically able, the government also is using the national bursary scheme for teachers in training in a more focused way. Graduates with excellent degree results in shortage subjects such as physics, mathematics, and chemistry can now receive a bursary of up to £20,000 during their training year; however, those with less than a 2.1 degree (or grade point average) will have to cover the full cost of their training themselves. And in line with the government’s neoconservative principles, no bursaries will

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be provided for those training to teach in a whole variety of social sciences or vocational courses, however good their degrees. Primary courses that encourage specialist rather than generalist teaching also will be encouraged.

But the government's most radical and far-reaching proposals take their inspiration from its neoliberal commitments through the development of School Direct training. The white paper (DfE, 2010) recognises that over the last 20 years, teacher education in England already has become overwhelmingly practically oriented. But in sharp contrast to teacher education in some successful school systems like Finland, Singapore, and Korea, the white paper argues that this move has not gone far enough: "Too little teacher training takes place on the job, and too much professional development involves compliance with bureaucratic initiatives rather than working with other teachers to develop effective practice" (DfE, 2010, p. 19).

Under the Schools Direct model, schools themselves increasingly will be in the driving seat (DfE, 2011a, 2011b). A school will apply to offer a training place; if approved, it can advertise the place, select the trainee, and then choose an accredited ITT provider to work with for assistance in providing the training. Funding will flow from the provider to the school to cover the costs of the training the provider contributes. However, because schools will be able to choose which provider to work with, they will, in effect, be able to dictate how much training they wish to purchase and how much they will provide themselves. Initially, beginning with 900 places in 2012–2013, the scheme is anticipated to expand rapidly in the coming years.

There are two other dimensions to the policy. First, in direct competition with universities, individual schools or chains of academies will be encouraged to become accredited providers of initial and in-service training that other schools can purchase from them. Second, these initiatives are accompanied by a new and slimmed-down list of teachers' standards intended to provide a framework of clearly defined minimum standards against which both trainees' and experienced teachers' performances can be judged. The 150 pages or so of guidance that accompanied the previous standards have been removed so that providers of teacher training have the flexibility to design the programmes that best meet the needs of their schools. Here is the very essence of the Coalition government's neoliberal inspired new localism: a diversity of public and private competitive providers with minimum but flexible standards that can be adapted to local need.

What are the implications of these moves for the role of universities in professional education in England? At the time of writing, they are still unclear, although there is obviously a fear that the government's aspiration is to move entirely away from university-led provision. The consequences for university departments and faculties of education could be devastating. Indeed, that fear had become so widespread by early 2011 that David Willetts (2011), the minister with responsibility for universities, made a statement to reassure vice chancellors of the continuing importance of universities' role (Willetts, 2011).

It may be that despite the neoliberal aspirations of the government to move entirely away from university-led initial teacher education and continuing professional

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development, the practicalities of doing so, particularly in the field of initial teacher education where England needs approximately 36,000 new teachers per year, may ultimately subvert that aspiration. It now seems more likely that, for the medium term at least, there will be a mixed economy: a smaller university-led system, largely based on those institutions that have been assessed by Ofsted as being outstanding, and an expanded school-based system led through 500 regional training schools. Increasingly, though, even the universities that do survive will find themselves cast in the role of service providers, where schools or groups of schools decide for themselves what it is they wish to purchase. And while some schools still will seek to purchase high-quality research-based professional education, others will not. The new policy specifically envisions this; in line with the notion of the market, there are to be many different ways in which the new minimum standards can be met. The long-term consequences may be as Whitty (2012) has recently speculated, which is the formation of multiple professionalisms as teacher education becomes more and more localised.

Conclusion

It is now almost 30 years since teacher education moved to centre stage in terms of national educational policy in England (Furlong, 2005). Right or wrong, that direction has been seen by successive governments as a key driver in their aspirations for wider educational reform. And it would seem that, with the new Coalition government's radical policies, the field is about to experience further radical change. In five years' time, the shape of teacher education in England could be very different from what it is today. As these market-based reforms take hold, the size of the higher education-based sector could certainly be much smaller than it is today, with more and more schools taking on leading roles themselves. This could have major consequences for other university-based provision in the field of education, such as higher degree programmes and research. Currently, initial teacher education accounts for some 66% of the economy of most university departments and faculties of education (Furlong, 2013); with more and more resources moving into schools, other programmes will inevitably be destabilised.

In her presidential address to the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2005) observed that teaching and teacher education are inherently and unavoidably political. Through the case study of England, this article illustrates just how political they are. The forces of globalisation do have a material reality: better communication, virtual contact, cheaper travel, and digitisation. Time and space have become compressed, and this compression has allowed the global development of capitalism, which has increasingly taken advantage of these possibilities to bring the whole globe under its influence. Inevitably, nation states will have to respond to these changed realities, but how they respond, as Rizvi and Lindgard (2010) made so clear, is a matter of choice. Choice or not, most developed and many developing countries have now accepted the aspiration to harness their national educational systems to global competitiveness; in Rizvi and Lindgard's terms, they have embraced the social imaginary of neoliberalism. And in the search for systemic educational reform, teacher education has increasingly come into focus as a key contributor.

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The ideology of neoliberalism is not static, even within the same country. In England, we can see evidence of the policy impact of the early Thatcher and Reagan Washington Consensus, where there was no role for public services unless they were economically useful; the post-Washington Consensus of new Labour, with its strong emphasis on bureaucratic management of public services; and the current Coalition government's emphasis on the importance of public services, but the need to manage them through free markets. These evolving ideas emphasise the fact that these changes are indeed brought about by active political processes. We also saw how in new Labour there was an evolving policy story, as the government struggled in different ways to achieve its political objectives.

Of course policies not only change over time, but they also vary country by country. Even within the United Kingdom, there are significant differences, as Menter et al. (2006) demonstrated in relation to Scotland. In sharp contrast to the reductive policies in England, teacher education reform in that country (Donaldson, 2011) is moving toward a strengthening and deepening of prospective teachers' personal education rather than a narrowing. And as the articles in this Special Issue clearly attest, similar moves are currently underway in the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, and the United States. England, particularly through its influence within the OECD and the McKinsey Corporation, may well have played a significant part in exporting these ideas to an international audience. Sir Michael Barber, who was responsible for many of the market driven reforms of the new Labour government, was a key contributor to both of the highly influential McKinsey (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Mourshed et al., 2010) reports. To an English reader, the principles articulated in these two immensely influential documents, although illustrated with international evidence, seem extremely familiar.

Importantly, though, many of these countries, including Scotland, differ significantly from England in terms of the power bases of different groups that have an interest in teacher education—universities, trade unions, general teaching councils, and local authorities (Menter & Hulme, 2008). In England, in sharp contrast to the United States, universities are, for the moment at least, still government funded, and compared with Ireland and Scotland, trade unions are weak in their influence on educational policy. And while in Ireland, New Zealand, and particularly Scotland, the General Teaching Councils are strong, the General Teaching Council for England was abolished when the Coalition government came to power in 2010. In England, even local authorities have diminishing power as more and more schools become semi-autonomous academies. The current absence of all these factors in England may well make this country significantly more “governable” than many others.

But that is not to suggest that the direction of travel in all of these countries is not in broad terms the same. Governments around the world are intent on systemic reform of education to improve their country's global competitiveness. And in their different ways, many of them see the reform and progressive management of teacher education as a key component in that systemic reform process. England, then, is perhaps an unusual case in the very direct way that neoliberal policies have been able to influence teacher education policy over the last 30 years, but the ideas this country has promulgated have increasingly found favor among

international governments. Perhaps by way of conclusion, all we can do is to return to the Cochran-Smith opening observation: these processes are indeed profoundly political. As such, there is no inevitability about them. They could be imagined differently.

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