Back to the Future: The De-professionalisation of Initial Teacher Education in England and Wales

Peter Gilroy
University of Sheffield

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INTRODUCTION

In many ways this paper reads like a report from an educational battlefield. From the 1980s those involved with initial teacher education in England and Wales can be seen as dealing with sporadic sniping at their work, followed by more substantial skirmishes, culminating in the 1990s with full-blooded assaults. This paper begins by describing the position being attacked, identifies the first intimations of aggression, then focuses upon the battering inflicted in the 1990s upon initial teacher education. The analysis which follows indicates that, savage though it has been, the attack on initial teacher education is in some ways only a feint to disguise an indirect assault on the concept of teacher professionalism and thus on education per se.

THE DISTANT PAST: TEACHER EDUCATION 1848-1969

Until the middle of the nineteenth century initial teacher education in Britain was conspicuous by its absence. In fact at the primary level untrained and poorly educated pupil teachers were the norm, with pupils over the age of 12 being apprenticed to schools for periods of 5 years. A small minority of these pupil-teachers progressed to colleges, that were in the main denominational, to study for their teacher’s certificate (which was introduced in 1848). However, the basic pattern of both primary and secondary teacher education was a form of apprenticeship, where teachers ‘learned-on-the-job’, an approach criticised as failing both children and teachers by the 1861 Newcastle Commission (see Patrick et al., 1982). Subsequently the 1888 Cross Committee recommended that universities should be involved with teacher training and so, as a result of the McNair report of 1944, university education departments began to be created to serve this need. By 1947 the way in which university departments were coming to influence college-based initial teacher education courses. Working through the ATOs, universities and their colleges could recommend to the Ministry of Education the award of Qualified Teacher Status to successful students. The colleges/universities link was such that it was possible to argue that it served a major role in initial teacher education, in that it “had the effect of both strengthening and broadening the professional and academic aspects of training” (Gosden 1989, p.2), a role that Her Majesty’s Inspectorate itself identified as being “significant” (DES 1988a, p.1).

By 1960 the colleges’ course had been increased from two to three years and subsequently, in 1963, to four years so as to allow colleges to offer the B.Ed. degree. By the end of the 1960s it was unusual for a teacher to enter the profession without a degree and thus without a substantial period of both the study and practice of education. The growth of the graduate profession can be seen from the Department of Education and Science’s own figures (DES 1991, p.38), which show a six-fold increase in primary graduate teachers between 1972 and 1988 (from 5% to 30%) and almost a doubling of secondary graduate teachers in the same period (from 37% to 63%). The idea that teachers could be inducted into their profession by means of an apprenticeship scheme could be seen as a quaint, and flawed, relic of the Victorian past.

THE RECENT PAST: TEACHER EDUCATION 1970-1984

Another way of describing the way in which initial teacher education had developed by the 1960s was that there was virtually no central control of provision, other than that provided by the universities and, for some institutions, the Council for National Academic Awards. The first hint of a reversal of this laissez-faire policy came in 1970 with the James Report. Only one of its recommendations was implemented by the Conservative government (the introduction of an induction programme for teachers in their probationary year), but this was doubly significant. First, it indicated that the central government was focusing its attention upon initial teacher education; second, that it felt competent to direct initial teacher education.
The spotlight of attention found expression in a spate of reports produced by the government’s agents, the Department of Education and Science (DES) and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI). For example, in 1981 a survey of new entrants in schools was carried out (DES 1982), followed in 1987 by a similar survey (DES 1988b). In themselves these surveys and publications were not objective, though perhaps the most curious finding was that the existing form of initial teacher education was working well, with schools, for example, reporting that they were dissatisfied with only 4% of new teachers (DES 1988c, p.59). However, as might be expected, selective references to these reports (and, as will be shown, would be easily quoted out of context to give the opposite impression by those who desired to denigrate the contribution of higher education to the process of initial teacher education.)

Secondly, the government now began to exert direct control over initial teacher education. University influence on college-based initial teacher education was considerably lessened when the ATOs were abolished in 1975. It almost disappeared altogether when, following on from the HMI recommendations concerning the content of initial teacher education (DES 1985), the government created in 1984 the first Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE) which, through its regional committees, advised the Secretary of State for Education as to whether or not courses of initial teacher education should be ‘approved’. To teacher educators the Orwellian nature of 1984 represented a major impression by those who wished to denigrate the profession. The numbers on course in the academic year 1990/91 were (DES 1990 and Hantsford May 1991):

- 4-year B.Ed./B.A. £25,000
- 1-year PGCE £6,000
- 2-year Articled Teacher Scheme £19,000

The total cost of bringing the B.Ed. and PGCE students within the Articled Teacher Scheme would be more than £152 million, an increase of more than £80 million over the 1990/91 initial teacher education finances. If the Articled Teacher scheme were to be adopted wholesale then the logistical problems of having more than 24,000 student teachers based in schools for most of the period of initial teacher education appeared overwhelming. Given these figures, and the fact that the Articled Teacher scheme had already “run into trouble” (TES, 7.9.90), how could the government abandon higher education-based initial teacher education?

THE SNIPING BEGINS

Until the late 1980s it was unusual to read much in the press that was critical (or, for that matter supportive) of initial teacher education. The field was simply not newsworthy. However, running in tandem with the government’s newly awakened interest in (and perhaps hostility towards) institutionalised teacher education was a hotchpotch of ‘Groups’ and ‘Institutes’ begun publishing monographs which were food and drink to the popular press. These groups, recently identified as the “wild men, and women, of the Right” (TES, 12.10.90), gave themselves a spurious respectability by basing themselves in ‘think tanks’ which they had themselves created. Press releases came thick and fast from the Centre for Policy Studies, the Hillgate Group and the individual ‘think tanks’ (each seemingly determined to share much the same membership), reporting on publications whose astonishing ignorance of the reality of initial teacher education was matched only by their lack of scholarship. On the basis of no evidence whatever, the complexities of initial teacher education were typified by Cox in the Times Educational Supplement (TES 6.1.89) as a “rígmarole of training” (Cox 1989), as providing “spurious and questionable studies” which had no “solid grounding in the real world” (O’Hear 1988, p.6) and which were taught, implied, by neo-Marxists (ibid., p.23).

A common thread running through these snippings at initial teacher education was that the skills of teaching could easily be picked up in the first year of teaching, so all certificated routes into the profession could be swept away (Lawlor 1990). Yet, when one looks more closely at Lawlor’s arguments, one finds that he supports the existing form of teacher education courses was conducted by the simple expedient of collecting the institutions’ prospectuses. Moreover, she has no direct experience of initial teacher education courses, having recently admitted that she had yet even to set foot in an institution offering teacher education. Pointing out such niceties has the double drawback of appearing to give some sort of academic respectability to a group where none in fact exists, as well as being far from newsworthy. Inevitably there was a tendency for teacher educators to hunker down and try to ignore the snipings, even though O’Hear was subsequently drafted by the Secretary of State onto CATE. There may also have been an assumption that the rational members of the DES and HMI could see that the New Right’s posturings were nowhere near substance. This viewpoint was supported at the 1991 annual conference of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) by a senior member of the DES, Clive Saville, who tried to allay the fears of teacher educators by speaking with confidence of the need for multiple routes into teaching (UCET 1991). Four weeks later Saville was removed from responsibility for teacher education.

THE FIRST ATTACK: JANUARY 1992

There had been many ‘leaks’ reported in the press forecasting a radical overhaul of initial teacher education in the period leading up to the 1992 North of England Annual Education Conference, thus expressing “half-baked but sinister ideas circulating in influential circles about the future of teacher education” (TES, 12.10.90). However, even the most pessimistic teacher educator had not forecast what was revealed in the Secretary of State’s (Mr Clarke) speech, which gave, in effect, the heavy firepower of central government support to the snipings of the New Right. Mr Clarke stated that he was going to break “the hold of the academic ivory towers and the classroom organisation” which higher education was spreading (Clarke 1992, p.7) by handing over the responsibility of teacher training to schools. He claimed that HMI had shown that such school-based training was “sound and can be put into practice effectively” (ibid., p.5). As a result, by September of 1992, and certainly no later than three years from the date of his speech, all secondary teacher education courses would have to take the place of the old ‘professional’. The cost involved was a concomitant “considerable shift of funds from colleges to schools” (ibid., p.13). He would consider primary courses when the current DES inquiry was completed.

These “uncontentious” changes (ibid., p.14) were widely, and in the main favourably, reported in the press. In fact the popular press seemed keen to take Mr Clarke’s innovations still further. Yet, the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) of which he did not intend to “take teacher education away from higher education” (ibid., p.15) this course of action was precisely what many in the press advocated, claiming, contra the findings of the Newcastle Commission, that a totally school-based system had “worked for teachers...in the days when few underwent formal training of any kind” (Sunday Express, 5.1.92).

The content of Mr Clarke’s speech was then re-worked into a consultation document (DES 1992a). This was dated January 28th and responded by March 31st, thus providing a consultation period of less than nine weeks. Indeed, the cynical disregard of the democratic process of change (alternatively, of the possible contribution that teacher educators might make to Mr Clarke’s plans for initial teacher education) that the word of consultation implied appeared to be recognised by another powerful body. On February 3rd the
Universities Funding Council requested universities to apply for extra funding so as to allow them to adapt their PGCE courses to meet "the new course criteria" (UFC 1992, p.1). Not only did this request reify what had been merely 'proposals' for consultation into fully fledged 'course criteria' but also, by requesting that funding applications should be returned to the Council by March 27th (ibid, p.4), the Council pre-empted the results of Mr Clarke's consultation process by four days. Clearly, the Council seemed to have reached the conclusion that Mr Clarke's proposals would be in place in spite of the results of what, apparently, would be an empty sham of consultation.

Reactions

The Journal of Education for Teaching (JET) decided that, even if the results of the consultation process were to be ignored, it was important that teacher educators should be given a platform to allow their voices to be heard. A survey was run of 112 institutions in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland concerned with initial teacher education. A letter was written requesting copies of the paper were sent to Mr Clarke and the DES.

The survey produced major, and informed, criticisms. Briefly, there were two categories of response. The first gave example after example of the many practical difficulties that the proposals would create. For instance, there would be an articled teachers scheme, upon which the new training would degenerate into an uncoordinated series of experiences within schools (TES, 12.1.92). Finally, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCVP) expressed their 'degenerate' view towards the proposals (CVCVP 1992). The CVCVP reiterated the problems already identified, concluding with the suggestion that a 60/40 split would be a more sensible form of school-based training.

Any further reactions were hidden by the dust thrown up by the leadership struggle within the Conservative party and the eventual General Election. With a new Conservative prime minister and a new Secretary of State for Education, Mr Patten, the battle lines were about to be re-drawn.

A STRATEGIC WITHDRAWAL

It soon became clear that few, if any, institutions were going to be able to start school-based courses in January 1992. In many cases, the money that had been received doubled the original figure of £6 million actually available for the transition (THES, 15.6.93). In May Mr Patten wrote to the Chair of CATE thanking him for CATE's response to the January proposals and stating that the original 80% school-based experience would now be modified by being reduced to 60%, what he called a "tough but fair requirement" (Patten 1992, p.1). The tricky question which CATE had asked for a ruling on, that of costing these courses, was neatly side-stepped, with the statements that schools and higher education institutions should negotiate for themselves, albeit in a new form, because buying training students (an absolute necessity in tightly staffed primary schools) would be prohibitively expensive. The sting was in the tail, however, as the subsequent budget brought forward the possibility of finding these funds by removing them from the control of higher education. If the finances for initial teacher education went directly to schools, institutions of higher education would have to bid to schools for them, which would reinforce the Clarke approach of school-led teacher training (TES, 30.10.92).

Teacher trainers barely had time to digest the implications of such a possibility when, a week later, they were faced with another scenario. It was reported that the National Curriculum Council had suggested to Mr Patten that, because 80% of other education and training students and because the Council was concerned with schools, then CATE's accreditation role should be passed on to the Council. Significantly, there was no formal public response to this suggestion by Mr Patten, who "let it be known" that he was not necessarily supporting CATE's approach to initial teacher education (TES, 6.11.92). Even the prime minister was reported as saying that he wanted to return to the 80% model, with schools receiving 80% of the initial teacher education funds (TES, 22.1.93). It seemed that the sniping had begun again.
Although CATE's future appeared less than certain, education departments subsequently received CATE Guidance on how to create school-based courses in partnership with schools which would then be accredited by CATE (CATE 1992b). One of the many interesting suggestions in this document was that the trainers would need training (ibid., pp. 6-7), which raised the strange and wasteful possibility of staff in higher education training teachers to take on many of the responsibilities which were previously located in higher education. Again, the answer to the question of how this process was to be funded was conspicuous by its absence. The urgency with which this question had to be addressed was made clear the following month when it was reported that head teacher unions were demanding a minimum of £2,000 per student, a figure very close to the £1,000 per student proposed by London University's Institute of Education when Mr Clarke was Secretary of State for Education (see above). Yet the reality was that, with the best will in the world, higher education could not afford to pay much more than approximately £600 per student and even that required them to make cuts in their staffing (TES, 18.12.92). Moreover, the heads were not prepared to continue with the scheme unless the funding issues were satisfactorily resolved in their favour.

This second period of sniping culminated with an astonishing leading article in a paper, The Spectator, usually held to be relatively moderate in its views. In spite of evidence to the contrary (see above) its readers were informed that both head teachers and teacher unions were vociferous in their complaints about the quality of the new teachers they received (The Spectator 1993). The article advised Mr Patten to remove accreditation from higher education and the "period of Marxist indoctrination" which higher education courses represented. As a result the institutions currently responsible for initial teacher education, "these harmful political training grounds", would disappear.

THE SECOND ATTACK: MARCH 1993

The following month the DFE issued a press release announcing news of the "first wholly school-based teacher training projects". Those preparing the two secondary schemes, and in spite of all that had been argued before, primary training (DFE 1993a). The funding issue was resolved in precisely the way the New Right and The Spectator had suggested, with money being "paid directly to participating schools to cover the cost of training, buying in outside expertise where they wish" (ibid., p.1). In

THE THIRD ATTACK: SEPTEMBER 1993

As has already been indicated, there had been warnings made by those running school-based courses of initial teacher education that the financial implications of the new partnership training system were such that they might have to withdraw from the field altogether. On the other hand, schools and teacher unions, felt that they could not commit themselves to the new partnerships until the financial aspect of the scheme was clarified. The third attack on teacher training resolved both these difficulties.

Mr Patten claimed that because of the way in which initial teacher education was now located in both schools and higher education it was necessary to create a new funding agency for initial teacher education, the Teacher Training Agency. He proposed that this new Agency, in quantities yet to be announced, would draw funds from finances previously allocated to initial teacher education administered through the Higher Education Funding Council (previously the DFE). He proposed that the Higher Education Funding Council's input to initial teacher education disappeared then so would other aspects of education departments' work, in particular research (TES, 28.6.93). However, it was this second reform that attracted most attention, not least because it flouted the hard-fought principle of an all graduate teaching profession. For example, the Chair of the British Association for Early Childhood Learning called the plan an "absolute outrage" (TES, 11.6.93). Significantly, CATE subsequently announced that it had rejected the plan put forward by Mr Patten (TES, 28.5.93).

The attacks on the reform, castigated as Mr Patten's "Mum's Army", continued throughout the summer drawing fire from teachers, head teachers, local authorities and even a senior Conservative Member of Parliament (TES, 25.6.93). Eventually the second reform's proposal was withdrawn in November, by which time it could be interpreted by some as a smoke screen to disguise a way of implementing the first reform (TES, 26.11.93).

Thus, whilst those in higher education were attempting to deal with the various reforms, proposals, consultation documents, proposals, draft schemes and so forth, another way, a direct assault on what was left of their autonomy was being planned. It was announced at the end of the summer of 1993.
The paper you have just read was completed immediately before Christmas (1993). With the new Education Bill being presented to the House of Lords in December there was, however, no Christmas truce. The attacks on the Bill came from all quarters, including Conservative Lords who, with only three speakers able to find anything to defend, was passed with a narrow majority. Furthermore, the Lords’ Parliamentary committee responsible for scrutinising the delegated powers of ministers published a criticism of the “excessive powers given to the Secretary of State by the Bill” (TES, 31.12.93), which is reported to have “embarrassed” the government (TES, 21.12.93).

It is widely believed that the government “badly miscalculated the potential weight of opposition” to the Bill (THES, 17.12.93). According to Lord Sheffield this opposition included the whole of the teaching profession, all the university vice-chancellors and principals, the church colleges, the head teachers (as represented by the Headmasters’ Conference), the Girls Schools Association and the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations (TES, 31.12.93). If, as is rumoured, the committee stage of the Bill (originally planned for the second week in January) is being delayed whilst ministers plan how to deal with its criticisms, then there is time, even now, for a last ditch defence against the government’s onslaught on teacher education. Cynics, however, might see something different as they look forward to 1994.

The Bill also contains proposals for controlling the activities of student unions and it is these which have begun to steal the limelight. It is possible that the government will produce a compromise, whereby they reduce, or remove altogether, those highly restrictive clauses of the Bill but retain the Teacher Training Agency, with all that means for the autonomy of university education departments. In this way the student union clauses would act as a diversion to allow the main attack to be thrust home. The best that might be hoped for in this scenario would be that the Agency might become a sub-committee of the Higher Education Funding Council, and so controlled in some measure by the Council’s attitude to funding Higher Education.

A measure of the attention that teacher education has had from the government is the fact that in the past 14 years there have been 15 Education Bills. As they say, “Watch this space.”

REFERENCES


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SCHOOL-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES: AN UNEVEN EVOLUTION

Mary Kluender Ducharme and Edward R. Ducharme
Drake University

What does school-based teacher education mean in the United States? Certainly, it does not mean that funding, decision-making and management of programs are the province of individual school districts; in the United States, teacher education is firmly ensconced in higher education. The overwhelming majority of teachers are prepared in colleges and universities, licensed by individual states, and employed by local school districts. Law, tradition, and funding suggest that this general pattern will not change soon.

While teacher education is located primarily in higher education institutions, school-based teacher education exists. It exists in many forms, ranging from student teaching and other field experiences in which students apply concepts and skills learned on campus to comprehensive partnerships among higher education institutions and local school districts for comprehensive initial and continuing teacher development. In this article, we explore several configurations of school-based teacher education. We first present brief scenarios that illustrate common school-based patterns, then describe several configurations currently in operation in the United States. We then summarise some of the issues inherent in school-based teacher education.

USING SCHOOL SITES FOR TEACHER PREPARATION: FOUR SCENARIOS

More than 1,200 higher education institutions offer teacher education programs in the United States, varying in size from small private colleges to large public universities. The teacher education programs in those institutions may range from small departments with two or three faculty members to colleges of education within universities with faculties of 200 or more. Each program is affected by a variety of influences: state legislators and policy makers, university-wide committees, school district personnel, individual faculty members and cooperating teachers. At the same time, however, curriculum in teacher education follows a remarkably similar pattern: "a composite of general undergraduate education, specialised study in academic departments or schools of education, and clinical experiences in elementary or secondary classrooms and schools" (Doyle, 1990, p.6). The extent to which the clinical experiences' component of teacher education programs is integrated with the other curricular elements or a shared responsibility of higher education and the schools varies widely. The following four scenarios demonstrate the range of configurations:

Scenario 1: Traditional Teacher Preparation

Amy is a twenty-one year old undergraduate majoring in elementary education in a state university in the mid-western United States. She is beginning her fourth year of study and plans to graduate next spring. During her first two years of college, most of Amy's coursework was in arts and sciences, but she also took an introductory course in education, during which she spent approximately 80 hours observing in elementary education classrooms, and an educational psychology course. During her third and fourth years, she took more coursework in education and developed an area of concentration in science, which a subject she looks forward to teaching. Amy's education professors took classes to elementary classrooms a few times during her education courses, usually for one-hour visits so students could tryout lessons they had planned in the college classes. One professor required her to videotape her teaching episode so she could later critique it. She was pleased with those opportunities, but she felt like a visitor to the classroom, not like a real teacher. She is looking forward to next semester's student teaching, when she will be in an elementary classroom full time. She wonders: will her cooperating teacher use the same methods and have a similar philosophy to that of her campus professors? Will she remember all the ideas and concepts she has recently learned?

Scenario 2: Campus School Teacher Preparation

Jane is also twenty-one years old, an undergraduate majoring in art and elementary education, but she attends a private college in the eastern part of the United States. Jane chose this college because it has a high-quality liberal arts program and a campus school serving as a