

Chapter 3: Is it us or them? Teacher education as act of resistance to a neo-liberal age

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Abstract

This empirical study examines the role of teacher educators' in developing the profession and professionalization of Initial Teacher Educators entering Post-Compulsory Education (PCE also referred to as FE for Further Education). Its writers – all post-compulsory teacher educators – explore the changes in the sector to confront a central ontological question of their work: *is initial teacher education (ITE) out of step with the direction of a neoliberal education system?* We draw from the narratives of teacher students to explore the tensions between the values located in their initial education experiences and the realities of the sector to reflect on our purpose as a teacher education team.

The chapter traces changes in recent PCE history to show how a tilt towards marketization has transformed the sector and challenged the paradigm, values and perspectives of Initial Teacher Education professionals in HE. Arguments that 'neoliberalism, because of its nihilism, is an unworkable logic for teacher education' (Tuck 2013, 324) highlight the diminishing esteem of the teacher's role, from educator to 'classroom manager' and 'instructional designer'. Unrealistic measures and compliance agendas de-professionalizes teachers by inhibiting teacher thinking and acting (Priestley et al, 2017). Against this instrumentalist shift, we hold that teaching and education are philosophically, politically and artistically situated actions, requiring socially and politically informed teachers who reject performativity and the continual need to justify education. What PCE calls for is educators who will know when and how to initiate change within the human condition of teaching in FE. Teacher's reflexive world views can equip them in deciding their terms of being, their virtue and their coming into presence (Arendt 1958).

We argue that PCE Teacher Educators must create and safeguard an intellectual space where teachers can contest the 'dangerous distortion of perceived reality and challenge the external powers that deprive of thinking and acting space' (Allen, 2002). The study highlights that it is through the irrationality of neoliberalism that teachers locate space to appear as moral thinking and acting subjects. A purpose of Initial Teacher Education is to support teachers to have the courage to tell the truth within risky situations and in dark times (Tamboukou 2012). In PCE, social and human interaction persists among policies and practices that involve a constant, complex and dynamic mix of power, challenge, confusion and choice. Where "policy as practice is 'created' in a trialectic of dominance, resistance and chaos/freedom" (Ball, 1994, 11), we assert that Initial Teacher Education must remain a focal point for the profession and an imperative pause and critical space for viewing the terrain that newly qualified teachers enter. Initial Teacher Education has to support BTs to navigate the shifting landscapes of FE environments to find their place, to safeguard reflexive judgements so that they can come into presence through word and deed (Topper 2011, 357).

Introduction

This chapter is grounded in our work as teacher educators for post-compulsory education (PCE), and the tensions that arise with beginning teachers (BTs) between Initial Teacher Education (ITE), college placements and early socialisation processes. This has led us to confront a central existential question about our purpose: *is initial teacher education (ITE) out of step with the direction of a neoliberal education system?* The case study for this research has been designed to excavate, elaborate and theorise beginning teachers' experiences of becoming a teacher in PCE, whilst undertaking an ITE course in Higher Education.

Background context

The ITE course is offered by a university that works in partnership with PCE colleges around the West Midlands – a region that is literally the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, but which has, like much of the UK, fallen behind with employers moving bases abroad in a new era of competition and cost-cutting, while successive Governments have prevaricated across years of neglect and managed decline. This contextual backdrop is significant to explain neoliberalism, a term we deploy here from Smith (2017) as the replacement of political judgment with economic rationale. In another industrial British city, Liverpool, civil unrest in the 1980s and mass unemployment led the Thatcher-government to plan for 'strategic abandonment', although the Minister in charge of the city – Michael Heseltine – favoured '...replacing democratically elected urban governance by business-led, centrally appointed urban development corporations with the view of breathing new entrepreneurial life into Britain's declining post-industrial metropolitan cities' (Parker, 2019). Equivalence may be suggested between the feckless manner in which central Government has handled urban policy, industrial decay and their treatment of English post-compulsory education. For the former, the proposal was to handle regeneration by transforming working class communities through 'entrepreneurial life' – sometimes called *gentrification*. PCE has seen similar manoeuvres, with private investment opening up provision and colleges falling out of public ownership.

In these new, usually mirrored, buildings, transparency is paramount with glass walls, CCTV, and open-plan offices ensuring total visibility and surveillance is inherent to the working culture. Arendt (1958) witnessed how oppressive regimes attempt to normalise human behaviour through the destruction of space; including thinking space. These working conditions impede the kind of educational process needed to sustain human creativity and flourish in intellectual and ethical development' (Hayden 2013, 240). Smith theorises on the 'Building Colleges for the Future' project through the work of Lefebvre and explored how transparent features of modern architecture give spaces a "veneer of innocence and neutrality" (Smith, 2017, 14). Trust is diminished at the expense of monitoring and just about everything must be accounted for. Smith concludes that The 'abstract space' of FE, articulated in and by these glazed façades feeds into and off ideological tropes of neoliberalism that subordinate the agency of students and staff, instrumentalising them for economic ends." (Smith, 2017, 18). It is into this environment that Beginning Teachers (BTs) are emerging. Here, we present the views of those who are crossing a threshold into the context as new teachers and seeking to make sense of it. ITE is a space for early socialisation into the political realms of FE and must safeguard each persons' capacity for critical reflexive judgment.

It should be explained that in the UK the Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) for PCE prepares teachers for a range of academic, professional and vocational courses. In England, PCE is fragmented and consists of a variety of courses and levels, with BTs entering colleges from HE undergraduate courses to work alongside colleagues who teach often without undergraduate training. This contextual background is included firstly for readers to understand the landscape of PCE and secondly because we are writing here about the neoliberal shaping of PCE that as teacher educators we resist and oppose. The language around PCE has increasingly become market-driven – *performance measurement indicators, standardisation, privatisation, precarious labour conditions, audits, accountability, target-setting, inspections, and competition* and ever *reduced funding*: terms that set a tone, direction and agenda which has shaped performativity as ‘a culture and a mode of regulation’ (Ball, 2003, 216).

It is both within and against this outside environment that the ITE team works to prepare its Beginning Teachers (BTs), via an immersion in reflective practice and developing criticality. Arendt’s work on judgement provides a meaningful addition to discussions about reflection and reflective practice in education. This is not reflective practice for self-governance, but an engaged and embodied awareness of ourselves within political worlds. Contemporary criticism sees teacher education in the UK as conforming to formats in easily packaged theories of instruction conforming to purported ‘evidence-bases’ (Biesta, 2015). Simultaneously, ITE in HE is becoming ever more portrayed as suspicious, woolly, failing and responsible for both poor recruitment into the profession and poor retention of teachers once qualified. We perceive this as the removal of ITE provision from HE and into private training providers’ control, where teaching becomes less philosophically situated and more a training package for ‘instructional designers’ whose aim is to deliver learning units as commodities. Tuck (2013) argues that neoliberal ideas are incompatible with teacher education as the freedom to think differently collides with the need to conform. In this tension is the basis for our existential question of our own relevance and value and what we now move on to qualify.

The significance of reflexivity and personal positionality within ITE encourages BTs to find well-being in the chaotic and uncertain world of FE. The ITE course employed in this study has been designed to support storying and BTs are encouraged to write reflectively in first person terms. The storied approach resonates with Arendt’s (1958) theorised political stance, which argues that stories about shared experiences bring forth new and existing knowledge about such experiences. The scope and purpose of case study research means that shared experiences can surface and be made visible for further political and social engagement (Thomas 2011). The case study utilises BTs narrative texts to explore, theorise and analyse meaning-making experiences about becoming a teacher within the political and human context of PCE.

The PGCE course in question.

The PGCE is designed to encourage BTs to engage with reflexive storying about their experience. Our reflexive internal dialogues can inform our moral principles and Arendt argues for us to use our capacity for judgment wisely. The ITE course values the human capacity for reflective judgements, initiative and action. While reflective practice itself may have its criticisms and limitations, we promote it as an asset through the thresholds of becoming a teacher, since exploring ourselves is inherent to taking ownership of our own judgements and transformation. The course modules are interwoven to connect with each other as opposed to

stand alone modules and assessments. Each module supports a BT to craft and construct an overall portfolio of their learning through a collection of text, artefacts, activities and supporting documentation (reflective journals RJs, and Final story extended learning autobiographies (ExLA). BTs are encouraged to engage with collective and critical dialogue, research and theory about their emergent pedagogic praxis.

The PGCE course includes placement experience, where BTs teach in a local college over two full days per week and undertake two longer, full-time block placements in January-February and again in May. For this case study, six BTs gave access to their yearlong reflective journals and ExLAs. We reiterate that the philosophy underpinning the narrative text is of criticality and reflexivity as significant for preparing beginning teachers (Thomas, 2011). The storied approach combines a model of learning advocated by Dixon et al (2010) where theories, research and experience inform teachers as reflective practitioners in the political world of PCE.

Against our educational methods, values and principles, we survey the world of PCE that our teachers enter. As teacher educators, we recognise that external influences inhibit teacher's agency, but teacher's agency and emancipation contravenes the direction of travel of an education system that has become characteristically subject to political whim. We do not dispute that a teacher education course would prepare its students for a professional role, but we also argue that teacher education is also about socialisation into the political space of PCE. The emphasis in our work is on nurturing professional judgment over commodified lists of competences (Biesta, 2015). The nurturing of BTs is personal, local and value-laden, entirely removed in essence from 'good, best and excellent practice', where 'all provision must be consistently good and continuously improving' (DfE, 1999, cited in Coffield and Edward, 373, 2009). It is this realm of continual monitoring and constant measuring that BTs move into.

We share a definition of neoliberalism, illustrated as "epistemology, economic strategy, and moral code rolled into one, neoliberalism refers to the reliance on market-based relationships to explain how the world works, or how it should work. It treasures both individual self-responsibility and social efficiency, aligning the purposes of public institutions to the primacy of the market." (Tuck, 2013, 325). With its crazed fixation on everything being marketable, neoliberalism cannot understand 'public good' and asks of the public sector the same questions directed at the private one: '*am I getting good value for my money?*' because while it counts the cost of everything it recognises the value of nothing except expansive capital. Where neoliberalism commodifies learning, it perceives staff distrustfully to handle its product. So many teachers feel this sense of disenfranchisement predicated squarely on an absence of professional agency, that this becomes the essence of our ITE work: a right to belong in a community of honesty where propinquity, shared repertoires and stories enable openness and opportunities.

The philosophical underpinning of the PGCE course values supporting BTs to engage with 'craft knowledge, or tacit knowledge: the ability to see the right thing to do in the circumstances' (Thomas 2011, 23). ITE has to prepare BTs to navigate the shifting landscapes of FE environments to find their place, to safeguard judgements so that they can come into presence through word and deed (Topper 2011, 357). The aim is to foster enquiring practitioners who question the directives that shape their professional lives and a politicised dogma in order to reclaim 'critical professionalism in the processes of civic renewal and social justice that seek to move beyond the limits of market reform and call into question the so-called

efficiency of marketisation' (Gleeson et al, 2015, 79). It is imperative that BTs can take up initiative, to begin anew and be somebody (Arendt, 1958).

Research Design

The aim of the research and creating a narrative case study called for a particular sample of participants who were on the PGCE course and early into full time employment. The case study is contextualised by ITE and PCE/FE and is about the lived and meaning-making experiences of six BTs. The context for the study is a fulltime pre-service PGCE in PCE award offered through a post-1992 university in the West Midlands, England. The purposive case study is contextualised by ITE and the first year of teaching in PCE and attempts to analyse, synthesise and theorise (Thomas, 2013) BTs' meaning-making experience of becoming a teacher in PCE during their PGCE and first year of teaching. The case study outlines the uncertainty, complexity and conflict of the situated lives of BTs (Thomas, 2013) as they prepare to become qualified. According to interpretivist paradigms the potential for case study research outweighs the limitations by offering richly detailed accounts of lived experiences pertinent to research objectives. Thus case study research has the scope to explore how social worlds are understood and experienced, with their multiple and richly textured layers (Mason, 2002). This study was guided by the main research question: 'What is the relationship between socialisation into PCE and beginning teachers' judgements about their emerging pedagogical praxis?

The case study consists of a collection of stories from six beginning teachers about their lived experience during the PGCE and first year of teaching in PCE over an eighteen month period. Merriam (1998, 6) defends the scope for using case study methodology by arguing that 'reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds and that there are multiple interpretations of reality'. Although case study research does not have well-defined and well-structured protocols, it does have the potential to illustrate what it is like to be in a particular situation (Yin, 2009).

We anticipate that this study will provide readers a connective understanding (Thomas, 2013) about the early experiences of PGCE BTs as they prepare for the political uncertainty of a neoliberal terrain. Our data and discussion is complemented throughout by references to develop an argument and self-reflection of our own ontology as an ITE team. We round the discussion of these accounts off by arguing that these reflective experiences equip students with a critical foresight of PCE to promote a position from which their professional lives are grounded in personal and shared values. We urge that the critical space of ITE is an imperative pause for those becoming teachers to share and build a collective experience of resistance against neoliberalism, to reclaim agency and trust for the profession.

Thematic Analysis

Themes emerged from exploring the participants' stories through the analytical framework of Biesta's (2013) three domains for the purpose of education (qualification [PGCE], socialisation [placement] and subjectification [BTs' reflective stories]). The themes surfaced from re-reading the data within the table formats. Highlighted patterns emerged through the participants' shared experiences, with recurrent words and phrases extrapolated from the tables and re-crafted into themes.

Theme 1: the subjected subject (socialisation and the teaching conditions within PCE)

The BTs' narratives explain some noteworthy concerns about their early placement experiences of being socialised into PCE's existing professional orders (Biesta, 2015). It seems a quandary exists and thus a critical examination is needed into how socialisation, as a process, is managed within ITE. Beginning Teacher Declan, like the other participants, experiences '*pressure, strain and stress*' - common amongst the six participants. The unrelenting dilemmas encountered during ITE in socialising BTs into PCE's existing professional orders is not only problematized by perpetual change and uncertainty, but also by unyielding expectations placed upon them to perform neoliberal ideals (Ball, 2003). Declan states that:

PCE is a challenging environment. There is pressure, strain and stress due to ambiguity of expectations. Working in the 'unknown' is time-consuming and ridiculous. I'm constantly working with change' and constantly feeling foolish. How can I learn to be a teacher when I am a nervous wreck and struggling?

Ball's (2003) warning of how political conditions within education underpin uncertainty and contradiction are echoed in Declan's words - the '*ambiguity of expectation*' and '*working in the unknown*' evokes Ball's 'terrors of performativity'. For BTs transitioning into the profession, Declan's utterance of 'ambiguities' indicates that it is not the newly qualified alone that deal with uncertainty, but also hints at the department he enters. This is a significant insight, when coupled with our own doubts around the identity and direction of the sector. It suggests that as guardians of this transitional phase, teacher educators cannot anticipate nor second guess the latest trappings of professional roles and responsibilities in an unstable, ever-shifting environment (this capricious landscape can be exemplified by any qualification change or professional body you care to choose, but may best be shown for the political football it is in the sea changes between the early 20th Century moves for deregulation of the sector reverting to 'micromanaged' (Hodgson et al, 2015, 17) centralisation by Government and more recently deregulation, all over again.

Greg describes his first impressions of placement as '*constantly being torn because of the relentless changing goal posts*'. The myriad criteria imposed on educators makes it 'inevitable that teachers become uncertain and self-questioning' (Ball 2003, 221). Labelling a journal entry '*One hell of year*', Greg discloses feeling '*stressed, torn, choked, tired and just about functioning*'. Like Declan, he attributes these sensations to concerns about '*unfair expectations and unrealistic goals*' Where Hodgson et al cited micromanagement, it may be more accurate to propose that PCE has been *mismanaged* for generations – and within these teachers anecdotes, we see the results of political disarray on the profession, for every centralised decision made far from the classroom ripples: '*I'm fighting the workload and most of it stems from admin and filling in forms. I'm putting the same information on three different forms and then having to change it to suit whichever way the management wind blows*' (Greg).

From Greg's and Declan's perspective, socialisation into existing professional orders is not conducive to fostering teachers' moral professionalism within pedagogical praxis. It seems that the denial of human factors and judgment creates conflict between the scope of political discursive practices and teachers' autonomy in thinking and acting. For Shain and Gleeson (1999) compliance replaces judgment, for Biesta (2015) it is tick-box lists of competences that supersede professional judgment, while Orr (2012) argues that teachers simply learn to cope. Our existential complex challenges us to ask how teacher educators can prepare someone for the intensity of a fluid and unstable environment, where:

Planning isn't easy. I was planning 4 topics, 4 extensions and 4 worksheets. I live the frenzy of panic planning. What I recognise is that I am tired and my battery needs recharging. I am like a hamster on a wheel - planning, planning and more planning – I'm losing sleep!! (Greg)

We cannot depend on the vocational generosity of the teacher, not when the dignity of their dedication is stripped away by the toil of 'bullshit jobs' – or 'busy work', which Avis and Reynolds (2017, 16) outline as 'the requirement for on-going accountability as well as the preparation for Ofsted inspection, processes of self-assessment and the like' for 'those who work in education at a time of austerity, intensification and cost cutting, putative non-work time is frequently used to get the job done' (Ibid).

Theme 2: Game play, mediated judgments and the thinking actor

Greg's 'frenzy of planning' is, as Simmons and Thompson (2008, 613) state that 'heavy workloads, scant resources and a culture of anxiety produced by hierarchical organisational ethos were found to thwart creativity'. Again, we cannot merely insist on resilience and must confront the extent to which ITE is complicit in socialisation processes detrimental to others (Taylor, 2016). Shain and Gleeson (1999) assert that managerialism aims to create monopolised professionals. For Greg it is about becoming worn down by work that makes him too tired to think or sleep, so that teacher judgment may be reduced to a competence, as beginning teachers learn to cope with the socialised conditions of PCE (Dixon et al 2010, Orr 2012), where everything becomes faster and ever more efficient, so that there is no time to pause, to reflect, to process or to question, and where there is little time to stop and think (Arendt 1958).

The conditions of PCE are a reminder of how we submit to those conditions. Hattie says she '*literally lives at placement*'. Annie explains '*although I am tired, due to the extremely long days, placement has shown me what working in a college will be like. It is completely mental!!*' Declan writes about managing his workload in '*confusing and contradictory conditions*' – but he manages it nonetheless, even as he questions bureaucratic principles: '*who actually reads the information and what do they do with it anyway? I'm sure they see it is an endurance test!*' There is a process of becoming engrained, relinquishing to the contours and rhythms of unnatural practices, even as the BTs emerging pedagogical praxis become governed by uncertainty, pressure and stress. Lottie, as with so many teachers who are recruited to the vocation, feels the workload as attrition even just as she begins her professional life:

Why do I feel like I'm jumping through hoops? I've been teaching for 3 hours this morning, worked through my lunch and then another 3 hour session THIS IS SOUL DESTROYING, AARRGGHHH!!!!!! I feel like I can't breathe at times with everything going on. AARRGGHHHH changing goal posts and workload – don't tell me this is it. I think I will cry. I feel so bad that I can't keep up.

The extract above contains multiple layers of meaning. Still new to teaching, Lottie is in the process of becoming fatigued as she adjusts to the speed of the profession, and she is experiencing conflict between what is expected and what she is experiencing. Once again, we see an acquiescence and convergence to the climate in the descriptor of conditions that are '*soul-destroying*.' Although ITE is a retreat into a space where sense can be made of the frenetic teaching life, it is little more than a holding space or critical pause, where teachers can contest the 'dangerous distortion of perceived reality and challenge the external powers that deprive of thinking and acting space' (Allen, 2002), and 'where we can rail in a safe place against the inequities of neo-liberalism' (Avis and Reynolds, 2017, 16). In this transition to the lived world of PCE, BTs need time to become, but are exposed to the realities 'necessitated by performative

regimes of dubious value that keeps us busy and saps our energy' (Ibid). Thereafter, who can say if they will be retained in a professional life? Arendt (1958) claims that in certain conditions human action has less chance to flourish and implications arise from creating false behaviours, where human deeds are inhibited in that their capacity to illuminate.

By moulding teachers' behaviours through ideas around performativity and surveillance, teachers are discouraged to think for themselves. In the narratives we can identify that the political landscape operating in FE creates situations where workload and performativity undermines FE teachers' values (Ball, 2003). To prepare teachers for such demoralisation and emasculation, we bestow student-focused values and provoke a natural tendency to enquire: '*is this right?*' And yet that is at odds with contemporary thinking that teacher education – teacher *training* – must eradicate from its programmes any semblance of critique. Teacher education must compromise on contesting the reality of that world in order to focus on behaviour, on quelling the instinct of difficult individuals, or on instilling British Values as germane in every lesson.

Theme 3: The PGCE classroom as a deliberative space

The BTs share how they try to manage the excessive workload, uncertainty and chaos across their college placements. Their experience initially becomes internalised to how they see themselves as the problem (Lottie says she is '*expected to do so much whilst often being criticised*'). The determinism of performativity is weakened by human action whereas the implication is that beginning teachers merely learn to cope (Orr, 2012). This is where ITE courses support further – to divert from the '*feelings of self-blame*' which Annie internalises, as we strive to stem the attrition in the system by critically reflecting on responses. Annie feels the pressure to do as she is 'told' and she questions '*how somethings are rendered more professional than others*', but is able to resist an assimilation of poor practice in order to 'get by and comply' (Dixon et al 2010, 391).

Orr (2012, 60-61) argues that managerialist cultures work to alienate people so that they may experience alienation from humanity. From the BTs' perspectives, conditions within PCE are an almost continual stress test threatening teacher dignity and student humanity. Annie echoes this, describing how some teachers in her department accused her of being '*too soft on her students*'. Though motivated, Annie writes '*there were times I could have just given in her keys and walked out the door*'. What is the proper response in ITE to such disclosure? Welcomed back to the critical pause of ITE, to process and reflect on such experiences, we cannot assure Annie that sacrifice is not normal, because it has become the standard for teachers to accept their lot without complaint until either their mental and physical health perishes or they tolerate it all with the ghostly memory of an ideal. ITE is a source of hope, because it champions the individual practitioner's subjectivity in a critical pause between placement and professional life.

The place of ITE in a neoliberal sector

The contrast between the placement environment and the educative environment provided by the university setting illustrates the potential for new contexts through meaning-making opportunities in a political world. The potential for ITE is to protect and ensure the conditions for the quality of human thinking and acting (Levinson, 2001) and thus provide scope within placement socialisation processes.

These six narratives show that the existing professional orders within PCE teaching can limit the opportunities to engage with their emergent pedagogical praxis. The chronology of their experiences suggests that the value of collective and dialogic storytelling during their PGCE supports their critical reflection in becoming teachers. This helps with meaning-making, as Hattie writes how *'sharing with others helps make sense of her placement experience'* and Declan finds it relieves tension: *'it is great to be with peers at uni. We get in the classroom and off load!'* For Arendt (1958) collective space and dialogue are facilitators of agency and freedom and thus a deliberative space is crucial to enable subjects to be visible through their words and actions. Writing about the PGCE classroom shows how the space supports them *'being in tune'* (Greg) or simply *'being able to be who I need to be'* (Denny), while Annie writes: *'when I hear my peers view different opinions it helps me decide what to do. I feel more informed'*.

There were disparities divulged between safe spaces and hostile environments. Arendt (1958) argues for a shared democratic political space which encourages individual growth, wellbeing and freedom. Together the BTs explored what resonated with them, what offered a healthy challenge and what did not: *'I can finally say that I am now feeling a sense of settlement and a sense of belonging I can come along to Uni and vent! I can say what I want, how I feel and just be me'*. Here, Lottie's disclosure reflects Arendt's (1958) argument that *'conditions'* provide the scope for human action. The collective and dialogic interactions within the PGCE classroom provide an arena for BTs to share experience and become a critical collective. For Lottie, as with the other participants, the PGCE classroom became a space of meaning-making and deliberation, where each participant took some responsibility for their desired emergent pedagogical praxis. Every human being possesses the promise of a *'new beginning'* where engaging in action means to capture and conquer an initiative. Lottie continues as she reflects on her experience:

Throughout this course I have learnt so much about how my biography has shaped me and my beliefs as an individual. Now I see that if I am not open to welcoming certain new experiences then I restrict myself of opportunities. Not that I am uncomfortable with what I believe, but on this course I've met people that I wouldn't normally go out of my way to communicate with, and I've endured things I wouldn't normally put myself up for.

The BTs felt that the PGCE classroom offered a *'healthy and safe space'* where they were encouraged to reclaim power as thinking and acting subjects (Arendt 1958, Allen 2002). Their collaborative and dialogic interactions were influential for their informed and emergent pedagogical praxis, as Greg explains: *'The PGCE is encouraging me to reflect on how I am received in the classroom... this is important to me in that I want to represent all those things that are important to me such as calmness and commitment to my students...not everything needs to be a performance.'*

The purpose of ITE is more than a socialisation process for beginning teachers and offers space and scope to commit to Biesta's (2013) *'balancing'* of the domains for the purpose of education; including socialisation and subjectification. The BTs experience of ITE offered space and opportunity to explore their own subjectivities as a teacher and critically examine assumptions about both pedagogical and political practices (Brookfield, 1995).

The PGCE classroom was experienced as a space where collectively BTs could become political actors within PCE. Earlier narrative text illustrate how neoliberal conditions in PCE were experienced and disclosed, whereas the deliberative space of the PGCE classroom

enabled the beginning teachers to share experiences and examine a variety of perspectives and understandings of the contexts. In the PGCE classroom and through teaching in colleges, the student teachers explore their own subjectivities in making sense of their teaching experiences and emerging pedagogical praxis. Annie adds:

Coming back to Uni after a four week block placement enabled me to feel like myself again. There was a time during placement where I could have just thrown it all in and said it's too difficult. I think having inside information about how education policy and practice works has informed me on how to respond. I think I can do this.

Similarly Hattie writes:

Each week I'm seeing and experiencing FE to its true extent. Both the positive and negative of placement has had an impact on me. The PGCE has helped me to develop my teacher ethos by sharing with my peers and understanding that I matter too.

This statement and its indication to a 'true' picture is disconcerting: it reveals the power play of neoliberalist policies in framing a perceived reality as the singular, 'true' reality, understood by Ball who described educational policy as being about 'dominance'. Our BTs may start with an idealised version of teaching and education, but become attrite by the positives and negatives, whether this is the intense workload, the economic insecurity of colleges or the encroachment on classroom teaching time to embed problematic, ideological concepts like British Values.

Neoliberalism refers to a hegemonic ideology or as Ball (2003) claims an ideology that constructs new meanings around a performativity that undermine PCE teachers' values in a 'fight for their soul'. Performativity derives from the definition of regulation of professional life in relation to bureaucratic targets, measures and sanctions (Ball, 2003). As everything is counted, quantified and fiscally stringent and austere, more is demanded from less. Not only is there less job security, less time and less teaching hours, less funding for resources, less support staff (and etc...), but teaching staff are expected to continually improve targeted averages, while all the time they are rated on their capability at performing in such marketisation conditions.

The extent to which neoliberalist and managerialist practices impact on a monopolistic PCE professional is contested and disrupted, we argue, through teachers' ability to cope and / or make sense of their situated contexts. In this way, PCE teachers' capabilities of shifting landscapes of professionalism through judgment, mediation and action continue to be debated. It is also conceivable that in collective and deliberative spaces and with 'the more human perspectives we can bring to bear upon our understanding of a situation, all the more likely are we to recognise the moral relevance or salience' (Benhabib 1988, 43). The BTs write that the PGCE classroom offers a space to challenge performative practices as compared to their socialised experiences in placement. Declan talks about '*unpicking practices*' and how sharing makes some '*unseen practices become seen*'. What emerges from these narratives is an awareness of BTs subjectivities within the political context of PCE. They begin to show how they engage in a constant negotiation between being a subjected subject through a variety of normalised practices and a subject of action by challenging such practices. Similarly, Greg claims that during a PGCE group task his '*blinkers were removed*' and that he could '*see the blind spots*'. Through their shared experiences in ITE, Beginning Teachers come to see for themselves how things are and who they choose to be.

Conclusion

The study makes some recommendations around policy and practice:

Research: The authors intend to revisit the participants five years on. The longitudinal aspect of the study will add richness and depth to understanding PCE teachers' experiences over time. Their stories would offer insight into how ITE can continue to prepare and support beginning teachers for the political and human contexts of FE, while potentially offering insight into continued teacher retention issues.

College Policy: The themes from this study illustrate some of the implications of the working conditions in FE. There are heavy teaching workloads and uncertain, yet, excessive administration duties. These working conditions impact on teachers' health and wellbeing. College policies must be considered fit for purpose, beginning with teacher wellbeing. Likewise we urge college senior management teams (SMTs) to engage with collective and collaborative practices, to listen and support those on the frontline of teaching.

The beginning teachers valued the safe and deliberative space of their PGCE classroom. There has been a demise of space in FE thus limiting opportunities for teachers to engage in **critically** reflective conversations about diversity and difference in teaching practice. Often staffrooms have been replaced by offices and teachers have little time to share their storied experiences about teaching and learning. Perhaps now is the time for SMTs to agree the significance of creating meaningful space and precious time for their teachers to share their experiences, ideas and practices - a space to bring about change.

Practice: This study was rooted in practice. The teachers' subjectivities remained powerful throughout and illustrate that human deeds, in care and kindness, are personal and political acts. Teachers are reminded that their moral and ethical praxis makes a difference to the lives of others. In challenging and uncertain times it is important for teachers to know who they are and what they stand for. In this way teachers can nurture and reclaim their agency through the power of their subjectivities and by enacting their world views. Furthermore by coming together in plurality teachers can collectively challenge those in PCE whose words are empty and whose deeds are brutal (Arendt, 1958).

In the deliberative space, of the PGCE classroom, the beginning teachers were able to explore and story their emergent pedagogical praxis within the political context of education. In this study, the BTs experienced PCE as '*the good*', '*the bad*' and '*the ugly*' (Denny). These experiences had an impact on their judgment making and recorded how managerial tactics were used to coerce them to conform to policy initiatives and to comply with heavy and unrealistic workloads. The outcome was that some FE teachers often cautiously and carefully partake in 'game play'. Here the relationship between socialisation and subjectification is problematic and can impact on the teachers' mediatory judgments and indeed their well-being. The implication between managerialist practices and game play is that teaching could become an illusionary practice of banalness in a fabricated existence. This study illustrated that a key purpose of ITE is to safeguard the 'space of appearance' (Arendt, 1958) between socialisation and subjectification. By safeguarding the scope of ITE, the PGCE classroom becomes an active and political space to support beginning teachers to become socialised into an existing world of PCE and to also initiate change.

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