

## 5



## TEACHER EDUCATION IN 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY ENGLAND. A CASE STUDY IN NEOLIBERAL PUBLIC POLICY

*La formación del profesorado del siglo XXI en  
Inglaterra. Un estudio de caso desde la política  
neoliberal*

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### ABSTRACT

Since 1984, English teacher education, especially initial teacher education, has been the subject of many interventions by central government. The analysis in this paper suggests that the overall trajectory of these policies has consistently moved teacher education in the direction of marketised system based on a combination of neo-liberal and neo-conservative approaches. This path has not been deviated from in spite of the changes in government from the Conservative –led Thatcher and Major governments until 1997, through the subsequent Labour –led Blair and Brown governments, nor with the arrival in May 2010 of the Coalition Government of the Conservative and Liberal Democratic parties. The paper traces these developments through three main themes – government policy documents and speeches, the creation of government agencies to carry through the policies and the diversification of approaches to entry into the teaching profession. The first part of the paper traces developments from 1984, the second part considers the recent past since the Coalition Government was established in 2010. The conclusion suggests that there is currently a very serious threat to the quality of teaching in England because of the destabilisation of teacher education provision and the undermining of the contribution of universities.

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**KEY WORDS:** Teacher Education; Educational policy; Quality of teaching; Teaching profession.

## RESUMEN

Desde 1984, la formación del profesorado en Inglaterra, especialmente su formación inicial, se ha visto sometida a diversas reformas desde el gobierno central. El análisis que se presenta en este artículo sugiere que la trayectoria general de estas políticas ha consistido en un progresivo desplazamiento de la formación del profesorado hacia la mercantilización del sistema basada en una combinación de enfoques neoliberal y neoconservador. Esta vía se ha mantenido consistente a lo largo del tiempo, y ello a pesar de los cambios de gobierno, desde los conservadores –liderados por Thatcher y Major hasta 1997, pasando por los laboristas –liderados por Blair y Brown, hasta la llegada en mayo de 2010 del gobierno de coalición entre conservadores y demócratas liberales. El artículo presenta estos desarrollos políticos a través de tres elementos centrales –documentos políticos y discursos gubernamentales, la creación de agencias gubernamentales para desarrollar esas políticas y la diversificación de modelos de acceso a la profesión docente. La primera parte del artículo aborda los desarrollos políticos en materia de formación del profesorado desde 1984, mientras que en la segunda parte, se considera su pasado reciente desde el establecimiento del gobierno de coalición en 2010. En la conclusión se sugiere que la calidad de la formación del profesorado se encuentra gravemente amenazada como consecuencia de su falta de estabilidad y la menor contribución de las universidades.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Formación del profesorado; Política educativa; Calidad de la enseñanza; Profesión docente.

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## INTRODUCCIÓN

In this paper we track the recent trajectory of government policy on teacher education and training in England. We examine how the development of policy, especially policy affecting pre-service or initial teacher education, has been influenced by a range of factors including think tanks and the media. Although there have been at least three different types of government over the past thirty years in England (Conservative, Labour and Coalition), we find that there have been significant consistencies in the ‘direction of travel’ throughout that period and that two themes emerge from this analysis. On the face of it, the two themes are in tension or even contradictory, for one is about increasing ‘freedom’, the other is about tightening central control. However we argue that this apparent contradiction is entirely typical of social and public policy under New Right (neo-liberal and neo-conservative) regimes. The freeing or creation of ‘the market’ can only be achieved through the introduction of repressive and constraining regulations that actually place severe limits on creativity and autonomy, at least for professionals working in the field.

Though the task given to the authors was to provide an analysis of 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher education in England, it is our contention that in order to understand the present situation it is

necessary to start our account in 1984, five years after the first avowedly New Right Government was elected to power, that which was led by Margaret Thatcher. In 1997, thirteen years after our starting point, the first 'New Labour' government, led by Tony Blair, was elected. It turned out that there was more continuity than discontinuity between New Labour and the New Right. Then, after a further thirteen year period, we have seen the creation of the UK's first post-war coalition government, following the General Election in 2010. This has been a somewhat uneasy arrangement between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats, and in relation to teacher education, has produced something of an acceleration albeit in much the same direction, with increasingly radical policies being introduced.

It is important to note that the case we are taking is the English one, which should not be confused with the British one. Teacher education in Scotland has always been organised and managed separately from England (MENTER et al, 2006) and currently appears to be developing a very different trajectory to that in England (HULME and MENTER, 2011) and since the devolution of education policy to separate legislatures in Wales and Northern Ireland in 1998/9 the path in those jurisdictions has also increasingly diverged from that in England (HULME and MENTER, 2008).

In this article we first offer an account of the major events affecting teacher education in England from 1984 until the election of the present government in 2010. In rather more detail, we then examine what interventions have been made since then and show how there now appears to be a major threat to the professional basis of teacher education which, if realised, could undermine the quality of teaching in English schools for years to come, as well as undermining the educational research infrastructure, which is so closely associated with university departments of education. The paper concludes with an assessment of the current situation and a brief consideration of the implications of this scenario through some internal UK and external international comparisons.

### **1. 1984-2010: THE TIGHTENING GRIP OF GOVERNMENT**

The tightening control of English teacher education can be traced through a number of policy documents published by the various governments over the period 1984 until the election of the Coalition Government in 2010. These were typically called 'Circulars' each with a number and a title. Sometimes policy was also implemented through new legislation, typically an Education Act, and sometimes Green Papers and White Papers were the vehicle for launching new policies, as we shall see. Various key government agencies were established in order to implement the policies, agencies which were sometimes 'at arm's length' from the government ministry, at other times intimately embedded within the ministry. Finally, a key strand throughout this period has been the 'diversification' of routes of entry into teaching. By the late 1970s almost all initial teacher education in England was in the form of either one year training courses for graduates or four year programmes for undergraduates (mainly for the primary school sector), with colleges of education, polytechnics and universities being responsible for leading these programmes. This homogeneity started to change significantly from the 1980s onwards. So, the broadly chronological account that follows, highlights these three themes – policy documents, government agencies and diversification. The overall picture was a complex and constantly changing one, in which other economic factors,

particularly factors affecting the supply of and demand for teachers in the workforce were also significant and may at times tend to be overlooked in accounts such as these.

### **1.1. 1984 – the first intervention**

In addition to being the year on which George Orwell's famous dystopian novel (Orwell, 1948) was set and in which 'Big Brother' came to dominate the culture and the polity, 1984 saw the actual publication of the first government circular in the sequence that was to emerge over the subsequent twenty years. Known as Circular 3/84, this was entitled *Initial Teacher Training: Approval of Courses* (DES, 1984) and set out a number of requirements that initial teacher training programmes would have to meet in order to be approved, by a new body, established specifically for this purpose, The Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, known as 'CATE'. This body was appointed by the Secretary of State for Education, and was chaired by a leading teacher educator with a university background (Professor William Taylor).

The 'CATE Criteria' which were set out in the Circular included minimum periods of time to be spent in school by student teachers during their programmes of study and, for intending primary teachers, specified particular proportions of time to be spent on professional education, study of the student's specialist subject and on the teaching of the specialist subject. The Circular also set out some requirements about the professional experience of the college and university staff who was teaching on the programmes. The demand for 'recent and relevant experience' within school settings soon led to programmes of Renewal of School Experience ('ROSE') for teacher educators in each of the training institutions.

So, even in this first intervention we see two of the three mechanisms for reforming teacher education being introduced – the naming of specific requirements that providers must meet in order for their courses to lead to the award of Qualified Teaching Status and the creation of a central body to manage the 'policing' of this approach. In retrospect however, CATE is seen as a body with quite a soft touch, which continued to be strongly influenced by professionals even if the underlying politics had been heightened and even though some of the members of the Council held strongly ideological positions associated with the New Right. The key point to be made is that the principle of political intervention in ITT had been established and at no point since then has the voice of the profession been the central guiding voice for policy, as it had been in the period before 1984 (ALEXANDER, 1984). There had also been significant local or regional influence in the provision of ITT designed to ensure a reasonable level of provision in primary and secondary training respectively to meet the local needs of schools and local education authorities. Indeed, even after 1984, CATE operated in a manner which was sensitive to regional demands, through operating local committees to carry out some of the planning and development work.

### **1.2. 1989 – diversification of entry routes**

The next government circular came five years later. Circular 24/89 (DES, 1989) was built upon its predecessor and introduced further refinements, including more detailed requirements for the structure and timing of programmes and also set out rules that could cover some of the new

patterns of training. As mentioned above, there had been a consolidation of provision around one year and four year courses during the 1970s as teaching moved towards becoming an 'all-graduate' profession, as had been proposed in the James Report of 1972 (JAMES, 1972). However, there had been growing concern about shortages of teachers in some of the newer subjects (such as technology) and in the difficulty in recruiting mathematics teachers. Rapid changes in the industrial infrastructure had also led to there being a glut of skilled technically trained people available for work as many industries were making large scale redundancies. These factors combined to create an opportunity for the introduction of shortened degree programmes for students to qualify as teachers. These two-year Bachelor of Education courses were established by several polytechnics across the country and were successful in providing much-needed teachers in these 'shortage subjects'.

However, teacher shortages generally did become more serious in the late 1980s and there was a call from the Secretary of State for Education for 'imaginative projects' which could lead to the award of a teaching qualification. In particular, in 1988, new approaches named 'articled and licensed teacher' schemes started. These laid the ground for what would later be called employment-based approaches to teacher education. They offered the opportunity for schools to recruit staff directly onto their staff and to offer a training programme, perhaps in association with a university or college. A number of the licensed teachers were actually already qualified as teachers but not within England. Later the approach for such colleagues became known as the Overseas Trained Teacher (OTT) scheme. This period also saw attempts to introduce part-time courses for entry into teaching, including a largely distance learning approach offered by the Open University. So we can see the third key mechanism of reform, that is 'diversification', was already being established by the late 1980s.

The late 1980s also saw the upheaval of the schools system in England with the most sweeping legislation since 1944. The Education Reform Act of 1988 established the National Curriculum and national assessment, both establishing much tighter control over the processes of schooling. However at the same time we saw the introduction of the quasi-market into education (WHITTY and MENTER, 1989; LEGRAND and BARTLETT, 1993) through 'open enrolment' and Local Management of Schools. Rather curiously these dual elements of new right education reform – curricular control and managerial freedom - did not appear to have an immediate impact on teacher education. Nevertheless there was a spate of right wing pamphleteering being undertaken by a range of groups, such as The Hillgate Group, The Adam Smith Institute and the Centre for Policy Studies (see FURLONG et al, 2000). These pamphlets variously alleged left-wing bias in teacher education institutions, over-emphasis on educational theory and a lack of practical experience within courses.

### **1.3. 1992, 1993 and the new partnerships**

These were allegations that were also picked up in the popular press and then developed subsequently into government policy on teacher education with a radical pair of circulars, known as 9/92 and 14/93 (DfE, 1992; 1993), covering respectively secondary and primary teacher education. The most radical element of these was the new requirement that all university- and college-led

provision should now be offered through formal partnerships with schools and that schools should receive some of the resources that were allocated for the provision of the programme. There had been a number of significant innovations in school-based teacher education over the preceding years (see FURLONG et al, 1988) and some of these, such as the Oxford Internship scheme (BENTON, 1990), had developed very precise roles for school-based staff, but the effect of the 1992 government intervention was to lead to the development of significant professional development across the country for school staff who were taking on the role of student mentor or professional tutor within the schools. This was seen by some as the first direct threat to higher education involvement in initial teacher training but can also be seen retrospectively as a very positive development in that it brought much greater professional recognition for the contribution of schools themselves in ITT. The other strongly directive element in the circulars was a significant increase in the amount of time that trainee teachers were required to spend in schools. On secondary one year programmes, Kenneth Clarke, the Secretary of State had initially announced that 75% of time should be spent in schools. This was actually reduced to 67% by the time the Circular was published, but it still did mean that on a 36 week programme just 12 weeks could be spent in higher education based study.

In 1993 another new approach to initial teacher training was announced, known as the School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) scheme and this too appeared to be a significant threat to higher education involvement. Any group of schools either in a particular area or with a common shared mission could establish a consortium and offer to train teachers within their schools. The extent to which they might draw on the expertise of university departments of education was entirely up to them. However, if the scheme was to lead to the award of an academic qualification such as PGCE, then they would necessarily have to collaborate with a higher education institution.

The SCITTS were not employment-based routes, in that the trainees were not technically employees within the school, even though they were largely based there. However the two employment-based routes that were launched at about this time were the Registered Teacher Programme and the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP). The former of these did not take off very well but the GTP programme fairly rapidly became a significant new route through which trainees, rather than being treated as students and therefore (later) having to pay fees, would be treated as employees and were themselves paid as unqualified teachers, during their training.

#### **1.4. Inspection**

Throughout this period (1984-1992) the quality assurance procedures that were operated throughout higher education were continuing to be applied in teacher education, with new courses being validated through a largely peer driven system involving colleagues from other institutions and from the teaching profession and the quality of existing provision was monitored through an examining process which included a number of external elements. Inspection was growing in its significance, although still carried out by members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate, again a professionally led body that would offer appraisal, advice and support to providers, as well as grades, when courses were inspected. However as government concern about quality increased, so

the stakes for inspection were also starting to be raised and quality assessment started to take precedence over quality assurance. In 1992 the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) was created as the body that initially would carry out a national programme of school inspections with the intention of raising standards. A division of Ofsted was established to carry out inspections of Initial Teacher Training and it was at this time that new types of inspectors started to play a part. Some were drawn from within the sector but others were provided by private companies. The contribution and role of the long-established HMI inspectors started to diminish at this time.

### **1.5. 1994-1998: The Teacher Training Agency and Standards**

Then just two years later under the auspices of the 1994 Education Act, the Government replaced CATE with an entirely new body called the Teacher Training Agency (TTA). This was to operate at a national level and critically to make decisions about the allocation of resources, notably in terms of the numbers of training places to be offered by each provider. The TTA was a 'Non-Departmental Public Body', effectively an executive agency designed to manage all matters related to teacher training, on behalf of the Government. In line with the Government's commitment to raise standards and quality across all state education, the TTA very quickly developed a collaboration with Ofsted, through which the annual allocations process of training places was to be based on the current gradings that emerged from inspections. Putting it simply, if overall numbers were to be increased, those providers with the best grades would benefit most from the new allocation. On the other hand, if numbers were to be reduced, those providers with poorer quality grades would be disproportionately targeted to lose numbers. In other words the inspection system became a very high stakes element in provision and the health and prospects of university education departments became increasingly dominated by the need to manage the inspection process successfully and effectively. What was sometimes called 'a culture of compliance' among providers developed.

The mid-1990s also saw the rapid development of 'standards' in teacher training. The idea of specified and observable characteristics of teaching had been introduced in England under the term 'competences' as early as the 1992/3 circulars, but it was in 1997, just after the election of the first Labour Government for eighteen years, that Circular 10/97 was published, entitled *Teaching: High Status, High Standards* (DfEE, 1997). This offered an elaboration of statements about the skills, knowledge and understanding required of teachers, each to become known as a standard, all of which should be observable in the practice of an individual's teaching in order for him/her to qualify as a teacher. This 'reconstruction' of teaching was carried out through a process of consultation that had several rather disconcerting elements (see MAHONY and HEXTALL, 2000) and which many commentators saw as a reductionist and technical-rationalist approach to teaching which could not succeed in capturing the complex essence of successful practice within the profession (FURLONG et al, 2000).

The following year, after the publication of a Green Paper (ie a consultation document) published by the Labour Government, *Teachers: Meeting the Challenge of Change* (DfEE, 1998a), we saw the (late?) arrival of a National Curriculum for teacher education in Circular 4/98 (DfEE, 1998b). This for the first time specified in some detail the content of teacher education

programmes. That it was effectively implemented by all providers, including all of the university providers, may be seen as a significant relinquishment by the universities of their academic autonomy. While in a number of professional areas of training universities had long accepted the existence of some professional requirements, this seemed to represent a further step, an imposition of a particular curriculum on higher education institutions. It is important to note also that the Green Paper also introduced 'skills tests' for teachers, tests in literacy, numeracy and ICT (Information and Communications Technology), which initially were to be taken on completion of the teacher training course and which would have to be passed in order to become fully registered as teacher. We should also note that the Green Paper did bring performance management much more explicitly into the conditions of employment of teachers, leading to new forms of performance related pay. It also introduced teaching assistants as a much more significant part of the education workforce.

The Labour Government also fulfilled a longstanding commitment to teachers in 2001 by establishing The General Teaching Council for England (GTCE). This was to be a professional body for teachers that would develop a code of professional conduct as well as being the body for the official registration of teaching qualifications. From the outset, there were significant tensions between this teachers' organisation and the TTA, with a number of 'boundary disputes', for example concerning Continuing Professional Development for teachers. At about the same time Teaching Councils were also created in Northern Ireland and Wales. There had been such a body in Scotland since 1966. The GTCE was to prove short-lived as the Coalition Government's Secretary of State Michael Gove was quick to announce its abolition following the 2010 general election.

Another New Labour innovation has proved more enduring however. Teach First was established in 2002, modelled on Teach for America. This was a scheme backed by business and attracting sponsorship from organisations such as the consultancy firm McKinsey, which sought to attract 'the brightest and best' graduates from leading universities to commit for a minimum of two years to teaching. These trainees were to be based in 'some of the most challenging schools' in urban areas (initially in London, but later elsewhere). Following an intensive six week preparatory summer school the trainees would undertake school-based training for a year leading to QTS and then continue to teach for a further year. Although the scheme is relatively expensive to run, it has been adjudged a great success both by the Labour Government that launched it and by the Coalition Government which succeeded and which continues to praise it for its innovative and entrepreneurial spirit.

### **1.6. 2005 – The TTA becomes the TDA**

In 2005 the Labour Government decided to change the remit of the TTA and renamed it. It was to become responsible for elements of the 'wider education workforce', such as the Higher Level Teaching Assistants that had been foreshadowed in the 1998 Green Paper. It was also going to play a part in more aspects of lifelong teacher learning and development. It was therefore renamed the Training and Development Agency for Schools (known as the TDA). Under this title it continued to revise and reform the teaching standards and indeed was leading in the development of a new Master's level qualification that was to be available to early career teachers. This Master's



in Teaching and Learning (MTL) was developed very rapidly with minimal higher education involvement (in spite of the 'Master's' title), but was another of the first education casualties of the Coalition Government that came into power in May 2010. It is still not entirely clear whether the ditching of the MTL was purely a cost cutting exercise or whether there was some ideological opposition to it within the new government.

The TDA was also given the promotion of teaching as a profession as one of its major tasks. There were renewed serious concerns in the early part of the first decade of the twentieth century about teacher supply and retention. There was a huge effort put into the marketing of teaching with major advertising campaigns to attract the brightest and best as well as the steady introduction of financial incentives for those applying to teach in the shortage subjects –especially mathematics and science. These incentives became increasingly differentiated as time went on so that they would be greater for those applicants with a better degree classification, for example.

Furlong (2005) suggests that under New Labour the TDA was a classic 'third way' organisation. He noted the retreat from the national curriculum for ITT and how there was increasing emphasis on consultation and partnership as ways of working (NEWMAN and CLARKE, 2009). However at the same time as the remit of the TDA was expanding and it was developing a more friendly face, the emphasis on control and inspection was strengthening still further. In the wake of new school policies under New Labour on literacy and numeracy in primary schools especially, the government was urging the TDA to ensure the improvement of standards in these areas within initial teacher training. Ministers had picked up, through an annual survey of Newly Qualified Teachers, that many trainees did not feel confident in teaching early reading and also that they were less than confident on managing behaviour in classroom. They therefore started to require of inspections that providers be separately graded in such matters and increasingly they were required to teach a particular approach in literacy, known as systematic synthetic phonics. The research to show that this may be a successful approach is far from convincing. However, because the approach appears to be both rigorous and traditional, it seems to have been adopted by government as the only way to teach reading. ITT providers of primary training were each inspected on their provision and were rated on a traffic lights system (Green = doing fine; Amber = some concerns; Red = not making adequate provision). Some providers were becoming concerned that their accreditation would actually be withdrawn, or that was what they were threatened with and several providers had their numbers reduced as a result of low inspection grades.

By the time that New Labour lost power and the Coalition Government came in, we can therefore see how neoliberal policies had affected the provision of teacher education. In a steady stream of government documents, new increasingly tight controls had been introduced. Competition had been introduced into the system through creating a quasi-market of choices for potential trainees to make about what form of training they would prefer. Apparently objective measurement systems of inspection had been introduced in the name of raising quality across the system, which had led to enormous instability and insecurity in some parts of that system. For those educators who genuinely believe in competition being the key driver to improvement then these developments may seem very positive and that the only 'victims' are those who are not providing high quality training and education. However, that many of these policies seem to have undermined the

contribution of higher education in the preparation of teachers is a concern to many teachers themselves, as well as to their organisations, implying as it does, a reduction in teacher professionalism and autonomy. Law and medicine - although they have been under some political pressure over this period – have not seen equivalent attempts to move them further from the academic and intellectual base of professional learning in the universities. Indeed nurse education has seen a steady move towards academic professionalisation over a similar period. Many courses in teacher education have been shortened (there are few if any four year BEd programmes left anywhere) and routes diversified. Not only are there many different routes into teaching but there are also alternatives to teaching per se. We see an increasingly differentiated teaching workforce both by route of entry and by nature of the responsibility.

## **2. FROM 2010 – THE DECONSTRUCTION OF TEACHER EDUCATION?**

The UK general election, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2012, resulted in a coalition government between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties. The Department for Children, Schools and Families under the previous Labour Government changed its name to the Department for Education (DfE). A ministerial team was appointed on entering government which was subsequently reshuffled on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012.

The first piece of clear policy intent in education came from the publication of the government's White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010a). In addition, a 35 page supporting document, *The Case for Change* (DfE 2010b) accompanied this and gave a more in-depth evidence based argument to support the changes outlined in the White Paper. Six months after the publication of the White Paper, another document, *Training our next generation of outstanding teachers* (DfE, 2011) was published. This document set out proposals for the reform of initial teacher training (ITT) to take effect from September 2012. In relation to ITT and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) the general thrust of policy captured in the White Paper and its sister paper *The Case for Change* contains proposals to raise the status of teaching through attracting higher quality applicants from a more diverse pool and to make ITT more school-based and school-led through, for example, the development of a network of Teaching Schools who would have a greater responsibility for delivering and leading ITT and CPD. The purpose of the next sections will be to look at both the origins of the key policy shifts in the White Paper and the evolution of these ideas to the present day and set these in the context of the themes explored in the previous section of diversification/freedom and control.

### **2.1. The Conservatives and Liberal democrats in opposition 2007-2010 – diversification, freedom and control -The education system as a whole**

To understand the rationale for the reforms outlined above it is necessary to see how they sit within bigger policy directions in education that began before the Conservative and Liberal Democrats formed the new government in May 2010. This section will locate the evolving teacher education policy of the two opposition parties within this bigger picture and within three key themes of diversification, freedom and accountability that has emerged from the analysis of key speeches from key opposition politicians and from documentary evidence. Michael Gove, who was

to become Secretary of State for Education in the coalition government, occupied the equivalent position in opposition.

The two parties in opposition attacked the Labour Government's policies in two main areas, first a failure to provide educated young people to allow the UK to compete on the international stage:

“The next generation of British workers will face the most competitive economic environment in world history. If we do not modernise our schools and universities, British workers will lose their livelihood and high quality jobs will start leaving. In recent years, however, we have been falling behind. In Australia, New Zealand, Finland, Sweden, Norway, the United States and even Poland the number of young people going to university is far higher than the proportion who go here. Currently nearly half of our children leave primary school - at the age of eleven - unable to read” (GOVE, 2007).

Second, a failure to educate the poor and most disadvantaged in society restricting their life changes and to promote social mobility. The second of these two failures is a recurrent and passionate theme of Michael Gove's speeches from 2007 to the present day which he often frames as almost a mission and moral crusade:

“The gap in academic achievement between those pupils from poorer homes and the rest widens as children go through school. By the time they sit their GCSEs, children from the poorest homes will have fallen further and further behind their contemporaries. We cannot afford to allow the scandal of a system which deepens division to go on.....Instead of two nations, instead of the educationally rich and the knowledge poor, sheep and goats, the fortunate and the forgotten, we should have an education system which overcomes disadvantage, unlocks talent and unites our country. That is my vision and it should be our mission” (GOVE, 2007).

This view is echoed critique by David Laws, when he was shadow education minister for the Liberal Democrats:

“And Britain now wears the badge of shame as the country where your life chances are more determined by your parents' income than your own ability. .... Let me tell you about these children. They arrive on their first school day, having already fallen way behind. And what is so shocking, is that rather than catching up at school, most of these children will fall further and further behind” (LAWS, 2007).

The key policy responses laid out by the opposition crystallise around measures to free schools from the bureaucratic control of the state and to diversify provision. For example, David Cameron (2007), leader of the conservative opposition, argued for a school system that has a greater diversity of types of schools. Secondly, he argued that the state should not be the sole provider of education thereby providing key roles for independent institutions, voluntary bodies and social enterprises. Thirdly, schools should be free from central bureaucratic control so that they can be free to innovate and, finally, that ‘in place of top-down instruction, empowerment of bottom up innovation’ should take place where the role of government would now be as ‘a regulator of services, not a monopoly provider’. A greater diversity of school provision is also seen to be the means to give parents choice. These remedies are also put forward in a speech by David Laws (Liberal Democrat spokesman on Children, Schools and Families):

“But, as liberals, it cannot be enough *only* to move power down from national politicians to local politicians. If we believe in empowering parents and pupils, part of that empowerment is choice. Choice is not a dirty word: it is one of the essential freedoms in a liberal society. And it is a liberal way of promoting real diversity, innovation, and higher standards. We should welcome new schools – as they do in many progressive countries – so long as those schools accept overarching admissions policies and the minimum curriculum standards. Finally, we must allow more innovation. It is absurd that only the Government’s pet schools should have the powers to innovate. These freedoms should be available in *every* school” (LAWS, 2007).

The themes of diversification, freedom and choice in the school system are also consistently present in speeches by Michael Gove in opposition and in government and later in government by Nick Gibb (Minister of State for Schools 2010-2012). These policy moves are clearly located within neoliberal perspectives where “market forces are alleged to be an efficient means of creating the conditions and relationships necessary for the freedom of consumers, for allocating scarce resources, generating diversity and providing the form of flexibility the changing world requires” (FURLONG et al, 200: 10).

More neo-conservative perspectives emphasising “traditional authority” (FURLONG et al., 2000: 10) are apparent in terms of the theme of accountability where there are indications that, when in government, there would be changes to government inspection by Ofsted which seem to be in a direction of tightening the reigns of accountability. For example Michael Gove (2009d) announced: “We will have ‘no notice’ Ofsted inspections so that inspectors can investigate schools with serious behaviour problems” (GOVE, 2009d).

Furthermore, in this speech, Gove indicates that schools judged to be failing by Ofsted will have their leadership replaced and reopen as Academies. Furthermore Teach First, Teaching Leaders and Future Leader programmes will be seen as ‘incubators’ that:

can work with established Academy chains to form new Academy management teams to take over schools identified as ‘failing’ by a revamped Ofsted, and also work with their own alumnae and parent groups on the foundation of new schools (Gove, 2009d)

## **2.2. Teacher Education**

The first significant mention of teacher education by Michael Gove (2009) focuses on improving the quality of teaching as being the ‘one factor’ which ‘unites those countries that do best in every measurement of educational performance’. Here he draws extensively on evidence from the McKinsey report (BARBER and MOURSHED, 2007) which presents evidence that high performing teachers produce high performing students in high performing countries such as Finland, Singapore and South Korea. One of the key reasons given in the McKinsey report for the high performance of teachers in these countries is that they recruit high quality applicants:

“These nations have determinedly shaped policy to ensure that teaching is a high prestige profession, attracting the brightest graduates and offering a level of financial reward and social esteem which ensures teachers are seen as members of the nation’s elite” (Gove, 2009a).

The focus of education policy thus at this stage is on improving the quality of teachers from which the key themes of freedom and diversification are apparent in achieving this aim. The first means proposed by Michael Gove to improve the quality of teachers is to diversify and draw on a wider pool of applicants. Gove (2009a), drawing on suggestions from a Policy Exchange report, *More Good Teachers* (2008), proposes the creation of a 'Teach Now' route into teaching to attract a more diverse set of applicants into teaching such as 'high-achieving business people' in mid-career who want to come into teaching to replace the Graduate Teacher Programme. He also proposes the expansion of Teach First and the expansion of two programmes which grew 'out of Teach First, Teaching Leaders and Future Leaders, which help train future Heads of Department and aspirant Head Teachers'. Involving organisations like Teach First is also seen to be a way of freeing the education system from bureaucracy:

"Once again these organisations, volunteer-led, innovative and anti-bureaucratic in culture, have generated a culture of excellence and leadership which surpasses anything else new in the educational landscape" (Gove, 2009d).

Other proposals by Michael Gove to diversify the pool of applicants to teaching involve policy announcements to develop a "Troops to Teachers" programme "to get professionals in the army who know how to train young men and women into the classroom where they can provide not just discipline –but inspiration and leadership" (Gove, 2009c).

A second means to attract higher quality applicants into the profession focuses on offering them more incentives to enter the profession and to retain them once they are in. Incentives to attract better quality applicants announced include offering to pay off the student loans of high quality mathematics and science graduates (Gove, 2010a). In terms of improving retention of high performing teachers Gove proposed reducing government bureaucracy by creating Academies free from local authority control so they can pay excellent teachers more and, secondly, offering them the opportunity to take higher qualifications in academic subjects:

"Maintain and deepen the knowledge of the subjects they love and on which they are paid to be authorities. You shouldn't stop being an academic physicist or part of a community of university historians when you enter teaching" (GOVE, 2009a).

At this point we just note that a key focus of CPD here is seen as a need to develop subject knowledge expertise in academic subjects rather than the development of pedagogic skills, a point we will return to later.

A third means to improve the quality of teaching is a drive to improve the prestige of teaching which in high performing countries seems to attract higher quality applicants. The main proposal here is to ensure prestige by raising the bar of qualifications needed to enter the teaching profession in the UK. For example for entry into any postgraduate routes of ITT:

"We will also raise the bar by refusing to fund any student who wants to enter postgraduate teacher training who has only a 'third' class degree. Deep subject knowledge is a prerequisite for success in secondary school teaching. So we'll insist, to start with, that teachers have at least a 2:2 before the taxpayer will pay for them to do a PGCE" (GOVE, 2009d).

Many of the initiatives on recruitment have a flavour of both neoliberal and neoconservative perspectives of the ‘New Right’. The initiatives designed to increase the diversity of applicants to the profession have a more neoliberal slant whilst those designed to bring in troops to teaching to improve discipline and the focus on developing teachers’ subject knowledge resonate more with neoconservative perspectives of tradition and control. In summary in this section we can show that the key themes of freedom and diversification manifest themselves in the education system as a whole but also in key policy proposals in teacher education that focus, in opposition, on attracting the best teachers into the profession. In this period there seem to be no significant policy announcements about improving the quality of initial teacher education despite a strong argument for this in the report by Policy Exchange, *More Good Teachers*, in 2008. But that is to come later, as we shall see.

### **2.3. In government - The Conservative-Liberal Coalition 11<sup>th</sup> May 2010 – freedom, diversification and control**

Many of the policies outlined in opposition can be seen in early government policy (The White Paper, 2010 – see section 1). Again, as in opposition, we can see teacher education policy situated within two key themes of diversification and freedom, a neoliberal perspective, alongside more neoconservative ones like tightening accountability. Michael Gove (2010b) in a speech just after coming into power now turns more significant attention to ITT. His conception of how teachers learn to teach is best described in his own words:

“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, 2010b).

In this speech he announces proposals to ‘reform teacher training to shift trainee teachers out of college and into the classroom’. Furlong et al. (2000) argue that in the past both neoliberals and neoconservatives have called for ‘a school-based apprenticeship model’ and agree that ‘higher education-based training is at best of secondary importance, as worst it is positively harmful’ (p.11). Michael Gove’s comments are therefore consistent with both these policy perspectives. Gove sees diversification of the ITE system as the means to achieve more school-based but also school-led training and announces plans to ‘end the arbitrary bureaucratic rule which limits how many teachers can be trained in schools, shift resources so that more heads can train teachers in their own schools, and make it easier for people to shift in mid-career into teaching’. In November 2011 an implementation plan *Training our next generation of outstanding teachers* (Department for Education, 2011) makes much clearer how a move to more school-led and school-based ITT and CPD will be realised. First, a new route called School Direct is introduced:

“The main aim of School Direct is to allow schools to recruit and select the trainees they want with the expectation that they will then go on to work within the school or group of schools in which they were trained, although there is no absolute guarantee of employment” (DfE, 2011)

Later, School Direct was amended to include a second pathway, School Direct (salaried), to replace the GTP programme. The implementation plan also indicates that the new Teaching Schools ‘will lead the school system in training and developing outstanding teachers’. In the plan it is

envisaged that there will be a hundred teaching schools for the 2011/12 academic year rising to '500 schools and their alliances by 2014/15'. Teaching Schools are a flagship policy and are described on the DfE website as follows:

"Teaching schools give outstanding schools a leading role in the training and professional development of teachers, support staff and head teachers, as well as contributing to the raising of standards through school-to-school support" (DfE, 2011).

The development of a national network of Teaching Schools and the introduction of School Direct could be seen as a move to diversification in teacher education. However, a move to locate teacher education mainly in schools, led by schools could, despite the different routes, be seen as a way of reducing diversification because the fundamental focus of teacher education is in one place, the school. Although Teaching Schools and School Direct are required to work in partnership with HEIs this is not envisaged to be as significant, sustained and systematic as in current University-school partnerships in ITT. Policy on CPD, both in opposition and now in government, still has a focus on teachers studying for a Masters degree in an academic subject and, in the White Paper there is a proposal to introduce a new competitive national scholarship scheme to support professional development focusing on the development of teachers' subject knowledge. As Nick Gibb announced:

"In the White Paper, we made a commitment to introduce a new Scholarship Fund. (...) our intention is that it will enable a number of teachers every year to study for post-graduate qualifications or other equally rigorous subject-based professional development that will benefit them and their careers" (GIBB, 2011a).

In addition, encouraging collaboration between schools is seen as a key means, in a less bureaucratic system, to develop pedagogy and Nick Gibb in particular focused on this aspect of CPD in relation to the role of Academies and Teaching Schools:

"And in giving schools more autonomy some have claimed that we want to set schools free to go it alone. But by removing needless bureaucracy from schools and by encouraging school-led professional development, we believe schools can strengthen the bonds that exist between them and allow for more opportunities for teachers and schools to collaborate with each other. So, more freedom, more and better professional development, and more collaboration" (GIBB, 2011a).

Again this policy move could be interpreted as a move to locate CPD mainly in schools and led by schools as a way of reducing diversification because the focus of teacher education is again in one place, the school. Certainly from the speeches of Nick Gibbs it seems that collaboration is more narrowly conceived to be between local schools without a significant notion of the involvement of Universities, professional associations and many other bodies currently involved in CPD in England:

"Many schools in the independent sector have already established successful partnerships with neighbouring institutions through the Independent State School Partnership scheme. And we want that sort of collaboration to continue through the new national network of Teaching Schools; our Education Endowment Fund; and the National and Local Leaders of Education programme" (Gibb, 2011b).

However, universities, at this stage, are not completely written out of ITT and the implementation plan involves a proposal to work with Ofsted to improve the strength of university-school partnerships despite the fact they already have a much stronger Ofsted rating than school-led training partnerships (OFSTED, 2010).

The role of universities continues to be debated during this period and there are reassurances from both Nick Gibb and Michael Gove that there will be a role for universities in teacher education despite contradictory signs. In his evidence to the House of Commons Education Committee (2012b) Nick Gibb was pressed on the role he envisages for universities in ITT. The chair of the committee Graham Stuart MP asked the question:

“why are you messing with something that Ofsted and international comparisons tell you is excellent? If there is one thing people come from around the world to learn from us it is probably initial teacher training, and why are you messing with it? I am trying to understand why” (HOUSE OF COMMONS EDUCATION COMMITTEE, 2012b).

Nick Gibb’s reply was to defend the policy based on the argument that, even if universities do have strong ITT, the UK is still falling behind its international competitors so that reform is needed. Later in the committee he says:

“no we are not abandoning universities. They still have a crucial role to play in delivering initial teacher training ...we are proceeding cautiously and universities will continue to play an important role” (HOUSE OF COMMONS EDUCATION COMMITTEE, 2012b).

However, he continues to stress the need for schools to have a more significant say in the selection of candidates and ‘more involvement with the training at the chalk face’. Michael Gove sought to reassure universities that they still have a place to play in ITT in his speech on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2011:

“We will also explore how excellent schools can be more involved in both initial training and the provision of professional development. Contrary to what some have said this is not about excluding higher education from teacher training. There are many excellent centres of ITT and losing their experience is not on my agenda” (GOVE, 2011a).

The report, *Great teachers: attracting, training and retaining the best* (2012a), from the House of Commons Education Committee was produced in 2012 after taking written and oral evidence from a wide range of stakeholders including representative from HE, Teach First, school-based providers, the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) and teaching unions. Its findings firmly support a strong role for universities in teacher education:

“Our evidence was clear that a diversity of routes into teaching is a welcome feature of the system, and we note that all routes have outstanding provision within them. We are left in little doubt that partnership between schools and universities is likely to provide the highest quality initial teacher education, the content of which will involve significant school experience but include theoretical and research elements as well” (HOUSE OF COMMONS EDUCATION COMMITTEE, 2012a: 3)

Although the report welcomed the development of Teaching Schools they also strongly supported the expectation that they would work with universities and they also stated that “a



diminution of universities' role in teacher training could bring considerable demerits and would caution against it" (HOUSE OF COMMONS EDUCATION COMMITTEE, 2012a: 4).

However, there are some contradictions to these reassurances, for example, the composition of the Teachers' Standards Review Group, established by Michael Gove with the task of 'simplifying' the existing standards, seems to show evidence of an agenda that largely excludes higher education from the task. Of the panel of 15, only one member represented a university department of education and that representative was from a HE provider that does not have outstanding practice in ITT and was one of the 1980s pamphleteers of the New Right (Anthony O'Hear). Furthermore, on June 14<sup>th</sup> 2012, Michael Gove gave more details of his plans, again indicating a continued and relentless move towards more school-led and school based ITT and CPD:

"The idea is a simple one: take the very best schools, ones that are already working to improve other schools, and put them in charge of teacher training and professional development for the whole system.....The impact of these changes on initial teacher training will be revolutionary. By the end of this Parliament well over half of all training places will be delivered by schools.....By the end of the Parliament we expect that as many as 10,000 students a year could be trained by schools that are either offering Schools Direct places or are full providers of teacher training" (Gove, 2012).

In addition Charlie Taylor, leader of the recently merged Teaching Agency and National College for School leadership (see below for more detail), talks about School Direct in the neoliberal language of the market in a recent speech:

"School Direct is the new way of training teachers which puts schools, the employers, the customers, at the heart of the process. With School Direct, schools can bid directly for training places. Schools select the provider of teacher training they want to work with whether it is a university or a school based SCITT" (Taylor, 2013).

In this speech he also signals, like Michael Gove, an acceleration to more school-led, school-based ITE and in his vision of the future are schools that:

"will blaze a trail towards a school-led system. They are the ones who will make school direct a success, transform CPD, create robust systems of school to school support and grow the best leaders. It is in these schools and their leaders that I have faith to change fundamentally, forever" (Taylor, 2013).

So although in this government's policy we can see both neoliberal and neoconservative perspectives as we have seen since 1984, what is perhaps different in the current policy trajectory is a much faster and more comprehensive move to school-led and school-based ITT and CPD than we have seen before. The argument that learning how to teach and teacher development is about learning and developing a craft alongside skilled professionals, through an apprenticeship approach, is gaining ascendancy. Although as we have seen there have been reassurances from Michael Gove and Nick Gibb about the role of universities in ITT and CPD the policy direction and its momentum seriously questions this commitment. A final piece to this story came on July 27<sup>th</sup> 2012 in the Department for Education's press release indicating that school academies in England can now recruit untrained teachers to 'allow them (academies) to bring in professionals who will offer a

wealth of knowledge and new skills for our state schools'. In one press response (Gilbert, 2012) this is likened to a move, argued earlier, to de-professionalise the profession and part of a bigger picture which gives the impression that 'anyone off the street can teach, that it is a "craft" – as opposed to an art or science – that can be learned on the job'

#### **2.4. Accountability- more freedom or more control? - Ofsted and inspection**

Once in government Michael Gove (2010) set a tone for school inspection that it "mirrors the approach of the world's most successful systems" and that any inspection by Ofsted "should be in inverse proportion to success". He goes on to explain that:

"The best needed only the lightest touch to continue on a course of improvement. Those who are struggling need closer attention. That is why we will direct Ofsted's resources to those schools which are faltering, or coasting, and insist that inspectors spend more time on classroom observation and assessing teaching and learning than having their attention diverted to other, strictly peripheral, areas" (Gove, 2010b).

In addition Gove (2010c) also claims that his aim is to "slim down" inspection criteria to "give school leaders more freedom to concentrate on their core responsibilities – teaching and learning". Furthermore, Gove (2011) wants to move away from inspection only and include guidance in inspectors' roles so that they should "engage not just during inspections but subsequently so that schools feel they have some guidance as well as a judgement". On the surface the agenda of control and accountability seem to be softening.

However, in reality the framework for inspection of schools, further education colleagues and Initial Teacher Education has changed in a number of significant ways after a consultation process and might be interpreted as a further tightening of control. For schools, key changes have been a shorter notification period for inspection. There has also been a change in the grading of schools in that any school judged previously as satisfactory is now be graded as "requires improvement" –a tougher judgement which then requires re-inspection within a year. Finally, there is also a requirement that for any school to be judged outstanding overall, it has to be outstanding in teaching and learning. This has triggered the re-inspection of all schools judged outstanding overall that were only judged to be 'good' in teaching and learning. Michael Gove (2011b) acknowledges that this is a new tougher inspection regime for schools but it is meant to focus on schools that are achieving less well consistent with the thrust of his arguments in his speeches in government. Arguably, though, the shorter notice for inspections will be applicable to all schools making that aspect tougher for all.

For initial teacher education, the key changes in Ofsted inspections mirror many of those in the school system and again there is an emphasis on focusing inspection on the poorest performers. They key changes are (GOVE, 2011b):

- The judgment of 'requires improvement' replaces the current satisfactory judgment.
- Introduce a monitoring inspection within 12 months for all ITE partnerships judged as "requires improvement". In addition the framework indicates that the number of times a provider can be judged to require improvement will "normally" be limited to "two

consecutive inspections before it is considered inadequate for Overall effectiveness” (GOVE, 2011b: 8).

- Drawing on “users’ views, including trainees, former trainees and employers” (GOVE, 2011b: 7)
- Reducing the time given for notification of an inspection to two working days.

However, again shorter notice inspections, drawing on users’ views for example arguably make the accountability tougher for all ITT partnerships. In addition, Michael Gove (2012) also announced that ITT providers rated ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted would get guaranteed allocations of places for two years at least, at their current level, but good providers would get no guaranteed places and satisfactory ones would receive no allocations at all and that those providers who had lost places would have to work with school to train their School Direct trainees. This makes the inspection process much higher stakes and could threaten the viability of some HE-led ITT partnerships. At present, by contrast, there seems to be no indication that School Direct places would be limited by a less than favourable Ofsted judgement.

### **2.5. Control of pedagogy**

In contrast to the ‘freedom’ and ‘diversification’ agenda in the school and ITT systems there are some contradictions to this agenda that we have already highlighted under neoliberal regimes. For example, the government has directed that the teaching of reading must be through the use of a method called systematic synthetic phonics, as Michael Gove (2012) says:

“Phonics and reading are becoming a key part of the new Ofsted inspection framework, with Ofsted inspectors listening to weaker readers as part of every primary school inspection. From September, a thorough understanding of the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics will be prioritised in teacher training and required for all teachers of early reading” (Gove, 2012).

Although there is some criticism of the evidence on which these claims are made (see for example, ELLIS, 2007) this method is being mandated with no freedom for primary schools to choose other methods to complement this system. In initial teacher education to ensure compliance there has been the introduction of unannounced focused monitoring inspections on primary ITT providers of their effectiveness of phonics training. The ITT providers selected will be based on ‘an annual risk assessment process that uses a range of data available to Ofsted (OFSTED, 2012: 43). Again the focus here is on poorer provision but it does add to an increase in accountability and control within the system.

### **2.6. The TDA becomes the TA and then merges with the National College for School Leadership**

One of the commitments of David Cameron’s incoming government was to reduce bureaucracy and one means of achieving this was to close down ‘quangoes’ – quasi-autonomous government bodies. The TDA was clearly seen as one such body and therefore it was not surprising that this was achieved earlier in 2012. However, the main means of closing the TDA was to retain many of the staff and incorporate them into a new agency, established within the Department for

Education. Thus the Teaching Agency was established in the summer of 2012 carrying out almost identical functions to its predecessor the TDA. Gove appointed a new Chief Executive, Charlie Taylor, who had been an adviser to Gove on behaviour management in schools, but who had had very little direct involvement in teacher education. The effect of this change of status to an Executive Agency is to give the Secretary of State even more direct control of teacher training policy and practice. At a recent conference, when the Chief Executive of the Teaching Agency was asked questions about the reasons for policies such as School Direct, his simple reply was that 'Ministers take the view that this is the best approach'.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

The next General Election in the UK is expected to take place in 2015. It is possible that by that time the full impact of the current government's policies on teacher education will have been played out. Both ITT and CPD may by that time may have become largely school-based and school-led and universities will play only a peripheral role. What is more, even if a new government were to be elected, it is far from certain that a Labour-led government would take a markedly different approach.

Teacher education does seem to have become a site for political intervention and domination, with the voices of the teaching profession and the academy being relatively very quiet. Throughout the whole period that we have covered in this paper, it is possible to see the relentless encroachment into the processes and practices of teacher education by successive governments. As noted earlier the trajectory has been in essence a neo-liberal one, with the teacher education market being steadily developed through various forms of diversification and supported by increasingly restrictive control mechanisms, including a potentially punitive inspection system. The success of politicians in proclaiming an increase in freedom as the driving force at the same time as control has been increasingly centralised is a deep and disturbing paradox.

The failure of the universities and of the teaching unions to resist these policies demonstrates more than anything a failure by them to demonstrate to the wider community that the quality of teaching is dependent on well-structured and theoretically informed programmes of professional learning. The consequences of this failure are unlikely to be limited to teacher education itself. There must be very real concerns about the continuation of the infrastructure for educational research in England. This infrastructure is so closely bound up with the health of university education departments that there must be a possibility that as teacher education work is taken out of universities, so the levels of staffing in these departments will decline and the research expertise that lies therein will be dissipated and dispersed. The Government itself may well be unworried about this. It has demonstrated time and again that it pays little attention to educational research in developing its policies. For example the implementation plan referred to in the previous section (DfE, 2011) is spattered with unsupported and misleading citations to research which are very difficult to identify.

Another way in which Government uses evidence selectively is in making international comparisons. The White Paper (DfE 2010) makes frequent reference to Singapore and Finland for

example. However, while there is an aspiration to emulate the success of such countries for example in international performance tables such as PISA, there is a great reluctance to consider how it might be that the quality of teaching has been improved through significant investment –one of the clearest examples is the requirement in Finland that teachers should all be educated to Master’s level before qualifying. It is also striking even within the United Kingdom how teacher education policies in the other three countries, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland –and indeed in the Republic of Ireland– appear to be increasing the professional and academic basis of qualifying to teach (MENTER et al, 2010; SAHLBERG et al, 2012; Darling-Hammond and Lieberman, 2012). In the USA, Darling-Hammond has reviewed what is known about high quality teacher preparation and comes to the conclusion:

“The fact that teachers’ effectiveness is greatly enhanced when they have had many opportunities to learn - including high quality general education, deepening of both content and pedagogical knowledge, teaching experience, and opportunities to develop specific practices through professional development and assessment – suggests a multi-faceted approach to policy development on behalf of stronger teaching” (Darling-Hammond, 2012: 149).

In this light England does appear to be very peculiar, indeed it is becoming increasingly so, in the way in which teachers are educated and trained.

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