

## Education studies and teacher education

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### Abstract

*State-directed curriculum and teaching methods, together with the competency-led compliance model which permeates teacher-training courses in England and Wales, have led to the demise of critical theory in teacher education. Non-teacher training undergraduate Education Studies, however, is a rapidly growing subject in universities today and offers the opportunity for the development of theory and a critical analysis of policy and practice. The nature of the subject is not yet well defined and a wide range of curricula live under the title of 'Education Studies'. There is also variation in the extent to which courses claim to prepare students for initial teacher training. This paper explores the possibilities for Education Studies courses offered in England and Wales and examines their potential relationship to teacher training. A theoretical framework for Education Studies is proposed and it is suggested that a background in critical theory of education is an essential attribute for future teachers in enabling them to become thoughtful decision-makers and to resist the compliance culture of current teacher training. The work draws upon initial findings from the research carried out on undergraduate Education Studies courses in England and Wales. Particular curriculum examples are drawn from the Education Studies programme at Bath Spa University College.*

### Background to Education Studies

Education Studies as a higher education subject has its origins in teacher training and has grown from 'theory for teaching'. The 1960s and 70s saw the first efforts to create Educational Studies as the theoretical basis for Bachelor of Education (BEd) degrees (Tibble, 1971). McCulloch (2002) tells the story of the choice of academic disciplines which were to comprise educational theory and Crook (2002) documents the problems which Education Studies encountered alongside demands for practical teacher training. Simon (1994) suggested that the education studies programmes which developed during the 1960s suffered from attempts to graft academic theory onto teacher training by the universities who validated BEd degrees for the former teacher-training colleges. He suggests that the process was to put theory *into* what had been essentially the practical and vocational studies in non-graduate Teaching Certificate courses. From the start, then, Education Studies had an unhappy relationship with its teacher-training parent. Crook describes the consequent neglect of the professional dimensions of teacher training as a 'wrong turn' that was corrected by 'the downgrading of educational studies in favour of longer periods of teaching practice' (p. 70). These criticisms led to the state regulatory frameworks imposed by Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE) in the 1980s and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) from the 1990s which brought about the gradual decline of educational theory in ITT courses.

So the image of Education Studies in teacher training is tarnished. Teacher education has always suffered criticisms from teachers, in contrast with medical training which has generally enjoyed the loyalty of doctors despite the demonstrable weaknesses in comparison to teacher training (Booth et al, 1995). The traditional format of medical training has been two years of *pre-clinical* theory, followed by three years of practically-oriented clinical work. This *theory-before-practice* model is one which has been eschewed by teacher trainers in favour of a more practically-oriented approach, with the interplay of theory and practice throughout a four-year course. In twenty years in teacher education I have argued for this model in the four-year QTS course in which students are able to engage in some practice and then to reflect on practice and to *theorise*, before proceeding to their next phase of practice. However, despite attempts to juggle theory and practice in these ways, students' and teachers' reception of educational theory as analysis has still often been negative and seen as irrelevant to their practitioner development. This negative view of the theoretical content of teacher training has, of course, been responsible for the success of the state's interventionist approach. The progressive marginalisation of critical theory by CATE and the TTA met little resistance from its students or the profession. The earlier attempts by Conservative governments and the Hillgate Group (1989) to erase the higher education sector completely from the teacher-training picture, seem for the present, at least, to have failed. But the efforts to force teacher training into a narrow technically compliant model continue with the continued publication of detailed QTS standards and increasingly intrusive Ofsted (2004) scrutiny.

However, the development of non-teacher-training Education Studies has provided the opportunity for higher education to offer students the critical analysis which is properly required of a profession. I now wish to argue that, for many students on four-year undergraduate QTS courses, assessed teaching practice has had a narrowing function and in order to develop a critical understanding of education processes they need to be free of the demands of assessed teaching. As an alternative, undergraduate Education Studies can provide students with a substantial period of time to engage in theoretical analysis and discourse in advance of their training in a PGCE course. This is not to underestimate the requirements of professional training, and I do not wish counter the arguments for the need for increased professional training, especially for those teaching the primary curriculum. I do want to argue, though, that proper undergraduate study with the freedom to engage in wide-ranging critical analysis is an essential part of teacher education which this is better achieved in a programme in which undergraduate studies and professional training are disaggregated.

### **New concepts of Education Studies**

Non-teacher-training Education Studies has existed since the 1960s in a small number of institutions, notably the universities of Cardiff and York. However, the last five years has seen a dramatic increase in undergraduate Education Studies degree courses. 2002-3 saw 2771 students registered on undergraduate Education Studies courses, a 16.7% annual increase, as against 6,959 on undergraduate qualified teacher status (QTS) degrees, only a 0.5% increase. In 2004-05 some 50 Higher Education Institutions (HEI) were offering non-teacher training Education Studies degree courses and 25 of them had commenced since 2001. New programmes have grown rapidly and randomly with little connected discussion of the nature of Education Studies as a subject and there is a wide variety of provision.

Education Studies has escaped the level of state control which teacher training has experienced. However, it should be noted that the subject is developing in the context of

unprecedented change in the nature of universities and university knowledge with the mass expansion of higher education in the market place (Readings, 1996; Barnett, 2000; Delanty, 2001). In examining Education Studies it is necessary to take into account the effects of the marketisation of higher education and of political controls on university knowledge.

Universities in the UK have been based on the nineteenth century Kant-Humboldt model of German idealism. For Kant the basis of the university was the struggle between tradition and reason, between superstition and enlightenment. The Kantian university of reason is modelled upon the individual researcher in which reason is the central tenet. Humboldt, in establishing the University of Berlin, saw the university as creating and sustaining a national culture, and the German university of the nineteenth century succeeded in uniting reason and culture in the relationship with the state. As Readings explains, Humboldt argued that philosophical reflection must be preserved from 'the Scylla of mere leisure and the Charabdys of practical utility under the direction of the state.... The state protects the actions of the university; the university safeguards the thoughts of the state. And each strives to realise the idea of a national culture' (Readings, 1996:69). The modern university, then, is a means of the realisation of state nationalism, culture and identity:

*The modern university was conceived by Humboldt as one of the primary apparatuses through which this production of national subjects was to take place in modernity, and the decline of the nation-state raises serious questions about the nature of the contemporary function of the university. (46)*

Under this model, the university is independent of state control and is free to define and codify what counts as knowledge. However, the new postmodern university of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century loses its autonomy from government. The effect is a shift from knowledge as truth, to knowledge as 'performativity', that which is seen to be useful in economic terms. It is a part of the dynamic of epistemological change described by Lyotard (1997) as the post-industrial, post-modern collapse of meta-knowledge and the contestation of the nature of knowledge itself. Cowen (1996) describes government policy for university knowledge in terms of global economics and market forces:

*.... the governmental critique of the university, in several of the OECD countries, delegitimises the traditional assumptions made by universities about their own excellence, proposes a rebalancing of the relationships between the state, the productive economy and universities and outlines the ways in which the contribution of the universities within this new social contract may be encouraged, even enforced. (3)*

Knowledge becomes, instead of a search for truth, a collection of skills. Barnett (2000) criticises the conversion of university knowledge into 'performative' skills through government evaluation procedures. History graduates are no longer historians, he suggests, only those who possess a range of transferable skills for industry. There is little attempt, though, by governments to control the selection of knowledge in the university curriculum and Kogan and Hanney (2000) refer to the 'exceptionalism' from government policy of higher education for the curriculum in the university sector. Government policy on higher education has been concerned essentially with access, funding and structure rather than content and it is through the skills, supposedly required in the market place, that the government controls higher education. Undergraduate Education Studies has developed, mainly in the post-1992 universities, as part of the expansion of higher education, the reduced unit of resource and the 'proletarianisation' of academic life. It is one of the new 'trans-disciplinary' subjects

which, Kogan and Hanney argue, have become stronger within the university power structure, at the expense of the mono-subjects, because of market demand.

While we may have to put up with the 'performative skills' required by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), there is no direct control of the curriculum content of Education Studies and it provides a release from the highly performative nature of teacher training. From the point of view of the curriculum content it offers the opportunity to enable students to enter into academic critiques of educational policy and practice in ways which have not been possible for many years. So those future teachers who take Education Studies can have an academic analysis of their professional context and practice which is closed off to the others who simply take a PGCE course, and even to those on undergraduate QTS courses which so heavily determined by the TTA standards. This seems to be one virtue of being in the market-led university context. While a subject is popular with students, its curriculum, as defined by the university, is allowed.

### **The relationship between Education Studies and teacher training**

The last five or six years has seen various attempts to define the nature of non-teacher training Education Studies. For example, Bartlett et al (2001) and Matheson and Grosvenor (1999) set out theoretical models which are distinct from teacher education and there is now a range of highly contrasting offerings in different universities under the title of 'Education Studies' (Ward, 2004a). The subject is variously seen as social policy, childhood studies, environmental education, comparative international education, educational research, with varying layers of emphasis in different courses. The QAA (2001) Benchmark for Education Studies is highly unspecific about the nature and content of the subject, and there is a studied avoidance of references to teaching in the document:

*Education Studies is concerned with understanding how people develop and learn throughout their lives. It facilitates a study of the nature of knowledge, and a critical engagement with a variety of perspectives, and ways of knowing and understanding, drawn from a range of appropriate disciplines. There is diversity in Education Studies courses at undergraduate level but all involve the intellectually rigorous study of educational processes, systems and approaches, and the cultural, societal, political and historical contexts within which they are embedded ... . A necessary feature of an Education Studies undergraduate honours degree is an intellectually rigorous study of educational processes, and the cultural, political and historical contexts within which they are embedded. (Para 6.1)*

So Education Studies is not simply for future teachers, but for a whole range of possible careers, as well as simply of academic interest. However, as the new subject develops there seems to be some urgency to define Education Studies away from teacher training. I suggest that in doing this there might be a tendency to ignore the possibilities of the subject as a preparation for teacher training and that the relationship between the new subject and teacher training should be explored.

A small number of universities have had long-standing courses in non-teacher training Education Studies. The rapid development of new courses has occurred in some institutions by converting TTA QTS student numbers into non-ITT HEFCE numbers. In other institutions Education Studies has recently been initiated in addition to, and alongside, undergraduate QTS programmes. The different origins of Education Studies has led to differences in the relationship to teacher training.

This paper reports on research on Education Studies degrees in England and Wales through the examination of university websites and by interviewing subject leaders and senior managers in a selection of institutions. Initial findings from the research indicate a pattern of the different relationship between undergraduate Education Studies and teacher training. Four categories are identified in the way programmes are presented:

**Category A – Explicit preparation for teacher training**

In this type the subject is portrayed as directly relevant to teacher training and there is an assumption of progression to a PGCE course, as an alternative to a four-year QTS course for primary teacher education. In some cases there is a structural link with teacher training with a guaranteed place on the institution's Primary PGCE course for graduates. In others a guaranteed interview is offered. These are sometimes where the four-year QTS course has been converted into a '3+1' module. In these cases Education Studies is often taught by those who work on the teacher-training programmes and there is a strong link in curriculum content.

**Category B – Potentially useful for teacher training**

In this category applicants are advised that the course is not a teacher training programme, but that future teachers would find it useful and relevant to teaching. Sometimes it is recommended for those who might teach but have not yet made a final career decision, or for those who have not reached the qualifications or academic standard required for a QTS degree. There is usually some content which is directly relevant to teacher training.

**Category C – Limited potential for teacher training**

In this category there is stronger emphasis on alternative careers to teaching and stronger warnings that Education Studies is not a preparation for teacher training. These are particularly cases of single honours awards where there is no subject study for secondary teaching and where the pre-2002 limit on primary PGCE entry is still emphasised. These tend to be in institutions where there is no primary PGCE teacher training.

**Category D – Explicitly distinct from teacher training**

In this category the non-teacher-training emphasis is even stronger. There tends to be no reference to teaching as a career outcome, or teacher training is signalled as an unlikely graduate option. Graduates are expected to take up careers in different education-related fields. These may include community work, administration, multi-agency approaches to care and education, health sector education services, prison education services, museum/library/gallery education sessions, leisure services and media. Such courses tend to exist alongside QTS degrees in the institution and the characteristic of Education Studies is seen as being strongly differentiated from teacher training content.

Despite these categories of emphasis, Education Studies subject leaders and managers in all types do acknowledge that, regardless of the way courses are described and presented, there are always students who perceive Education Studies as a potential route into teaching. So, it might be said that there is some discontinuity between course aims and rationales and the ways in which students actually perceive them. One of the reasons that Education Studies is popular, and why it is allowed to exist in the market-led university context, is probably that many students take it because they perceive its vocational opportunities in teaching.

It should also be noted that there is sometimes a personal or biographical element in the resistance to linking Education Studies to teacher training. In some cases courses are run by those who have interests in education which are wider than teacher training and wish to explore these issues and content, perhaps sociological or philosophical. Others are ideologically opposed to government-imposed teacher training criteria, and some feel no longer competent to teach to the TTA standards. It is interesting that the academic rationale for Education Studies should be determined by these individual academic or professional positions and is, perhaps, a symptom of the low level of jurisdiction on curriculum content in the current university sector curriculum, for example, as noted above in the QAA (2001) Benchmark.

In institutions where Education Studies has been converted from a teacher-training course there is a strong element of preparation of students for teacher training, with explicit attempts to make the curriculum relevant to future teacher-trainees. In those institutions where a QTS undergraduate programme runs alongside Education Studies then the orientation of the curriculum might well be strongly away from teacher training in order to make a clear distinction between Education Studies and teacher training. In the 'Category A' institutions there are structural links between the undergraduate course and the PGCE, with a guaranteed place or guaranteed interview. In others where there is no direct connection between the two, relationships between undergraduate and Education Studies are variable. In some institutions Education Studies Students are welcomed as applicants for the PGCE. In others there is hostility towards them, with PGCE course leaders looking for applicants from 'normal' subject degree courses, or there is a perception of Education Studies students as low quality

It is easy to see why these differences should have arisen, and they relate mainly to the higher education market. For those institutions which have converted their numbers from QTS courses it is likely that their recruitment will be from the population who wish to progress to teaching as a career option. For those who have created Education Studies alongside an undergraduate QTS degree it is likely that they will want to give Education Studies aims which are clearly distinct from QTS standards. The latter has led to a fever of rich academic activity in the last five years in which Education Studies is being constructed as a new university subject in its own right.

I want wholeheartedly to endorse such developments and the interesting university curriculum which is emerging. However, I also wish to address the matter of how Education Studies and teacher training are related and to suggest that the relationship is more complex than Education Studies simply being *unconnected* with teacher training or the professional development of future teachers. Certainly, there will be students on Education Studies courses who have different career aspirations and if the subject is to have the vocational relevance demanded of higher education (Barnett, 2000), then it will need to foresee careers in education other than teaching. However, many students are taking Education Studies in a range of universities with the intention of teaching, or see the subject as a means of testing out their thinking about teaching. Systematic research data is needed on this, but my own findings with students and with colleagues in different universities is that this is a significant element in the thinking of some students when they take Education Studies.

This is not a plea for the Education Studies curriculum to be concerned exclusively with teaching and the school curriculum, and it is certainly not a recommendation that Education Studies should be a surrogate course in pedagogy. Of course, it needs to be carefully distinguished from teacher training. We should, though, recognise that Education Studies is

a subject which includes future teachers among its students. What they need is not more curriculum content and pedagogical guidance, but a critical analysis of educational policy and professional practice and an understanding of the wider socio-economic issues and politics of education – the understandings that they are likely not to gain from a teacher training course bounded by the TTA Standards.

### **The effects of state control**

State control of teacher education has led to a competences-based model with tight designation of curriculum content focussing on subject knowledge and its teaching (DfES/TTA, 2002). The resulting compliance culture of teacher training is well documented in Bottery (2000) Maguire, Dillon and Quintrell (1998), Mahony and Hextall (1997) and Cowen (2002). Hargreaves (2003) sees the controls of teacher training as a function of a wider malaise caused by the global demand for increased standards through standardisation:

*In many parts of the world, the rightful quest for higher educational standards has degenerated into a compulsive obsession with standardisation. By and large, our schools are preparing young people neither to work well in the knowledge economy nor to live in a strong civil society. Instead of promoting economic invention and social integration, too many schools are becoming mired in the regulations and routines of soulless standardisation .... In their preparation, their professional development and their working lives, today's teachers must get a grasp of and a grip on the knowledge society in which their pupils live and work. If teachers do not understand the knowledge society, they cannot prepare their pupils for it. As a traditional Irish saying proclaims: 'You have to listen to the river if you want to catch a trout'. (p. xvii)*

Education Studies can provide this understanding of the knowledge society in which students, whether they are future teachers or not, are living. My suggestion is that there is no need to differentiate between Education Studies for future teachers and others. While Education Studies can be seen as an academic form of study for those who intend to work in the wider world, a similar understanding is required for those who intend to teach. The perceptions and understanding of Educational policies and processes for all are the same: prospective teachers are simply a sub-group.

### **Towards a theory for Education Studies for future teachers**

Here I wish to propose a principle for Education Studies, before turning to some specific selections for the possible content of the Education Studies curriculum. This is the notion of Education as 'emancipation', derived from the Critical Theory of Horkheimer, Adorno and Habermas of the Frankfurt School. Peters (1966) demonstrated the now-familiar concept that education must include the concept of that which is valuable. This concept can be broadened in that education might be intended to create 'a better world' and this is where Critical Theory becomes relevant. Blake and Masschelein (2003) summarise the key features of Critical Theory as:

- a critical stance towards society;
- ethical concern for the individual;
- rejection of all possible excuses for hunger, domination, humiliation or injustice;
- longing for a better world.

They point out that, while critical theorists have never taken much interest in education, an important aspect of their vision is the longing for a better world and that Educationists have drawn from critical theory. How this model might work for Education Studies is now explained.

Everyone knows about education. We have all learned and been subjected to educational policies and practice in various institutions and all have taken-for-granted assumptions about knowledge, learning, teaching and schooling. The role of Education Studies, it is proposed, is to enable students to understand the nature of education policies and practice, to engage them in informed critique and to see education through the prism of academic disciplines. This involves challenging their assumptions about reality, freeing them from what Marx calls their 'false consciousness' or, more what Habermas (1981) entitles 'emancipation'. We have all met those students who talk of their lives being changed by new understandings, who talk of 'knowing the world differently'. It might be argued that any subject can do this. However, I suggest that the depth of first-hand experience of schooling that most people have, combined with the ultimate revelation about educational process, can be particularly significant for them. The task is to de-construct the familiar and the obvious and to enable the individual to formulate an academic critique.

Any educational course is a set of propositions through lectures, seminars and reading the literature and research. For students, their background knowledge and experience can be drawn upon to test, verify or reject such propositions made to them. Let us take as an example the proposition that some educational research has found that whole-class teaching in primary schools is more effective in supporting learning than group or individualised instruction. First, the individual has easy access to the concepts in the proposition, having been experience most probably the types of teaching described. The individual can then subjectively test this proposition by recalling both good and poor examples of class teaching and draw their own conclusion. This is different from coming to a proposition in physics such as the atomic make-up of materials where there is no direct experiential access to the concepts and all propositions must be tested within the theoretical framework of physics. Familiarity, then, is a valuable commodity for the Education Studies student. On the other hand, however, such familiarity makes it difficult for the student to distance herself from the nature of propositions; the taken-for-granted in educational experience is bound to be very strong. The task for Education Studies is to deconstruct the false consciousness of the taken-for-granted of educational experience.

The current centrally-determined teacher-training model cannot be anything other than a particular reality which is set unquestioningly before 'trainees'. The very term implies their subjugation to a particular order. Against this, Education Studies is a requirement for the teacher who is going to be able to develop a proper professional career, rather than operate according to the latest government directions. Professional practice in schools is now channelled through a series of unquestioned assertions. The latest are about 'learning styles' and 'emotional intelligence', notions borrowed from popular psychology. So there is now a flurry of unquestioned practice by an unsuspecting profession.

The emphasis on critique suggested above may give the impression that Education Studies can only ever be a negative analysis: complaint about Government controls. I wish to propose an extended notion of the concept of 'critique'. First, and obviously, it goes beyond negative criticism: it is not simply finding fault, weakness and evil. Instead, it should involve balanced evaluation and assessment against a set of principles. Those principles must be based, of course, upon values, and those values must be open to scrutiny and debate.

Education Studies should be asking difficult questions about underlying assumptions and evidence.

Underlying the notion of values in education must be the idea that something is held to be good, the better world. The point is that, as well as offering a cold, rational analysis of education processes, the subject needs to engage with students' interests and commitments; it needs to be 'inspirational', offering students an optimistic view of human beings and their learning, of society and of the future for a 'better world'. Inspiration and critical analysis can be contradictory. Some students intending to teach have may be disaffected by the revelations about nature of the education system presented in the Education Studies course: their initial excitement about bringing children to a better world is punctured by the realisation of the political structures in which they live. So it is important to balance these: the inspiration needed for practice, with the academic scepticism needed to discover truth.

### **The Education Studies curriculum - for teachers and the rest**

It is argued, then, that the role of Education Studies is to enable all students who are interested in education to engage in informed critique of education for a better world. This section offers some examples of the ways in which the subject can achieve this for future teachers. They are:

- the contested nature of knowledge;
- the contested nature of learning and teaching;
- alternative visions through international and global perspectives;
- the nature of the teaching profession;
- the role of research.

Particular instances of the curriculum are drawn from the Education Studies programme at Bath Spa University College and detailed in Ward (2004b).

#### *(a) The contested nature of knowledge*

For many students knowledge is seen as that selection which is the school curriculum, and as future teachers they may well see the curriculum as a received and non-problematic reality. Education Studies expels this myth by helping students to understand the distinction between knowledge and the curriculum and to understand the ways in which knowledge is socially and politically constructed. One way of achieving this is to guide students through the politics of the development of the National Curriculum for England and Wales. Another strategy is to contrast it with the national curricula in other countries. For example, the Norwegian curriculum provides a framework based, not upon subjects, but upon visions of human development. Students' opportunity to see alternative ways of perceiving knowledge helps them to understand the nature of the process which occurs in the UK and reveals to them the essential matter of the arbitrary and political nature of knowledge. And this is what can be *inspirational*: the Norwegian National Curriculum appeals often to students' view of a better world, where learning is not framed by an adult view of subjects; it enables future teachers to see an alternative vision of knowledge and the curriculum.

Future teachers also need to understand the debates within the subjects they will be teaching. A group of optional modules at Bath Spa are concerned with school curriculum

subjects, although not the 'how-to-teach' pedagogical content. Instead, students look at the epistemology of the subject – what it is to know. For example, students examine Mathematics as *a priori* knowledge, reflect on their own learning in Mathematics and consider why some people find the subject difficult and intimidating (Hanson, 2004). In Science there is discussion of different perspectives on science: whether it is a body of empirical facts, or a creative activity and the beliefs that underlie different views of the subject (Howe and Davies, 2004). Bianchi (2004) considers the nature of knowing in the arts, and how learning in art changes perceptions of the world. Haywood (2004) points to the ways in which, not only learning, but the nature of knowledge itself has been affected by the role of information and communications technology through the following functions: provisionality, capacity and range, interactivity, speed and automatic functions (p.179). The key point, then, is that not only the curriculum – a selection from available knowledge – but knowledge itself, what we might call the raw material of teaching, is seen as a problematic and open to question.

*(b) The contested nature of learning*

Unsurprisingly the QAA Benchmark suggests that Education Studies should be concerned with learning and, of course, some aspect of learning theory has been a long-established part of teacher training theory. Ironically perhaps, it is the learning theory based on Piagetian models of human development that attracted so much criticism from students and teachers about their training in the past. There is, though, now a welter of diverse learning theory to inspire students and teachers: Constructivist Approaches (Von Glasersfeld, 1989), Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983), Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1996), Accelerated Learning (Smith, 2003), Building Learning Power (Claxton, 2002), Philosophy for Children (Fisher, 2003) as well as various accounts of 'brain-based' learning and metacognition. These are now presented in popular texts and are taken up with enthusiasm by teachers and teacher trainers. The teaching profession in its usual way grabs the latest answer to its problems and 'brain gym', bottles of water and background Mozart become ingrained into the unquestioned orthodoxy of professional practice. What is often lacking among teachers is an informed critical analysis of these ideas.

Here the opportunities in Education Studies are for future teachers to be inspired and excited by new possibilities for learning and teaching and by the revelation of new insights about their own learning. At the same time, Education Studies for teachers should be offering a critique of these proposals. For example, what is meant by 'accelerated', what kind of 'philosophy' is it and how much of the theories depend upon mere textual metaphor in the presentation of theory? The psychometric concept of 'intelligence', whether emotional, cognitive or multiple, is still inherent in theories of learning (Coulby, 2000; Howe, 1999), and the very concept needs to be questioned.

*(c) The contested nature of teaching*

From the debate about learning comes analysis of teaching. So there are debates about the relative merits of class teaching, group learning and individualised learning (Gipps, 1992) and evidence (Galton, Simon and Croll, 1980) demonstrates the superiority of those teachers who prioritise whole-class teaching. So we have the Effective Schools machinery with the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in primary schools establishing practice based upon this evidence; professional practice is dictated by this top-down model drawn from selected empirical data and the model is fastened into teaching training with the three-part lesson.

However, these are technical matters. What teacher training is unable to explore from its confined technicist perspective are the underlying political assumptions about teaching. Teaching is not merely a technical matter like building motor cars. It is a value-laden enterprise based upon political assumptions about the nature of human beings and the nature of society. The very act of constraining children compulsorily within a school may be worthwhile and good, but it is certainly political. How they are allowed to behave within the school is also political. Education Studies allows future teachers to consider and discuss the nature of the political decision that they have taken in becoming a teacher and the nature of the political decision which are taken on their behalf as they engage in practice determined by a government-controlled schooling system (Hicks, 2004; Bord, 2004). This is not an argument for de-schooling, but it is to argue that teachers should be informed about the possibilities of radical forms of education and to be able to consider them. A module on Radical Education at Bath Spa gives students the option to consider these issues.

In my experience, the exposure of future teachers to such ideas has 'radicalised' them and made them disaffected about the school system, to the extent that they change their career plans, protesting that they could never be a part of such a system. This might be a case for keeping prospective teachers away from this dangerous area of human knowledge and it is here again that we have the possible tension between truth and inspiration. The problem is in how can we create inspired teachers, but who also have a critique of the system within which they are working. Another group of students report that taking Education Studies has made them *more* inspired about teaching. They say that understanding 'the world' and the nature of the system has allowed them to understand what they can do and what they can't do, and that this has an empowering effect.

*(d) International perspectives*

One of the sources of the teaching methods in the National Numeracy Strategy was comparative data about teaching in Taiwan (Reynolds and Farrell, 1996) where undifferentiated whole-class teaching in a three-part lesson was depicted as promoting higher levels of achievement in mathematics. This was just one of the many attempts to drive the political agenda for change in the British education system by making selective comparisons with practice and attainment levels in other countries. International comparisons are intrinsically worthwhile in helping students and teachers to perceive alternatives to received policy and practice. A good current case is the Reggio Emilia approach to early years education in Italy.

Such comparisons can be taken at their face value and good practice identified elsewhere can be unquestioningly accepted as grounds for change. However, what is possible in Education Studies is for students to look beyond the superficial difference of test comparisons and practice and to examine the cultural context within which the practice takes place. For example, as Wood (2004) explains, many of the Pacific Rim countries share a culture based upon Confucian ideals of a non-competitive society in which:

*... there is a pervasive belief... that all children are infinitely malleable and that children can be imbued with qualities which will last into adulthood. For Japanese teachers, therefore, all children are capable of success and they have strong expectations that their pupils will perform well. (p.12)*

This contrasts with the culture in which British teachers and children are raised where children are differentiated by attainment (or 'ability') and society demands they achieve individually. That it is just *not so simple* is the important point here and teachers who understand this are in a better position to understand the methods in which they are required to employ.

So it is a deeper understanding through international comparison which Education Studies can bring about, and this is an understanding of alternative world views. We are locked in the perception of our own realities, but an examination of some different perspectives can help to unlock this, and can be a source of great inspiration to students. As Wood explains:

*A consideration of Australian Aboriginal and Native American beliefs and values reveals a startlingly different approach to the physical world in which we live. Aborigines have a close symbiotic relationship with the land, of which they see themselves as caretakers and guardians.... In a similar way Native Americans have a sense of kinship with other life forms. These views are at odds with those of western societies which see the world as a place for exploitation and production.... Aboriginal and Native American education are informed by a particular understanding of the world and by a strong spirituality. They involve personal transformation through knowledge of history, ritual and myth, often encoded in dance, art and song... This contrasts with a western approach which has focused on education in terms of facts and figures which can be passed on in books and programmes of study. While it is easy to romanticise such approaches and use information out of context, a study of other world views and educational systems undoubtedly poses a challenge to the neo-liberal assumptions of western capitalism and the associated education systems. (Wood, 2004:16)*

Students find these ideas inspiring, again as a part of the emancipation process, the freedom from the closed vision in which they have been raised. The point is that, while they are enabled to perceive that there *are* alternative world views, it helps them to develop a critique of their own world view and to understand the nature of the neo-liberal society in which they live.

*(e) Global perspectives on economics and education*

The use of international comparisons to create moral panic about educational practice in the home country is a now well-known strategy by governments. It is, though, a very restricted version of learning about international education. Education Studies offers the possibilities of views across the globe, the relationships between economies and education and, for example, the causes of world poverty. Teachers are actors in the knowledge economy and, if they are not to be, as Hargreaves (2003) fears, 'the drones and clones of policy-makers' anaemic ambitions' (p. xvii), then they need to understand the political and economic role which education plays, not just in the society, but the *world* in which their work. Currently, teachers can be trapped within the confines of media perceptions of Africa. Education Studies can help future teachers to understand the economic implications of globalisation.

So student teachers need a grasp of the concept of globalisation in education and this is the idea of being able to understand the links between a range of issues. Hicks (2004) warns against the global perspective as being limited to a trip abroad or links with a school in another country. He suggests that what is needed is an overview of 'the state of the world

and the ways in which issues are related: wealth and poverty, human rights, peace and conflict, the environment' (p. 22).

These are topics which are touched upon in the school curriculum and in some degree courses. However, their relationship to education may well not be evident to students and it is necessary to raise their consciousness about them. Education Studies can provide such insights. Obviously, any one of them is a substantial topic in itself, but to introduce students to some key ideas, facts and issues can be enough to start them thinking with a more open mind-set. At Bath Spa a compulsory module introduces these, while optional modules which cover global issues in more depth are:

Human Rights and Education; Education and Environment; Education in the Pacific Rim; Education in the USA; Education in Africa; Education in Europe; Education for the Future.

As Hicks (2004) suggests, there is a problem in presenting the world to children as overwhelmingly problematical because the effect of making everything seem impossible is disempowering. What is needed is the sense that action can produce results. The same is true of Education Students who can be encouraged to think positively about their role as educators and teachers and many come away from their studies with the sense that they are empowered to make changes of some kinds in the world. Again, it is this sense of optimism, idealism and inspiration which is essential in the role of the future teacher. And Education Studies can provide here both the inspiration and the analytic critique.

*(f) The teaching profession*

If we are to avoid the 'drones and clones' model of teaching it is surely essential that future teachers understand the nature of their profession. The suggestions above about teachers' understanding of the nature of knowledge, of learning and teaching and of their role in the global knowledge economy are part of this. However, they also need a local knowledge of where their profession is within the context of Government policy, and this requires an understanding, not just of Government education policy, but of the whole political and economic backdrop against which education exists. Again, it is such a political analysis which is difficult to conceal within a teacher training programme.

First students need to appreciate the neo-liberal economic western framework in which UK society exists; then they need to understand the role which politics plays in the Government's global economic policy and the its perception of the relationship between education and the economy. One of the common and well-rehearsed debates is whether education is to improve the individual or the industrial economy. Policy norms over the last twenty-five years have shifted strongly towards the view of education as fulfilling the nation's economic needs, with New Labour's 'Education, Education, Education' slogan. However, as Wolf (2002) demonstrates, the relationship is not so simple and a good education system is no guarantee of a good economy. This challenges the whole role of education in society and renders it problematic. Teachers need to know this and how the Government is manipulating the teaching profession, as Bottery (2000) shows, by creating a managerialist culture through budgetary devolution and the introduction of industrialised targets for children's and teachers' performance. City Academies, where they might find themselves teaching, are born of a free-market notion that the involvement of private enterprise in the social services will help to improve them. They need to understand the economic arguments upon which this is based, and they may find the policy to be justifiable. So, equally, before teachers take a decision *not* to teach in a City Academy 'on principle', they should be

informed about the principle. Finally, they need to understand the nature of the free-market situation in which the education system is now operating. They need to understand that the National Curriculum and standardised testing were not set up purely to ensure that all children 'received a good education', but were designed to provide a standardised measuring scale for teachers and schools to be assessed against in a performative market. There is an apparent contradiction with the Thatcher Government, which was professedly committed to removing regulation and 'rolling back government', introducing the biggest legislative programme and regulation ever inflicted upon schools. However, this is simple neo-liberal economics: in order for there to be a free market there must be the regulations to enable it. The default for the market is not unregulated markets, but regulation (Gray, 1998) and so we needed the National Curriculum and testing: teachers should know this.

*(g) The role of research*

The role of educational research is essential to both Education Studies and future teachers. Of course, the Education Studies student must be able to read and interpret research data, understand it within a theoretical context and be able to carry out small-scale research enquiries using appropriate methods. But these are the very skills and knowledge needed by teachers. Action research has had a faltering presence in schools in the last twenty years. However, there is now a growing perception among professionals of the need to gather their own data and view their practice from a research perspective, and this comes from the Improving Schools culture. Further, school teachers need to be able to read and interpret educational research, rather than simply have the results of research fed down to them via Government diktat, such as the latest on 'synthetic phonics'. If we are ever to have a profession which takes ownership of its practice, it must understand the nature of the evidence. Government attempts to manipulate the practice of the medical profession have met much sterner resistance, and this is because doctors, for all the weaknesses of their training, are taught to have a critical analysis of research. The house journal of medicine, the British Medical Journal, is a research journal. The house journal of the teaching profession, the Times Educational Supplement, reports mainly on the latest tussles between the Government and the professions. Its research reporting is second hand and slender.

## **Conclusion**

What has been proposed here is a programmatic definition – a political definition - of good teachers. It is argued that teachers should know about the world and be aware of the global political and economic context in which they work; they should not only know what they are teaching, but also understand the nature of knowledge and the way it is socially constructed. They should understand not just the 'ways pupils learn', but what underlies the assumptions about those theories of learning. They should know not just what Government policy on education *is*, but why such policy is and how it is derived. They should have educational vision, but understand that other visions are possible.

In other words, teachers should be loosened from the technician framework in which current teacher training places them and be able to think, argue and reason. Education Studies can offer this because of the vagaries of the present UK higher education system, in which teacher training is controlled and HEFCE-funded courses are left with a free academic hand. I urge that we use this freedom thoughtfully to create an academic framework for future teachers, and resist simply indulging pet hobbies and predilections.

It might be a golden age that we are in now when we can celebrate a wide range of Education Studies curricula in higher education institutions, a newly emerging subject born in the teacher-training stable. Efforts to allow the subject a broader range than the preparation of teachers is essential, but we should acknowledge the fact that possible future teachers still form a core of our students and what they need is Education Studies *and* teacher training.

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