

Final Report for: ‘A crisis of teaching expertise? The challenge to expert teacher knowledge arising from the contemporary policy context in England’

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Overview

This final report covers September 2023 to September 2024. As outlined below the report indicates that we have completed the data collection and analysis planned for the project and are therefore able to complete the final publications and a concluding workshop over the next year. The documentary analysis and interviewing were completed within the timescales in our original project plan, and we have also run the introductory project workshop and had a paper accepted for the forthcoming BJES Special Issue on Teachers, Teaching and Teacher Education: Trajectories, Threats and Transformations (paper published online July 2024). Please see further details below.

Project title	A crisis of teaching expertise? The challenge to expert teacher knowledge arising from the contemporary policy context in England
Project summary	<p>The project aims to examine the changing nature of teaching expertise, with regard to the contemporary policy context in England, addressing the extent to which current policy contains underpinning assumptions about the expert knowledge needed for well-grounded teaching practice. Through an analysis of policy documents and other publicly available material, and interviews with those involved in teacher education in England, we aim to identify how conceptualisations of expertise are contested in processes of initial teacher education and professional development reform.</p> <p>Recent developments in England suggest the importance of examining conceptualisations of teacher expertise. Firstly, the instantiation of a curriculum framework for Initial Teacher Education in terms of the Core Content Framework, and the development of the Early Career Framework for early-stage professional development, has provided expression to the expectations of policy-makers in terms of teacher expertise. Secondly the process of centralising control of teacher expertise in the hands of the Department for Education and a small ‘expert group’ substantively reduces the control and discretion that initial teacher education providers have over defining what counts as an official version of teaching expertise. Thirdly, the embedding of the Education Endowment Foundation and the Department for Education as guarantors and arbiters of what counts as “the best available educational research” for teachers has a potentially substantive impact on longer term knowledge production and what is considered (by policy makers, future teachers, other professions, and the public) as valid expert knowledge for teaching.</p>
Research questions	The project seeks to identify how teacher expertise is implicitly and explicitly conceptualised in current English education policy in respect of initial teacher education, professional development and the relationship

	<p>between research and teaching. It also seeks to understand how such policy is translated at the level of practice by those who manage initial teacher education programmes. The research process aims to locate these conceptualisations of expertise in terms of the broader sociological and philosophical debate about the relationship between expertise, trust, legitimation and professionalism, identifying implications for the future of teaching and teachers in England. The research will also have relevance to developments further afield, not least in the United States and Australia, where similar reforms to teaching and educational research have been introduced, but also for other countries in Europe who may be subject to similar influences on education policy. Drawing on the sociology and philosophy of expertise, the project will explore the extent to which current government policy is leading to manifestations of systemic expertise which seem to run counter to the practical, craft and individualised manifestations of expertise which have historically been associated with the teaching profession, and which may hinder the development of a sense of teaching purpose around which appropriate expertise can be assembled.</p> <p>Our research is therefore organised around the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How is teacher expertise conceptualised in current government policy in England in respect of initial teacher education, professional development and the relationship between research and teaching? 2. How is this conceptualisation translated into an understanding of expertise at the level of Initial Teacher Education (Initial Teacher Training) programmes? 3. What are the potential implications of these conceptualisations of expertise for teacher education, and therefore for teaching and learning, in England and in the broader international context? <p>The research is organised in three stages (please see below with notes regarding actions completed against these)</p>
<p>Report of activity against the three stages of research</p>	<p>Stage 1: A process of documentary analysis and policy scholarship which aimed to assemble relevant source material (including policy statements, guidance, ministerial speeches, contributions to debates) relating to policy formation and implementation in teacher education in England within the last five years, including developments relevant to the relationship between research and teacher education.</p> <p>Sept 2023-Feb 2024: The documentary analysis was completed and this informed the preparation of a paper to BJES Special Issue call in relation to the Early Career Framework (paper accepted and published online July 2024). Further policy scholarship work will be ongoing in relation to future publications.</p> <p>Online version of accepted paper: Full article: An Expert System on Flimsy Foundations: Teaching Expertise and the Early Career Framework (tandfonline.com)</p>

	<p>Stage 2: The second stage consisted of a set of interviews with those involved in recent processes of policy development and implementation (for example members of advisory groups, representatives of the Universities’ Council for the Education of Teachers, those involved in Subject Hubs) to explore conceptualisations of teacher expertise and the rationale for the direction of policy in England. We anticipated undertaking between 8 and 10 interviews in this stage.</p> <p>Between Sept 2023 – Feb 2024 a total of 8 interviews were completed with those involved in policy development and implementation. The majority of the remaining interviewing was undertaken under phase 3 (below).</p> <p>Stage 3: In a third stage which ran approximately parallel to the second we undertook interviews with a sample of those who manage Initial Teacher Training (ITT) programmes in England in order to understand how they conceptualise expertise in relation to the national policy framework, above. The sample included those involved in leading both university and school or trust-led ITT programmes and will be drawn from at least three regions of England. We anticipated around 10 interviews in this stage.</p> <p>Between Sept 2023 – June 2024 10 interviews were completed, with the majority of interviewing with those who manage ITT programmes in England (both school-based and university-led programmes) taking place simultaneously to phase 2 above, which took us to 18 in total for the project.</p>
<p>Other activity completed between September 2023 and August 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductory workshop completed with colleagues at the University of Plymouth (November 2023) • Abstract for BJES Special Issue accepted and paper drafted (for submission by end March 2024) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper accepted and published online for BJES Special Issue (July 2024) • The period April – July 2024 was focused on analysis of the interviews and the development of a set of themes to structure further discussion and publications • We will be drafting a further paper for submission to a journal in autumn 2024 focused on how teacher expertise is conceptualised in terms of the implementation of policy in this area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one other paper will follow – subjecting notions of “deliberate practice” (which are often connected with contemporary notions of expertise) to a critical analysis and contrasting these with more holistic and critically reflective conceptualisations of teacher expertise • There is also the possibility of a paper locating our project findings in debates about teacher professionalism. • We have been in discussion with Routledge about a potential book on teacher expertise emerging from the project. This plan is currently on hold and may go forward in the future as our priority is to work on the journal articles above. The plan would be for this to be an edited collection

	of papers which (in addition to focusing on the project findings) would also include some invited contributions from international colleagues.
Activity completed in relation to budget (Sept 2023-end August 2024)	<p>Data collection, transcription and analysis (20 interviews) - £5816 of budget to cover researcher time, transcription, data input and analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 18 interviews have been undertaken and transcribed (Sept23-June 24). The process of analysis was the focus of the last 3-4 months of the project and has resulted in a set of emerging themes relating to the conceptualisation of teacher expertise. <p>Documentary analysis: Collection and analysis of documents - £2510 of budget covering researcher time (data collection and analysis)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The majority of the documentary analysis was undertaken during the period October 2023 – February 2024 <p>Travel for interviews - £500 of budget.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We have not needed to spend the £500 for travel as interviews have been conducted remotely. We would not need to claim this £500 in our final invoice. <p>Workshops for discussion and dissemination (at introduction and conclusion of project) - £600 of budget.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The introductory workshop for the project was held in November 2023 at the University of Plymouth. The plan is to organise a workshop focusing on the project findings in autumn 2024.

Completed by Jim Hordern and colleagues (September 2024)