



Routledge Research in Teacher Education

VALUES AND PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Nick Mead



Values and Professional Knowledge in Teacher Education

Values and Professional Knowledge in Teacher Education provides distinctive insights into potential strengths to develop trainee teachers' values within school-based training. Looking at the personal moral and political values of trainees as fundamental to strategic and critical professional knowledge, the book considers a key question about training contexts: to what extent is teacher education embedded in the purpose and rationale of the school so that trainees' values, and consequently their autonomy and identity, can flourish? The book is research focused and offers case studies that offer vicarious experiences which resonate with the professional needs and concerns of teacher educators.

The book opens with a reflective narrative on the experience of a teacher educator in England. Further chapters explore international perspectives on values and professional knowledge in teacher education, applied theoretical principles for developing the relationship between trainee teachers' values and their professional knowledge, the impact of university and school-based training contexts on the development of values-based professional knowledge, and the challenge of a values-based professional knowledge to current teacher education practice.

Values and Professional Knowledge in Teacher Education will be of great interest to academics and post-graduate students in the field of education, university and school-based teacher educators, trainee teachers, researchers, policymakers and school leaders.

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To Hilary, Charles, Henry, Lucy and Robert



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1 The experience of a teacher educator in England: values-based professional knowledge at stake

Taking the long view of teacher education

Pring and Roberts (2015) argue for the importance of the long view in education, so when did neo-liberal values begin to impact on teacher educators and trainee teachers' values? The historian Tony Judt (2010) writes that much of what appears 'natural' today in terms of the pursuit of material self-interest dates from the 1980s. On the other hand, taking Young's (2014) sociological view that schools are *specialized institutions* that have always had constraints as well as opportunities built into them, is it naïve or idealistic to believe that trainee teachers' personal moral and political values can ever fully flourish in such contexts?

Although I acknowledge the institutional constraints which Young speaks of, I also believe that the long view is essential if we are to understand why it is that we have lost sight of trainee teachers' personal moral and political values to the detriment of their professional knowledge development. There are two strands within the long view which form the backdrop to my own narrative as a school mentor and teacher educator over the past thirty years. The first of these strands well documented by Pring and Roberts (2015) is the erosion of the political consensus about Education, which these authors date back to the Ruskin College speech given in 1976 by the then prime minister Jim Callaghan. This was the first time that a prime minister had said anything about education 'off his own bat' (p. 7). Pring and Roberts argue that before this speech, the political consensus accepted that schools should have freedom over the curriculum and gave local education authorities the funding and discretion necessary to develop systems that best met their local needs. After Callaghan's speech, which marked the beginning of direct political interference in education, the political consensus began to disintegrate with governments reducing spending on education, reducing the powers of local government, and most importantly for this study, reducing the independence of teachers.

The second strand, well documented by Craft (1996), focuses on right-wing teacher education reforms arising from the disintegration of political consensus about education. The reduction in teacher independence and the increase in neo-liberal political interference leads to extensive reforms of teacher education from 1989 onwards. The right-wing Tory perspective on training was to prevail and would drive reforms based on a perception of teaching as 'a purely

technicist matter of transmitting an unproblematic body of knowledge' (p. 37). Craft is particularly concerned with the way in which this instrumentalist view of teacher education led to an attempt to eliminate any values-based professional knowledge from teacher education. For example, Margaret Thatcher, the prime minister at the time, believed that that there 'was too little emphasis on factual knowledge, too little practical experience and too much stress on sociological and psychological factors' (p. 37). These views were reinforced by Lawlor's paper (1990) produced for the right-wing Centre for Policy Studies. Lawlor argued for complete on-the-job training in response to a review of a handful of Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) courses, which she considered to have too much sociological, psychological and cultural theory in relation to pupil learning. Here we can identify the political antecedents of an instrumentalist approach to initial teacher education, which has continued until the present and which has reduced opportunities for trainees to develop the relationship between their personal moral and political values through the processes of making moral decisions about inclusion and social justice. That this reduction in opportunities was to be thorough for ideological reasons is evident in the 1994 Education Act. The Act divorced Initial Teacher Education (ITE) from universities by diverting the funding to the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) (later Teacher Development Agency; TDA), which, because it controlled the accreditation and the funding, could dictate the content of courses. With the exception of the professional values section in the 2002 set of standards, values have not figured in the TTA and TDA iterations of the teaching standards.

At this point in the long view, my own narrative as a teacher educator begins. The two strands outlined above reflecting increasing neo-liberal political interference in teacher education culminated in the recommendation in 1990 made by Ken Clark, the then secretary of state for education, that 80 per cent of a teacher training course should be in school (eventually reduced to 75%). Secondly, teaching standards were introduced for secondary trainees in 1992 and for primary in 1993. These standards focused on subject knowledge and classroom management. Third, university departments were to pay schools for the work of school-based mentors.

The importance of the relationship between personal moral and political values

For me, as for those who have engaged in professional discourse arising from the case studies in Chapter 4, the relationship between trainees' personal moral and political values lies at the heart of professional fulfilment and, consequently, the development of effective professional knowledge and expertise. This belief is part of the personal and professional narrative underpinning this text, and although the relationship will be discussed more theoretically in Chapter 3 once that narrative has unfolded, at this point, I need to explain its significance within my own professional development. There are those academics such as Biesta (2015), who, like myself, argue that teacher education should be understood as a process of the formation of the person; however, what Biesta means here is 'not the individual

person, but the person as professional' (p. 12). In a similar vein, Korthagen and Kessels (1999), although describing personal meaning-making in teachers' practice, limit values to what a teacher considers important, for example, 'that children in this grade are capable of performing additions up to 100 without making mistakes' (p. 8). These demarcations reflect concern about straying into the private moral domain, as well as displaying an awareness of the risks of moral coercion, for example within education systems in oppressive regimes. However, insights arising from reflection on my own development from self-understanding to self-realization, as both teacher and teacher educator, lead to a strong belief that the relationship between personal (as opposed to private) moral values and political values is critical to professional knowledge development. I will try to exemplify this from my own experience as Religious Education (RE) teacher, mentor and teacher educator.

The author's narrative as Religious Education teacher

At the heart of RE professional knowledge development has been the tension between an accurate representation of formal, lived belief systems and the beliefs and values of the pupils. This presents a considerable challenge for the positioning of the teacher in relation to their own spiritual, moral and political values. In the late 1960s I had taught RE in a largely confessional way, underpinned by a liberal Christian theological model, which assumed that common Christian values were nominally shared by the teacher and their pupils. This post-war model rooted in national moral restructuring presented a problem for those of us reaching adulthood and professional status at a time of growing secularization and plurality. Two things occurred that influenced the development of my professional knowledge: a disconnect between assumptions about beliefs and values within the RE curriculum and the development of one's own personal moral and political values. Second, this disconnect displayed itself in the frustration of trying to make the connections between pupils' lived experience and the faith content in such a way that would be inclusive and contribute to social justice and so would fulfil one's motivations to want to teach RE. This disconnect between my personal moral and political values and the existing values and assumptions inherent in the subject at the time contributed to a decision to take a year out of teaching for further study but, most importantly, it crystallized for me the integral place of my personal moral and political values in developing a critical and strategic professional knowledge, which would sustain me in future teaching. However, many challenges were to lie ahead.

With increasing post-war migration, secularization and greater diversity in British society, confessionalism was superseded by a phenomenological approach, which was adopted for a more multi-faith syllabus and intended to 'develop an awareness of religious issues based on accurate information, rationally understood and considered in the light of relevant facts' (Schools Council 1971, pp. 22–24). This approach which would 'bracket out pupils and teachers own presuppositions and opinions' (1971, pp. 22–24) was to be combined with a 'reflective process whereby the outcomes of engaging in a dialogue with experience are brought

4 *Experience of a teacher educator in England*

into dialogue with living religions, so that one can interpret and reinforce the other' (1971, p. 43). As a result of this approach lacking any kind of pedagogical model, content seemed to drive a wedge between understanding formal belief systems and the development of pupil self-understanding. As Grimmitt has said:

the broad liberal educational value that the model attributes to the study of religion, including its capacity to address the personal and existential concerns of the pupil, is largely absent and that it has become a by word for a narrowly descriptive and content-centred approach to RE.

(2000, p. 28)

Once again, the positioning of the RE teacher in relation to their own personal moral, spiritual and political values is challenged by the phenomenological approach in that they, like the pupils, experience a disconnect between understanding formal belief systems and the development of their own self-understanding. It was, then, with a strong sense of this dilemma that in the late 1980s, I took on a new RE department and, in the process of writing a new syllabus, sought to resolve this tension. This project took on greater significance for my own professional knowledge development because it took place against the backdrop of RE, as a non-national curriculum subject, increasingly 'falling victim to a technicist and standards-related political ideology of education' ushered in by Margaret Thatcher and the tory politics of the time (Grimmitt, p. 7). This displayed itself, not only in the narrow interpretation of the subject influenced by the Tory right with the emphasis on Christianity in the 1988 Reform Act clause (HMSO 1988), but also through the influence of content-heavy model syllabuses (SCAA 1994) containing measurable learning outcomes based on pupil competency.

As a subject leader, one was pressurized to engage in the 'new managerialism' because of the risk, otherwise, of RE becoming marginalized from the rest of the curriculum. However, there were to be consequences for the struggle to develop a meaningful relationship between curriculum content in RE and pupil self-understanding, not least in the subject specialist's struggle to retain the values underpinning the integrity of the subject as they engaged in the development of increasingly instrumental whole school teaching and learning and assessment policies. On reflection, it becomes clear to me that in this context, I was beginning to understand the nature of critical and strategic professional knowledge which emerges when processes of moral decision-making are required.

In particular, in this ethos of measurement and instrumentalism, the relationship between one's own personal moral and political values is galvanized to do justice to the personhood of each pupil in a specific context which matters to you professionally. Hence, I sought to develop the humanizing influence of RE within and upon the whole curriculum. In writing a new syllabus, I therefore turned to Grimmitt (1987) and Read *et al.* (1992) and their Westhill RE Project, which had as its central aim 'to help children mature in relation to their own patterns of belief and behaviour through exploring religious beliefs and practices and related human experience' (Grimmitt p. 93). This aim gives priority to the pupil's

personal development rather than being a recipient of a body of knowledge, as they had become in the truncated phenomenological approach.

Implicit in the Westhill project was a distinction between learning about and learning from religions based on a theory of human development developed by Grimmitt (1987). Central to that theory is the process of growing in self-knowledge, which involves keeping the interplay between self and others continually in focus. This requires the curriculum content selected from both shared human experience and the religious traditions to be 'contextualised within the main loci of interaction between self and others – *family, faith, community, plural society and world-wide community*' (Grimmitt 1987, pp. 238–246). Grimmitt argued that it is only when there is *coherence* between the component parts, with each part playing its role, that the educational intentions of the theory become realizable. This coherence contributed to strengthening the relationship between my personal moral and political values in the classroom, and it consequently led to a much more confident kind of critical and strategic professional knowledge. This manifested itself in the articulation of shared personal and professional values underpinning the aims and purpose of an inclusive and socially just RE within the department. Motivating professional fulfilment leading to greater autonomy and a strengthening of teacher identity then followed as we engaged in developing relevant and meaningful learning, resulting in pupil investment in the value of the subject. To conclude, at this point in my professional knowledge development, the foundations were laid for a more theoretical understanding of the relationship between personal moral and political values, and it is to this which I will turn in Chapter 3.

At this point, those who teach what they may consider to be non-affective and values-free subjects in secondary schools may view my narrative as peculiar to the subject of RE. It is therefore worthwhile to have a look at what was happening in Maths during the late 1980s and 1990s. First of all within the Maths subject teaching world, there is a move towards cracking the myth that this is a totally values-free subject (Bishop *et al.* 1999). Part of this movement is the development of research into teachers' intended and implemented values and within this research, a recognition that teachers' personal moral and political values do play a significant role in decision-making in the Maths classroom. This is best exemplified in Dunne's (1997) research undertaken with four secondary Maths teachers between 1991 and 1994. As in my own experience in adapting RE assessments to comply with whole school National Curriculum procedures, Dunne finds that the introduction of external regulation in Maths presents a significant challenge to teachers' values. She observes that teacher judgements about test tier entry and pupil performance in class is narrowed to 'individualised and essentialised notions of ability' (p. 1). She argues that the reduction of ability to only a personal attribute is superficial and diminishes the significance of the classroom as an 'arena for inter-subjective interaction, ignoring the constitution of an individual pupil's and teachers' subjectivity by relations of, for example, age, gender class and ethnicity' (p. 1). Dunne concludes that deference to a clinical notion of ability conceals the complexities of social relations, which, in relation to the

personhood of the pupil, have a direct bearing on the intended and implemented values of the teacher. This finding, states Dunne, has considerable significance for social justice in education.

The author's narrative as mentor

I have analysed how the 'new managerialism' and instrumentalism emerging in the late 1980s and 1990s galvanized the relationship between my personal moral and political values as I sought to preserve the integrity of RE in relation to its contribution to the personhood of the individual pupil. The resulting increased confidence in my understanding of critical and strategic professional knowledge, based on moral decision-making about inclusive and socially just RE, motivated me to engage in the impact of the same instrumentalism beginning to spread beyond the curriculum and assessment and into teacher education. This meant that, as a subject mentor, I was involved in the initial implementation of the first set of Teaching Standards set out in Circular 9/92 (DfE 1992) within the context of what was to be described then in ideological terms as school-based training. Although not as radical as Ken Clarke, the secretary of state for education, had set out in his speech to the north of England education conference in January of 1992, stating that he wanted schools 'to be in the lead' (Campbell & Kane 1998), the shift to schools as 'full partners of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)' providing twenty-four weeks of training within a PGCE programme was significant enough (DfE 1992). It was significant in particular because the nature of the training set out in the circular was clearly intended to use schools to reinforce the prevailing neo-liberal values underpinning the measurement of competences pervading curriculum, assessment and whole school management: 'The accreditation criteria for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) courses should require HEIs, schools and students to focus on the competences of teaching' (DfE, 1992 para 22, p. 1). This focus is spelt out most emphatically in the circular's annex A:

HEI institutions, schools and students should focus on the competences of teaching throughout the whole period of initial training. The progressive development of these competences should be monitored regularly during ITT. Their attainment at a level appropriate to newly qualified teachers should be the objective of every student taking a course of initial training.

(DfE 1992, annex A para 2, p. 6)

The circular goes on to state that it expects schools to develop their own competences-based approaches to the assessment of students, followed by a statement of these competences, which are predictably narrow and instrumental but which should very much be the priority for schools: 'Schools will have a leading responsibility for training students to teach their specialist subjects and assess their competences in these respects' (DfE 1992, para 14, p. 4). In annex A, subject knowledge and application are presented functionally as measurable competences in the form of 'knowledge, concepts and skills'; similarly, class management are presented as

‘creating a purposeful and orderly environment’ (paras 2.3, 2.4, p. 6). Not surprisingly, competences in the assessment and recording of pupil progress are couched in the language of the ‘new managerialism’ and instrumentalism: students should ‘be able to identify the current level of attainment of individual pupils, systematically assess and record and use assessments in their teaching’ (annex a para 2.5, p. 6).

As I progressed in the mentoring role at a time when my own sense of what critical and strategic professional knowledge might look like, underpinned by the relationship between personal moral and political values, I became increasingly aware of the challenge of meeting trainee’s training needs through a standards-based approach as set out in Circular 9/92. It seemed to me, in the light of my own professional development, that mentors would need to help trainees to realize their personal values and motivations through their developing classroom practice. To achieve this, I felt that I needed to develop my own self-understanding, as well as the dialogic skills which would enable me to articulate the relationship between my own personal moral and political values within my classroom practice, thereby fusing the moral and instrumental within a standards-based framework. Such a fusion was important from my own professional perspective as I sought to support entrants into the profession. This was because I sensed a strong professional imperative to do justice to the integrity of my subject, as well as the beliefs and values underpinning the motivations of the trainees. At the same time, I could not allow RE ITE to become marginalized by a failure to meet high expectations, albeit within a narrow set of assessment criteria. Subject value meant, then, that I had good reason to be tough on standards, but I did not believe that teaching standards should be the ‘tail which wags the RE dog’, and so I managed to avoid some of the more negative cynicism generated by instrumental and technicist systems which can so easily be passed on to new entrants in training. Being free of negative (but not healthy) cynicism meant I could focus on enabling trainees to develop a critical and strategic kind of professional knowledge, which had at its heart a dynamic relationship between their personal moral and political values that would inform their decision-making for the benefit of all pupils. Given the opportunities for this kind of professional knowledge to develop through a process of personal development for the trainee, I believed that the teaching standards set out in 9/92 would be fulfilled and indeed exceeded in a meaningful way.

However, there was much at stake here because of the potential gap between what I had learnt through my own professional knowledge development and the realities of developing the new and unchartered mentoring role in the way hoped for. Overcoming that gap would require not an embracing of the anti-intellectualism that lay behind the prevailing political ideology that had created Circular 9/92, but an engagement in scholarly and professional debate about the serious arguments for school-based initial teacher education that could contribute to practical decision-making in the school context (McIntyre, Hagger & Wilkin 1993). That decision-making in relation to how experienced teachers can facilitate learning for new entrants would be subject to a range of views about professional education amongst senior leaders and professionals, reflecting the degree

to which schools adopted the prevailing neo-liberal values of the 'new managerialism'. For example, as McIntyre *et al.* stated at the time:

The mentor's role is likely to be a minimal one if, like Lawlor (1990) one believes that, beyond a good understanding of the subject to be taught, teaching is the same kind of relatively simple task as driving a car. On this view mentors need only provide a few helpful hints and tips and organise the extensive practice required.

(1990, p. 16)

In contrast, the contributors to what was one of the first academic and professional texts devoted to mentoring in school-based ITE state:

that teaching is a very complex and difficult undertaking, dependent on the development of many kinds of qualities and abilities, and that therefore helping people to learn to teach is also a complex and difficult task.

(1990, p. 16)

In the immediate post-Circular 9/92 period, there were not in place the professional structures to enable mentors to fully engage in a professional discussion about the complexities of the mentoring process. In school, we had the new role of professional tutor who perceived their role as largely operational in relation to mentors, whereas I had anticipated more than this, for example, in creating a regular forum for sharing issues and good practice. Within the partnership, the university subject tutors gradually began to set up a system of pre-placement meetings, but again these were largely concerned with operational matters in terms of meeting provision requirements. It is interesting to note that by 1996 and the introduction of an extremely heavy-handed Ofsted ITE inspection regime (three visits in a year), universities, who were largely driving the partnerships, woke up to the need to galvanize their mentors and introduced mentor training, some of which was becoming accredited. The degree to which such training would address the complexities of ITE as well as the quality of training provision within the structures of the partnership would depend to a large extent on the university subject tutors' evolving ability to engage in the nature of professional education, as well as subject knowledge and application which were the focus of Circular 9/92.

I was fortunate because Margaret Wilkin was working on a post-modern view of ITE within the education faculty of Cambridge University, our partner university. Although aware of the inherent dangers of the fragmentation and relativism of this cultural view, Wilkin introduce a positive counter-movement which could potentially influence the instrumental methodology of standards-based and school-based teacher education. Wilkin argues that within ITE, the emphasis on plurality and democracy which characterizes post-modernism needs to be merged with the values, clearly defined goals and rational actions of modernism:

As training becomes school-based, numerous teachers of varied interests, experience and skill must necessarily become empowered to fully share in the