

What should teacher education be about? Initial comparisons from Scotland and Alberta

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Abstract

This article empirically examines the ways in which Initial Teacher Education in Scotland and Alberta, Canada, seeks to 'get students in', 'get them out and into the workforce', 'get on with teaching future teachers' and how it should 'get on with students' (based on Smith & Laslett, 1993). Using Adams' (2016) policy heuristic, which posits that policy can be discerned in three realms: frame; explanation; and formation, this paper considers the middle realm: that of policy explanation. Here, attempts to position policy through public pronouncement, policy directive, mandate and/or missive are examined in the context of ITE in Scotland and Alberta. By analysing policy explanations, the paper marks out how both jurisdictions should begin to attempt to craft ITE located in career-long, professional learning and development that understands and acknowledges tensions between ITE and later teacher-education phases. Finally, the paper makes a tentative proposal as to what such ITE might hope to achieve and how it might contribute to a well-developed workforce, so that both locations and other jurisdictions might orient initial teacher development.

Key words

Initial Teacher Education; Scotland; Alberta; Policy

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Introduction

Despite Initial Teacher Education being a significant part of policy rhetoric and practice across many countries, agreement does not exist as to what ITE *is*, what it *should be* or what it *should be for*. Simply, ITE might posit that it exists to move an individual from ‘lay-person’ to ‘teacher’ as efficiently as possible. However, it is unclear whether globally this proposes credentialisation via standards and/or competences or conversely by engendering deeper insights and reflection on career-long professionalisation and professionalism.

Governments will, to varying degrees, seek engagement with and/or control discussion about ITE inputs, processes, and outcomes. As national political actors utilise network governance-type approaches to international affairs (e.g. Coman, 2016) many governments exercise domestic policy-power directly through education. As ITE missives seek new, or improved structural solutions, predictably these stem from political and education actors’ personal experiences allied to political expediency. It is unsurprising to hear politicians cite *urgency* or *crisis* in ITE for these provide population-attention calls to establish mechanisms for ‘obvious’ teacher preparation solutions. When supported by ‘research evidence’, often of a particular methodological persuasion, such calls offer electioneering slogans. In the 1997 UK election campaign, New Labour demonstrated this through the mantra ‘Education, Education, Education’. In 2010, the UK Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, stated that teaching is a ‘craft’ best learnt by working in school alongside ‘excellent’ teachers (Department for Education, 2010). Gove’s pronouncement was ‘supported’ by trainee teachers’ views that initial teacher training (ITT – the English nomenclature) was ‘too theoretical’ and did not focus enough on classroom processes (Adams, 2011a; Department for Education, 2010). Most, if not all politicians have experience of education as a student but not necessarily a teacher. It is unsurprising, then that personal experience drives what they perceive and expect education broadly, and teachers specifically, should do.

This English-ITT position has dramatically increased the number of pre-service teachers training in school settings and is tied to particular interpretations of what teachers do, how they learn and develop, and their role (Adams, 2008, 2011a). Conversely, countries such as Norway have embedded ITE within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through the consolidation of five-year ITE pathways with masters level study; similarly, Finland educates ITE students to masters level. While it might be thought that such similar ITE structures indicate concomitant levels of political-class involvement, Hilde Wågsås Afdal (Ladegaard, 2012) notes that the Norwegian Minister for Education's grip during recent reforms was considerable and contrasted with the Finnish approach of professional trust and control by the teaching and teacher education professions.

Despite international differences, political moves manifest mostly as: control of the ITE curriculum; locations for 'training'; specifications for certification; even messages about how teachers should teach and therefore the messages to be conveyed to ITE students about pedagogy and/or technique. In England it was only 40 years ago that politicians would defer to teachers in pedagogic matters (Watkins & Mortimore, 1999). This changed with the election of New Labour in 1997 and has continued apace with, first the UK coalition government from 2010 to 2015 and subsequent administrations. Such changes have ushered in new governance forms often based on rigid curriculum interpretations as 'knowledge to be acquired', teacher practice centred on 'whole-class instruction' and 'no-excuses' behaviour management systems (Claxton, 2021). Often, such perspectives originate with teachers with official political support through sanction and/or celebration through political speeches or promotion of adherents to political adviser posts. This demonstrates how ITE is 'positioned' socially, culturally, politically, and historically. This commentary on England highlights: first, English moves towards the technicisation of teaching and learning-teaching are mirrored elsewhere such as the US. Second, Scotland is part of the United Kingdom and despite having an independent education system, pressure is often applied to utilise 'down south matters, north of the border'.

In this article, we critique ITE in two jurisdictions: Scotland and Alberta (Canada). Scottish education has always maintained independence from the rest of the UK and ITE is no different. In Scotland, pre-service teachers are 'educated' rather than 'trained' and preparation takes place through partnership mechanisms between schools, local authorities, and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). There are eleven HEIs that offer ITE programmes, all of whom work in partnership. The *General Teaching Council Scotland* (GTCS) is the independent statutory body responsible for setting and maintaining standards for ITE and beyond and the provision of a code of professionalism. It is they who accredit partnership programmes developed between ITE actors. Additionally, *Education Scotland* provides guidelines for the self-evaluation of ITE courses (Education Scotland, 2018). The Scottish Parliament also scrutinises ITE through its *Education, Children and Young People Committee*.

ITE in Alberta shares similar structures. Formal education is governed provincially with higher education, including ITE, governed by the Ministry of Advanced Education. Like Scotland, the majority of Alberta's eleven ITE programs are based upon a philosophy of 'teacher education' versus 'teacher training'. All operate within formal partnerships with kindergarten to grade twelve schools, governed provincially by Alberta Education. These partnerships exist primarily to ensure preservice teachers can complete practicum courses as required by Alberta Education for certification purposes. While time spent in practicum differs between HEIs as a programme function, Alberta Education requires a minimum of ten weeks supervised, unpaid practicum. Hence, the average time ITE students spend in schools between each of the HEIs is approximately twenty weeks. Additionally, the Alberta Teachers' Association which serves provincial in-service teachers in myriad ways also influences ITE through committees that bring HEIs together to discuss topics of importance to teacher education in Alberta. Unlike Scotland, these policy actors do not play a role in the on-going evaluation of ITE programs which are monitored and evaluated by the HEIs themselves; instead, the Ministry of Advanced Education plays a significant role in the approval of ITE programs.

ITE realms: delineating and considering ITE?

We refer here to Initial Teacher *Education* (ITE). There is insufficient space to debate at length distinctions with Initial Teacher *Training* (ITT); simply, here the former refers to the development of teacher preparation processes located in the elaboration of teacher agency, enquiry, and career-long professional development. Conversely, ITT is the preparation of future teachers that seeks to imbue political ‘taken-for-granted’ assumptions as to what teaching is and should do with little room for debate.

This contrast highlights two ITE concerns. First, how Political processes seek (or not) to control teachers’ preparation speaks to positioning the teaching profession within socio-political-cultural-historical conversations. Second, control (or lack) of ITE manifests in myriad ways across myriad locations to direct the work of all.

To assist the analysis herein, we define ITE ‘realms’. The *systemic* consists of mechanisms for official admittance ‘into ITE’ and support for development ‘through ITE’. This realm is political, organisational, and institutional defining ITE through *inputs* (funding, staffing) and *outputs* (official, state sanctioned teachers). The second realm is Teacher Education *operationalisation*; techniques for *learning-teaching* (Mayer et al., 2017), mechanisms for instructing student-teachers and those employed or observed by student teachers in classrooms. The third realm is Teacher Education *Pedagogy*: how teachers are brought into relationship with the *systems-realm* and the *practice-realm* through various professional, personal, and relational growth. This third realm binds ITE; it *determines* and is *determined by* the others, located in *systemic discussions* and *operationalisation practices*.

We do not present these realms discretely; none operates in isolation. For example, partnership requires *systemic* organisational inputs across multiple sites with multiple students, guided by principles and desired outcomes for wider ITE experiences. Partnership is also *operationalised* and *practiced*: how students move into, through and exit from partnership experiences manifests operationally (variously called practicum, school experience, teaching practice, etc.). *Teacher Education Pedagogy* binds both these realms in normative terms:

partnership as *pedagogic acts* provide theoretical/conceptual bases for *systems* and the realisation of *operational* matters. All three partnership 'realms' support beginning teachers to understand professional praxis (the interdependence of here-and-now theories coupled with practice (Adams & McLennan, 2020)) in relation to the work of others and enduring education themes.

Conceptualising policy; conceptualising ITE

Additionally, this paper deploys Adams' (2016) heuristic 'Policy-as-Positioning' to underscore how positional manifestations offered through policy explanations are augmented by associated storylines and language. Noting that the objectification of policy '...runs counter to the lived experiences of those working in policy-rich contexts', Policy-as-Positioning extends Ball *et al.*'s contribution that policy is '...texts and "things" and discursive processes that are complexly configured, contextually mediated and institutionally rendered' (Ball *et al.*, 2011: 3). By introducing Gee's (2012) ideas of Big-D/Discourse and little-d/discourse, Adams (2016: 295) examines how the diffuse nature of policy formation/enactment (or, as he describes, 'positioning') might be uncovered and examined. Policy-as-Positioning posits the interplay of three policy-ontology mechanisms: *policy-framing*; *policy-explaining*; and *policy-forming*. *Policy-framing* illuminates how political, cultural, social, and historical pronouncements (Big-D/Discourses) provide positions with which individuals and groups might respond. *Policy-explaining* signals how texts, in this case across Scotland and Alberta, explicitly attempt representation of Big-D/Discourses. Such interpretational representations manifest through 'written' policy intent but are subsequently 'read' through social, cultural, and political Big-D/Discourses. Accordingly, how ITE 'should tend towards' particular features as extolled by explaining and framing goals, aims and objectives is potentially observable.

Of concern is how language embeds throughout society and social institutions (Gee 2012, 112). Big-D/Discourses consist of '...distinctive ways of speaking/listening and often, too, writing/reading coupled with distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, believing with other people and with various objects, tools, and technologies, so as to

enact specific socially recognizable identities engaged in specific socially recognizable activities' (Gee 2012, 152). These are matters of societal/cultural/economic/political recognition and denote, via expressions of thinking, feeling, etc., socially accepted association in language, and the various ways we use tools, technologies, and props to meaningfully identify ourselves as a member of a social group to recognisably fill a social niche (Gee, 2012, 158). Big-D/Discourses are mastered by enculturation into social practices through scaffolded interaction (Gee 2012, 167-168) and signal that behaviour gains meaning '...against the Discourse, or a set of complementary or competing Discourses that 'can "recognise" and give meaning and value to that behaviour'. (Gee, 2012, 190). Time, and Discourse membership produces 'someone'. *Policy-framing* and *policy-explaining* deploy Big-D/Discourse to provide more 'readerly' or more 'writerly' calls to professional action. However, neither are seen to confer policy with 'form' for both note the 'ever emergence' of policy as 'processes' constituted in local, discursive moments.

Conversely, little-d/discourse consists of '... stretches of language which 'hang together' so as to make sense to some community of people, such as a contribution to a conversation or a story' (Gee, 2012: 112). This defines the discursive act, the 'how' implicit in local, conversational engagement. This sense-making denotes moment-by-moment discursive events and Adams develops this as *policy-forming*; through 'attempts to understand' policy frames and explanations, policies are 'brought into existence'. Little-d/discourse (Gee, 2012) realises policy-formation through the deployment of illocutionary moments (attempts at action) and realisation of perlocutionary effects (results in action). Overall, Policy-as-Positioning obviates that static representations are imbued in 'policy documents' or 'policy pronouncements'. Instead, it ontologically positions policy as in flux: always forming and reforming through discursive moments in local realisation.

Bacchi (2000) highlights that discourse has no universal, agreed-upon definition and is often poorly conceptualised, realised, or demarcated. Indeed, Gee's contribution, possibly contentious through its bifurcation, elaborates distinctions and commonalities between societal

matters and instances of local agreement/disagreement. Deployed as a methodological heuristic, Policy-as-Positioning offers potential to debate the three ITE realms. It provides interpretation of how and why ITE might/might not manifest particularly. Despite those who seek to tightly frame ITE through overarching socio-political frameworks and explain such positions through diktat, fiat, or calls to teachers' 'essential characteristics' it is common to find little-d/ITE-discourses (indeed, education-discourses more broadly) forming in ways which reconstitute the frames and explanations under discussion (e.g. Aydarova, Rigney, & Dana, 2021). This does not deny manifest probabilities of legislation or mandate but positions framing and explaining as probable explanatory mechanisms with local policy formation as flexible local possibility. Indeed, little-d/discourse policy-forming emphasises a relational ontology: in-the-moment-lived-ness. Figure 1 represents this interface between *ITE realms* and *Policy-as-Positioning*.

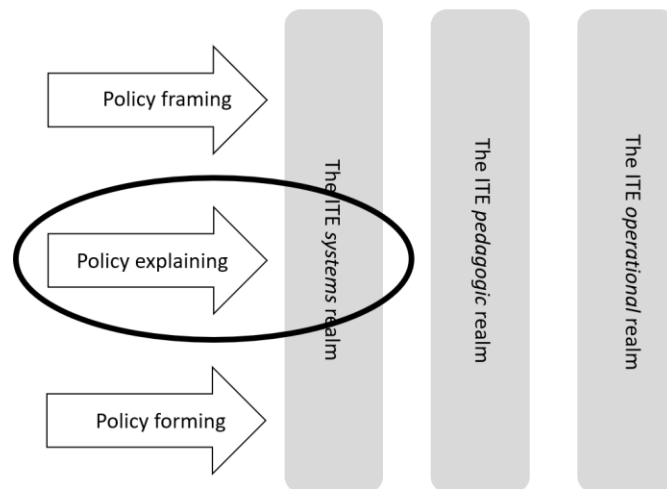


Figure 1: The ITE realms/Policy-as-Positioning interface (as indicated by the marked overlap).

Alberta and Scotland: policy-learning

Separating each ITE realm for the purposes of defining and operationalising ITE is potentially problematic. However, thinking and debating at each level helps if only that different actors may be involved in each. Such realm-focus also has support in *Policy-as-Positioning* (Adams,

2011b, 2016). Deploying Positioning Theory (cf. Harré, 2004) this extends and modifies policy-enactment theory (cf. Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2011) and work on *policy-as-text* and *policy-as-discourse* (Ball, 1993). Deploying a realms approach, we debate, through *policy-explaining* how policy pronouncements offer perspectives on ITE in Alberta and Scotland. We focus on the *Systems* realm to examine Scottish and Albertan ITE policy-explanations; how ITE is *explained* systemically. We examine both ITE *systems realms* through particular policy *explanations*.

An initial thought might be ‘why compare these two?’ Here we note Phillips (2000: 299, cited in Ochs, 2006: 600) policy borrowing rationale: ‘...the most obvious consequence of learning from and understanding what is happening "elsewhere" in education’ in connection with Rose’s (1991) assertion that lesson-drawing starts with scanning *elsewhere* to inform what might happen *here*. Further, Dale’s (2007) view that policy-learning is more helpful than policy-borrowing lends weight to this comparison, particularly as both jurisdictions share similar characteristics. Both Alberta and Scotland have similar: population size (4,371,316 and 5,463,300 in 2019 respectively); population dispersal (a densely populated ‘central belt’ with more sparsely populated southern and northern areas giving rise to geographically close schools in part but with large numbers of rural and remote schools elsewhere); aging populations; and English as the majority home language. Alberta is geographically larger than Scotland (255,214 square-miles versus 30,000 square miles respectively). There are also similarities in mechanisms for preparing teachers. While these are mandated slightly differently, both jurisdictions operate on the basis that ITE should have a close relationship with HEIs. Additionally, while Scotland is diversifying somewhat, the main routes are as detailed in table 1 below. Further similarities exist between the two locations: all programmes therein must conform to nationally/provincially mandated ‘standards’ for ‘provisional’ qualification, followed by a period whereby new entrants gain ‘full registration’ (Scotland) or ‘teaching license’ (Alberta). Such initial periods of education followed by workplace validation are increasingly a global phenomenon (Ronfeldt & Mcqueen, 2017).

<p style="text-align: center;">Scotland</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Initial programmes confer ‘provisional registration’ with the GTCS)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Alberta</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Successful programme completion confers ‘interim licensing’ with Alberta Education)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four-year BA/MA (all GTCS validated): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Subject study ○ ‘Professional’ aspects • One-year <i>Professional Graduate Diploma of Education</i> (PGDE) (perhaps two-year masters) (all GTCS validated): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prior ‘graduate status’ ○ Pedagogic/curriculum focus • ITE followed by either the Teacher Induction Scheme (TIS) or the Flexible Route’ for ‘full registration’. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four-year BEd: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Two years subject study ○ Two years education courses • Two-year top-up BEd: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Four semesters ○ Education courses • Five-year concurrent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Two degrees in five years ○ BA/BSc/BKin and BEd • ITE followed by interim certification and possible employment as a K-12 teacher

Table 1: General outline of ITE routes across Scotland and Alberta

Here we examine how ITE is officially ‘explained’; we examine aspects of the ITE *system realm* in each jurisdiction, through the *policy explanation* lens (Adams, 2016). We do this by deploying Smith and Laslett’s (1993) classroom management ideas of ‘get them in’, ‘get them out’, ‘get on with it’ and ‘get on with them’. Further, we consider how pre-service teachers enter, progress through, and exit from ITE programmes as well as how teacher educators are required to *get on with* teaching pre-service teachers and *get on with* them. We conclude with Sanderson’s (2009) ideas of *intelligent policy-making* to discuss how ITE might be further normatively positioned. Sanderson’s ideas contrast with ‘rational’, evidence-based policy making, connect with understanding contingency, and relate strongly to Adams’ ideas of *policy-positioning*. Through an examination of normative (re)constructions, we tentatively define what ITE might hope to achieve in both locations and how this might influence work elsewhere.

‘Explaining ITE’ in Scotland and Alberta

In their 1993 book *Effective classroom management: A teachers' guide*, Smith and Laslett proposed four rules: *get them in, get them out, get on with it, get on with them*. These provided advice on how matters such as transitions (*get them in; get them out*) might orient teachers' work. Here, we argue this metaphor constructs an interpretive ITE framework. Through examination of how policy explaining orients *getting students into ITE, getting them out of ITE, getting on with it* (doing ITE), and *getting on with them* (the ITE student) we firstly examine that *stated as ITE*. We then deliberate on what *might be done*. The initial examination is *empirical*: it speaks to *how* things occur. The latter is *normative*; it proposes what might/should be. Notably, the positions policy-explanations offer in each jurisdiction are often contradictory; to underscore this we take each of Smith & Laslett's (1993) aspects in turn.

Get them in; Get them out

Both Albertan and Scottish policy documents position *getting students out of ITE* by successful completion rates. Pre-service teachers embark on and achieve success in recognised modes of study by meeting programme and/or provincial/national requirements to enter the workforce. Such mechanisms imply, in the least 'preparedness to teach' as a central ITE tenet but which acknowledges the value of career-long learning. However, both locations juxtapose this with the desire to ensure new teachers might 'hit the ground running', mostly to fill teacher vacancies. On the one hand, ITE sets out to produce teachers who are as close to the 'finished article' as possible yet recognises that the 'finished article' through *initial* teacher education is unattainable. Both jurisdictions' ITE graduates can work 'as teachers' but without an 'official stamp of being a teacher'. This foregrounds contradictory positions: newly qualified teachers are able to 'act as teachers' but are 'not teachers'.

In Alberta, this contradiction between new teachers enacting the traits and sensibilities of *fully ready* educators and the recognition of continued career-long learning is seen clearly in the distinction between the use of interim certification mechanisms but a single Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2018) for all teachers, regardless of experience. Applicants to Alberta teacher education programmes are normally assessed using criteria that include

previous academic success (grade point average). This is arguably the most considered criteria for it offers the least logistical complexity/the most objective admissions criteria, and/or past/present experiences that speak to an applicant's suitability for the profession. Having completed their ITE, newly minted graduates apply for interim certification with Alberta Education. they then have approximately two years to gain the required experience and successful teaching evaluations necessary to be recommended for permanent certification. It is here, (successfully completing an ITE program *and* attaining requisite successful teaching evaluations) that the contradiction lies.

To better understand this, it is necessary to understand the teacher evaluation policy in use. In 2018 a newly developed Teaching Quality Standard was created, and subsequently implemented across all K-12 schools in 2019. This document outlines one standard to be met by all teachers, experience notwithstanding.

Quality teaching occurs when the teacher's ongoing analysis of the context, and the teacher's decisions about which pedagogical knowledge and abilities to apply, result in optimum learning for all students' (p. 3).

This standard is further delineated by six competencies focusing on various aspects of the aforementioned, including the ability to: foster effective relationships; engage in career-long learning; demonstrate a professional body of knowledge; establish inclusive learning environments; apply foundational knowledge about Indigenous people; and adhere to legal frameworks and policies (Alberta Education, 2018). This document posits a continuum to be applied differentially to each teacher during their career. Yet ITE programs must attest that graduates applying for interim certification have, to an acceptable degree met this standard and associated competencies, making them ready to 'move towards being a teacher.' Assuming successful attainment of a teaching position, new teachers, at the end of two years, must again prove they are 'ready' through a permanent certification process. Clearly, while Discourse posits this document as a continuum, there are also points where one must further prove one's

worth. While this may not negate the continuum, it does raise questions about how and when pre-service teachers *are* teachers.

Scotland has recently rewritten standards that student teachers must meet to receive provisional registration (General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), 2021b). Once met, students have three years to achieve the Standards for full registration (General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), 2021a). Both sets are underpinned by professional values: social justice; trust and respect; and integrity. In contrast with Alberta, there is formal recognition that newly qualified teachers will not have the breadth and depth of experience of more experienced colleagues, evidenced by the fact that progression is incremental (standards for provisional registration, then standards for full registration). Indeed, the GTCS has other standards that operate as individuals progress in their career, set within the frames of ‘professional commitment’ and a code of practice.

Table 1 shows the several pathways through Scottish ITE. Students who enter a four-year, undergraduate degree will have different experiences to those who learn-teaching via a one-year (in effect 10 months) professional, graduate diploma of education (PGDE). Across Scotland most PGDEs confer credits at level 11 of the SCQF Framework (masters level); however, this is much less common on undergraduate routes. Differential status between undergraduate and postgraduate routes thus exists, not in terms of ‘meeting the standards’ but in terms of judgements about the time it takes for student teachers to be ‘ready to teach’ and credentialisation levels at which they graduate.

All graduates from Scottish ITE are eligible for the Teacher Induction Scheme (TIS). Here, those identified as having met the provisional registration standards are offered guaranteed employment in a state-maintained school for one academic year. At the end of this period, graduates are expected to meet the standards for full registration and are subsequently eligible to take-up permanent positions in a maintained Scottish school. For those unwilling or unable

to enter TIS, there is the option of a flexible route to full registration often achieved via ad-hoc supply-teaching.

Two points emerge. First, that undertaken on each type of route cannot be said to be comparable. Indeed, the Donaldson Review (Donaldson, 2011: 39), a seminal evaluation of teacher education and development that forms the basis for Scottish ITE currently, noted that while

many PGDE qualified probationers have a steeper learning curve at the start of the induction year, they often have a strong capacity to learn and develop and the difference in practical teaching skills between the two routes becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish over time.

Thus, both graduate groups are conferred with similar status, provisional registration. While no two ITE graduates will be the same and thus require the same support, Donaldson's statement contradicts the very premise of conferring equal provisional status to both routes: if a feature of PGDE graduates is that they (generally) have a steeper learning curve in the induction year, then it follows they must not have the same experience or knowledge as those leaving undergraduate routes. Different experiences are acceptable both within and between courses particularly where these meet individual and local need: these pertain to travelling different paths to the same destination. This is not what Donaldson suggested. He was clear: not only is the PGDE experience different to that of an undergraduate, it also potentially requires more development work to achieve full registration status. This is further compounded given that in 2017 the Scottish Government sought to further diversify ITE routes, some of which compressed the PGDE and subsequent induction period.

This issue is not insurmountable. The induction period is designed to support and develop newly qualified teachers to both meet the full standards and continue to develop recognition of the value of career-long professional learning. Providing differentiated professional development in this induction year may meet individual need though both cohorts are not

directly comparable. There is currently, insufficient data to determine whether the induction-year experience sufficiently diagnoses and meets both individual need and need as determined (potentially) by ITE route. Second is Donaldson's focus on 'practical teaching skills'. While important, these potentially contrast with the espoused aims for Scottish ITE: the development of a socially just profession. While a focus on social justice is not necessarily elided by a focus on practical matters, given that social justice requires more than practical teaching skills it is propitious to question how ITE and the induction year support features necessary to that end.

While Scottish ITE relies on nationally mandated standards to provide systemic parity, variation in ITE route challenges post-ITE induction year provision. This is not a matter of 'one route is better than the other'; it is acknowledgement that 'different routes achieve different things' that need addressing variably in subsequent year/s. Whereas the Alberta system does not differentiate between teachers with limited and extensive experience, in Scotland, different routes provide for an oxymoronic position that needs addressing during the post-ITE years.

Get on with it

In Alberta, teachers are required to hold a Bachelor of Education degree to be certified by the Government of Alberta (Alberta Education) to teach in K-12 classrooms. While equivalency exceptions are sometimes made for internationally educated teachers, the BEd is the norm and is that offered by ITE programs provincially. While the Ministry of Advanced Education is responsible for the initial approval of ITE programs, it is Alberta Education, through the process of teacher certification that influences how ITE 'gets on with' educating preservice teachers. While ITE programs themselves do not issue teacher certification, all ITE programs must attest to Alberta Education that graduates meet the standards associated with interim certification (see Alberta Education, 2021). Currently, this translates into requirements including minimum credit hours received related to content knowledge, the completion of further credit hours in courses constituting the Bachelor of Education degree, and the integration and completion of school-based practicum. Currently, teacher education programs meet these requirements disparately. Courses within various teacher education programs differ, as do the number of

weeks spent on practicum; most institutions include well over the minimum required for certification. However, as it stands all accredited programs are designed to ensure that they meet the certification requirements of Alberta Education; this process thus governs and shapes teacher education in the province.

The critical issue concerning Alberta's ITE system is not that each program, and thus each graduate, must meet a minimum standard to be certified with Alberta Education. It is the secondary impact this process has on how providers 'get on with' ITE and resultant pulls to centre this creates. As each institution's ITE attempts to remain responsive to changes across local, national, and international communities, this external certification process exerts homogenizing forces on ITE graduates. This has two significant implications. First, it assumes there exists the ideal teacher and that the minimum, ubiquitous standards for certification across the province will so generate such individuals. This is significant for it signals to ITE programs that there exist those meant to be teachers and those who are not; there exist universal markers that allow some to fit visions of what a teacher is/is not. Second, while each ITE program individually is designed to meet Alberta Education's certification requirements, the quiet influence of the certification process precludes interrogation of the very purpose for education. Certification requirements in and of themselves position new teachers as conveyors of knowledge with practical skills learned from those with current K-12 classroom experience, thereby all but ensuring continuation of what has been.

This is mirrored in Scotland where two issues emerge. First, by providing standards, GTCS and other interested parties make bold claims about that which a teacher should know and be able to do to achieve provisional/full registration. While the standards are less prescriptive than in other jurisdictions (e.g., England), they concentrate the minds of all who provide ITE, be they HEI-, LA-, or school-based. GTCS and Scottish Government are both clear that they wish for ITE to produce enquiring and collaborative teachers, for such professionalism,

is a powerful force in developing teachers' agency and delivering our commitment to engaging children, young people, their families and communities in the education process. (General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2021: 4)

The standards ITE students must meet to achieve provisional registration govern that which teacher educators 'do' and what students must 'evidence'. As in Alberta, this positions all in ITE and gives specific directional intent both for *what* to provide (even if loosely derived) and *how* to respond. This categorises future teachers into 'those professionally acceptable' and 'those not'.

In addition to standards for provisional registration, all Scottish HEIs must meet requirements for programme accreditation (General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), 2013) which detail matters such as the length of time to be spent on placement. Further, in 2019, GTCS produced a *Memorandum on Entry Requirements to Programmes of Initial Teacher Education in Scotland* (General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), 2019) that sets out minimum expectations for ITE entry and mandates that selection of student teachers,

must take into account available reports on individual applicants, their experiences, interests and wider achievements and the extent to which they match the skills, attributes and dispositions desirable in a teacher. (General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), 2019: 5)

While societally, professionally, and politically agreed direction for ITE is not uncommon, it can be argued that such suites of standards and mandated entry requirements position teaching in terms of that currently required, rather than what may be needed in the future. In effect, it defines 'the teacher' against existing norms and needs thereby possibly reducing creativity. Such matters are particularly acute when student teachers are expected to 'fit' with existing organisational/pedagogical features that challenge that which they have been taught or that which they wish to achieve. As Johnston (2020) notes, ITE student success on placement occurs because of myriad issues in addition to personal ability, such as the quality of mentor support

and school culture. Scottish ITE programmes may well not wish to produce cardboard cut-out teachers, but it is clear the profession has mechanisms for ensuring, as far as possible, that those who graduate are 'recognisably teachers'.

Get on with them

Teachers and preservice teachers in Alberta are shaped by narratives that underpin education across the province. These narratives are greatly created and maintained by policies, both governmental and otherwise that govern education including curriculum documents and other legislative ideals that create what it means to be an educator in the province. For ITE, these policies and missives shape the education of future teachers through preparation by universities designed to 'fit them into' the profession. In 'getting on' with preservice teachers in Alberta, two policies play a critical role: the *Teaching Quality Standard* (2018) and the *Alberta Teachers' Association Code of Professional Conduct* (2018). These documents describe what a teacher ought to *be* and how they *ought to* behave. In effect, they describe who teacher educators and student teachers are and how they should engage in educating/being educated. The *Teaching Quality Standard* describes competent teachers as those who create inclusive classrooms with individualized instruction for each student: they are subject area experts able to imbue pedagogy with Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing; they are lifelong learners who understand the importance of and follow legislation and policy. Succinctly, this document describes 'the teacher' explicitly, in terms of what they must be able to do, and implicitly, by outlining a set of values in which all 'good teachers' believe. The *Code of Professional Conduct*, on the other hand speaks not to who teachers *are* but to the ways in which they must behave, providing a list of rules that govern teacher-pupil interaction, pupils, school authorities, colleagues, and the profession. This document outlines, explicitly and implicitly, what it means to be a well-behaved teacher; one who embraces the narratives and values that surround education.

This is mirrored in Scotland. The standards for provisional/full registration seek to orient professional expertise and activity so ensuring Scottish schools meet their obligations. In

addition to a general *Code of Professionalism and Conduct* (General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), 2012a) GTCS have produced *The Student Teacher Code* (General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), 2012b). This recognises ITE students' interim status: as they have not yet met the standards for provisional registration, students are not bound by the general code. Instead, they must ensure they do not act in ways which may prejudice future judgments about their status as *fit to practice*. Indeed, fitness to practice provide additional requirements that govern the investigation of alleged misconduct or unprofessional practice (General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS), 2017).

There is no intention here to evaluate the worth of any of these policies as all have a role to play both for the teaching profession and for ITE. Each shape the way ITE 'gets on with' the work of learning-teaching and thus they orient both that undertaken and that judged to be 'successful'. All these policy explanations are embraced while ITE students are working at university and in school. They provide evaluative measures against which to assess the success of preservice teacher education measures including school placements.

Intelligent policymaking

Three things thus become clear. First, how ITE is organised in both jurisdictions is relatively similar. While there are some differences in terms of, for example level of qualification, there is much consistency. Second, for both, policy explanations seek to orient ITE so that it centres on attempts at explicit standardisation through articulated statements to which teachers must work, and processes for the development of teaching in ways judged to be 'acceptable' both educationally and politically. Third, both locations seek to develop teachers who, while meeting agreed-upon mandates, are simultaneously required to be creative *and/but* controlled.

It can be argued that policy explanations here seek to bridge the gap between desire and performance; their position revolves around the seeming belief that such articulations capture that intended and then translate this into actionable features. There is a concentration on implementation, and although there is a certain amount of input monitoring the approach in

each case is oriented towards outcomes: mandating the 'good teacher'. What this recognises is the differential 'delivery' of ITE within a tightly agreed framework.

However, there exist tensions in the approach of both jurisdictions. The identification of standards for ITE (and beyond) assumes that the work of teachers can be codified and rationalised. Both approaches posit that there are certain features of teachers' work that can be identified, stated, and then actioned. With origins in enlightenment thinking, both approaches drive the belief that responsibility in public affairs is a matter of evidence and reflective judgement which in turn lays the foundations for 'evidence-based policy making' (EBPM) (Sanderson, 2011). Measures for 'getting them in, getting them out, getting on with it and getting on with them' revolve around sharing *what works* with pre-service teachers as well as utilising *what works* methods for achieving success. Simply, the approaches in both jurisdictions *describe* that to be taught and that to be done, albeit with nods towards the normative. Those who generated the standards may argue this was done *with* the profession and for the purposes of ensuring autonomous professional action. However, it should be stressed that in both jurisdictions, and reflecting approaches in other countries, standards operate also, and possibly more heavily, within '...an "audit" or "managerial" professionalism discourse that emphasises accountability and effectiveness, and considers standards and teacher education as part of state regulated accountability' (Révai, 2018: 9). This 'tightrope walking' is a common feature of many standards-based approaches where a fine line is trodden between standards as a mechanism to release potential, and as forming a gatekeeping function to validate entry to the profession.

When standards align with 'evidence' it is notable that the latter legitimates the former. At one level this is unsurprising: governments of all persuasions desire to achieve value-for-money: what better way than to identify 'evidence' as the mainstay. Here is the identification of a causal link between policy and practice. Two problems emerge. First, most contemporary policy theories signal that policy is never simply mandated on high and implemented locally. Rather, policy is variously defined as enacted, or for Adams' (2016) 'positioned'. His recognition of the

intricate relationship between *policy framing*, *policy explaining* and, *policy forming* contests the allure of 'policy into practice'. This approach to policy responds to the attractiveness of instrumental rationality in the face of social complexity. Often that desired is a drive to control society more concretely through instrumentally rational mechanisms that seek order and control. Notably, the evidence referred to is always located in the past and often does not survive unaltered the closer policy gets to the 'political classes'. Both Albertan and Scottish ITE approaches seem caught here: although they wish to describe normative ITE positions for learning-teaching (that which *should* be done and adopted), in effect they merely provide *descriptions* for the teaching profession. This contradiction emerges from the belief that an apolitical, scientized method cures all ills. Notably, in many parts of the world political hubris and ideology often usurp evidence-based approaches, leading to slippage in that pronounced, or selective choice as to what counts as evidence. The danger is that descriptive accounts simply maintain and strengthen the power of elites (Sanderson, 2009) via mechanisms that poorly interpret policy or which are used as a smokescreen for political decision-making or to justify policies post-hoc (Sanderson, 2011). To counter this, Sanderson (2009; 2011) identifies 'intelligent policy making' where actors,

'...accommodate the complexity surrounding the application of intelligence in policy making, treat policies as hypotheses to be tested in practice, to be piloted where feasible and appropriate and to be subject to rigorous evaluation, and in which we learn from these processes and apply the intelligence thus gained to future policy thinking and decisions (Sanderson, 2009: 700).

Central to Sanderson's claims is 'fallibilism': the recognition that all knowledge can be further interpreted, revised, and criticised. For ITE this means all are '...warranted in asserting the validity of knowledge on the basis of principles, rules and procedures of inquiry that produce successful experimentation, i.e., knowledge that informs successful problem solving' (Sanderson, 2009: 709). This is a practical endeavour that requires Deweyan (1957) 'intelligence': the capacity to apply knowledge to help actors take appropriate ethical-moral action where values *and* ends must be explicitly considered. For ITE, this shifts the conversation

from one of 'meeting the standards' to 'positioning the standards' in specific contexts; preservice teacher and teacher-educator responses are thus local and responsive.

Essentially here are differences between *describing* and *setting* standards (Ingvarson, 2012). The former articulates valued professional knowledge and skills, the latter agrees to levels of acceptability. The former might offer well-articulated positions for professional acts, but the latter provides grounds for the conferment of professional status. While the first may attempt to establish a vision for the profession, inevitably this is subject to contemporary professional perspectives coupled with often poorly articulated and poorly thought through predictions for how teachers will need to work in the future. As much that passes for contemporary education has its origins in 19th century educational practice, it is doubtful whether such 'future forecasting' has to date been successful. When attached to assessment mechanisms that are inevitably tied to tacit agreement about what teachers do, etc., it is of little surprise that students on placement often report having to work to agreed protocols that may contradict that discussed and learnt in HEIs.

There are then, tensions in the approaches of both jurisdictions. First, the delineation of standards is prescriptive in how it defines 'the teacher'. They offer readily made and digestible statements for all involved in ITE but may constrain how preservice teachers and teacher-educators work and that which they believe. Such statements are inevitably generic in form and while this does not necessarily preclude individual interpretation, given that the statements are made according to contemporary ideas about what a teacher 'looks like', 'does', and 'acts' it is unsurprising when ITE students are judged against others who 'walk and talk in the right way'. When added to the aim for ITE to ensure newly qualified teachers 'hit the ground running', homogeneity and conformity may ensue. Second, returning to the *realms for ITE*, standards, as a policy-explanation mechanism, contribute to the construction of ITE systems and pedagogy. Their impact is pervasive: although they are established as outcomes, they drive inputs to ITE as well.

Adams' heuristic for policy can be deployed here. Rather than identify universalist ITE approaches *systemically, pedagogically, and operationally*, Policy-as-Positioning highlights how that undertaken at the local level is positioned by the language and storylines of all involved as they attempt to understand and operationalise policy-frames and policy-explanations. Although *evidence* is not necessarily problematic, when it is deployed to mandate learning-teaching, it possibly *might* be. When used to overly direct ITE, evidence features as a mechanism for constraint and control and hence the continuation of that which has gone before as judgement towards 'becoming a teacher'; the moulding of new teachers in the guise of that which already exists.

However, Sanderson's idea of 'intelligent policy' coupled with Adams' heuristic signals an alternative orientation. The former identifies the need for local solutions to local problems that are evaluated, and which contribute to a new pillar for policy using 'trial and error' as acknowledgement of how social life is constructed as a complex phenomenon. At the local level of *policy-forming* this requires appreciation of that which policy explanations attempt to achieve within the frame that differential responses are required.

We are not suggesting that local interpretation does not already occur. Indeed, there are many instances where creative approaches to ITE happen in each jurisdiction. However, what we note is the inherent contradiction within and between ITE realms. Policy frames at each location may desire flexibility and creativity, and local response may engender this, but problematically, policy explanation in both jurisdictions positions all involved in learning-teaching as needing to 'become' a certain type of teacher: one readily identifiable. There is a need to challenge this tendency to conflate *what is the case* with *what should be the case*: the empirical with feelings and ideals. Approaches to, for example behaviour management require not just explication and acceptance, but also challenge as good policy and as good professional practice. This requires discussion about professional knowledge and positionality rather than what evidence might or might not tell us. Possibly, Ingvarson (2012: 9) is right when he states,

Standards are a means of translating research into expectations for teachers' practice. Standards are not immutable; they need regular revision in the light of research and professional knowledge.

This must be tempered by recognition that 'research applied here' is not the same as 'research applied there'. Policy-as-Positioning coupled with Sanderson's ideas on intelligent policy signal the need to recognise and accept contingency.

Conclusion

The educational significance of this paper is in its intent to begin a conversation on an activity central to development of the teaching profession. Without critical examination of policy explanations, ITE may simply replicate that which it has always done. Termed by Lortie (1975) as an 'apprenticeship of observation' (the tendency for preservice and in-service teachers to replicate their own student experiences and, as such, maintain a status-quo), ITE must stand as a place to provide initial challenge to educational systems and policies. That presented here is of educational significance for those seeking the critique of educational policy through the discussion of three aspects of ITE requiring further debate if it is to position PSTs favourably in terms of entry into and exit from ITE and orient ITE work so that PSTs are suitably positioned vis-à-vis the profession as students and later as in-service teachers. These aspects include the practicum; professional partnerships; and theory. Each of these are noted as fundamental to the development of normative positions for ITE. Challenge must ensue as to *what* evidence, *whose* evidence and *why* this evidence and can be provided by acknowledging the mechanism of policy explanation and how these can be and are positioned locally.

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