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Teacher Education Advancement Network

TEAN Conference 2024 Abstracts

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Use the hyperlink below to go to the 'at a glance' conference programme

Use author names or keywords or the presentation code number to search for specific abstracts

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Presentation 56: On why ‘subjectification’ matters and how to regain agency in initial teacher education

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The increasing pressure in Western countries for qualifications and improved PISA and other high-stakes testing (supposedly demanded by the media, politicians, and policymakers) has shifted the focus from teaching to learning. Biesta (2022), an educational theorist who has put forward three domains for education (qualification, socialisation, and subjectification), challenges the educational shift and characterises this evolution as "learnification," - the framing of all educational aspects in the language of learning, thereby prioritising the learning process over the content and reasons for learning. We argue that 'learnification' is dominating the space within which initial teacher education takes place today, and we consider this problematic because the purpose of education has become sidelined; the student has been diminished to a learner (Biesta, 2022), and it has caused a politically motivated surveillance of teacher education (Heck, 2022). As part of the ITERC Biesta Reading group collaboration, our presentation explores Biesta's notion of subjectification – the attributing of agency and active engagement to the student in educational contexts and how this shapes the underlying power dynamics and relationships in teacher education.

Demonstrating through exemplification, we show how students can regain their agency when they become the subjects of their own life. Through an exploration of the purposes of education, freedom, and democracy and how this could re-enter initial teacher education, we hope to address Papastephanou's (2020) concerns about the 'elusive' nature of Biesta's theoretical framework and Biesta's partial or axiomatic interpretations. To address MacAllister (2016), another critic of Biesta who argues that the trifold lens is normative and would benefit from considering alternative perspectives on the purposes of education, we demonstrate how Biesta elevates the discourse by re-appraising the purpose of Teacher Education and critiquing various objectives that guide teacher education programs.

We share our insights into subjectification as teacher educators from various international educational backgrounds, including examples from primary mathematics, senior English, Religious Education and democracy in the classroom. We critique how teacher educators can support student teachers, mediate governmental policy, and utilise the heart, head and hand approach, illustrating how the overt attention to subjectification as an educational purpose can make a difference to students' classroom experiences and their education (Biesta, 2017). We draw implications from these examples for teacher education in the respective subject domains and illustrate how attention to subjectification in education relates to the broader concerns of freedom and democracy.

Key References

Biesta, G. (2017). *Letting Art Teach. Art Education 'after' Joseph Beuys*. Arnhem: Artez Press
 Biesta, G. (2022). *World Centred Education*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Heck, D. (2022). Teacher educators as public intellectuals: exploring possibilities. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 1-12.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2022.2049700>

MacAllister, J. (2016). The normativity of Gert Biesta's educational theory. *Ethics and Education*, 11(3), 378-392.

Papastephanou, M. (2020). What lies within Gert Biesta's going beyond learning? *Ethics and Education*, 15(3), 275-299.

Presentation 57: Can research contribute to the development of historical and critical consciousness through narrative in school-led teacher training?

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Current research using the Gramscian Dialectic (Gramsci 1971) and Historical Consciousness (Rusen 1993; Gergen 2005) demonstrates a clash of ideological values between neo-liberal instrumentalism, aimed at aligning school-led teacher education with school improvement and historic narratives which embed teacher education within the civic, social democratic values of the training universities (Mead 2023). Such a clash of ideological values might re-generate a Gramscian values-based dialectic in current teacher education which can contribute to the development of the moral and political values of trainee teachers. However, a problem arises for school-led only training routes if there is no historic social democratic narrative informing historical consciousness. Are trainees and teacher educators entirely subject to the neo-liberal values of the 'operative structures' of political ideology?

The aim of the research was to identify in school-led training the nature of any narrative which might be the vehicle for historical consciousness and that would generate the synergies of a Gramscian Dialectic, modifying intransigent neo-liberal policies and thereby contributing to the transformation of "common sense" into critical consciousness", essential to the development of the moral and political values of trainees (Gramsci 1971; Adamson 1978).

Following the first round of the UK government's teacher training Market Review (UKGov2021) which involved providers receiving or not re-accreditation according to their compliance with a set of 'quality requirements', 179 providers were re-accredited, 104 of which are school-led Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) and 59 are university-led with 16 new entrants (DfE 2022). The methodology employed was an electronic sweep through three identified SCITT sources: the 104 school-led providers' websites, lead school websites and latest Ofsted reports. Categories of data synthesis used across the three SCITT sources were: "vision and values", "vision and history" "course aims" and "course content". Within these categories, a degree of triangulation between the three sources was sought.

The findings demonstrate the features of compliance to a set of "quality requirements" which results in a hegemonic neoliberal corporate and business narrative, the historical consciousness within which is that historic "other traditional university routes into teaching" are less efficient and effective in addressing pupil disadvantage. Secondly, There is evidence, found particularly in the distinctive values of some SCITT lead schools, that the hegemonic narrative is modified by a deeper historical consciousness which has its roots in social democratic values.