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## **Towards instrumental trainability in England? The 'official pedagogy' of the Core Content Framework.**

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### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on the structure and substance of the Core Content Framework (CCF), a controversial document which stipulates content that providers of teacher education in England must incorporate in their programmes. We identify both a [concept](#) of instrumental trainability and a lack of coherence in the CCF which suggests it is unsuitable as a guide to a curriculum for teacher education. Drawing on Bernstein's work and its application by other sociologists of educational knowledge, we identify how the CCF embeds a 'generic mode' in teacher education that has roots outside of disciplinary structures of knowledge production and therefore foregrounds a type of official pedagogy that sees teaching as a technical performance and leaves gaps in the knowledge and understanding a new teacher requires to make sound educational judgements. Employing Muller's distinction between conceptual and contextual coherence, we argue that the CCF is based upon an imaginary notion of instructional practice that does not fully grasp the context of teachers' work. We illustrate the argument via an analysis of the language, structure, and three of the eight sections in the CCF.

**Keywords:** teacher professionalism; initial teacher education; teacher education policy; sociology of educational knowledge

## **Towards instrumental trainability in England? The ‘official pedagogy’ of the Core Content Framework.**

### **Introduction: the policy infrastructure of teacher education in England**

The Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework (CCF) (DfE 2019a) is a central piece of the UK government’s policy infrastructure around teacher education in England, stipulating a selection of content that providers of teacher education must now incorporate in their programmes. The 2015 Carter Review recommended that teacher education in England should have specified core content that could be developed by a ‘sector body’ and validated ‘through a regulatory framework rather than by local ITT partnerships’ (Mutton, Burn and Menter, 2017, 19). A framework of content was published in 2016 as a guide for teacher education providers, but had little statutory impact on teacher education programmes.

However, a parallel policy development outlined in the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy published in January 2019 (DfE 2019b) shifted the one-year statutory induction of Newly Qualified Teachers to a two-year statutory induction for the now termed Early Career Teachers. The cornerstone of this induction was adherence to an Early Career Framework (ECF) (DfE 2019c), designed by an Expert Advisory Group and independently reviewed by the Education Endowment Foundation. This document sets out two types of ‘content’, including ‘key evidence statements (Learn that)’ said to be based upon high-quality evidence from the UK and overseas such as ‘syntheses... meta-analyses and rigorous individual studies’ and ‘practice statements (Learn how to)’ that ‘draw on both the best available educational research and on additional guidance from the Expert Advisory Group and other sector representatives’ (DfE 2019c, p.4).

The design of the ITT Core Content Framework that emerged in 2019 followed that of the ECF, sharing the exact layout and the same set of ‘Learn that’ statements and References, with substantive content of the document only varying in the listing of the ‘Learn how to’ statements. A significant shift, however, was in the authority given to the CCF document, as it was identified as statutory content for ITT. In 2020, Ofsted, the statutory inspection body responsible for standards in education in England, published its new Initial Teacher

Education inspection framework and handbook, which set expectations on providers about their adherence to the CCF (Ofsted 2020). Paragraph 36 of this framework states that ‘inspectors will consider how well providers have translated the minimum entitlement, which is set out in the DfE’s ITT core content framework into a carefully sequenced curriculum of education and training, including subject and phase expertise’ (Ofsted 2020). This is emphasised with the stipulation that following notification of an Ofsted inspection, providers must provide Ofsted with ‘an overview of how the provider meets the requirements set out in the ITT core content framework’ (Ofsted 2020, paragraph 66). In addition to becoming statutory content and featuring heavily in the Ofsted framework, the CCF also became the central focus of the accreditation process of teacher education provision in England that emerged from the Market Review of ITT that reported in 2021 (DfE 2021). As part of the application for accreditation, providers had to demonstrate and exemplify how they planned to cover the CCF, and then once accredited these providers had to submit detailed examples of how they would use the CCF in their curricula (DfE 2022a). The CCF thus has rapidly become a focal point of teacher education reform in England, and is set to play a substantive role in the English school system.

This paper focuses on the substance and internal structure of the CCF, identifying the [concept of instrumental trainability](#) that underpins it and a lack of coherence that renders the CCF unsuitable as a guide to a curriculum for teacher education. It is argued that the CCF is based upon an imaginary notion of instructional practice that does not fully grasp the context of [teachers’ work](#). Drawing on Bernstein’s work and its application by Jones and Moore (1995) and Beck (2008, 2009) to competency-based approaches and teacher education reform, we identify how the CCF embeds a ‘generic mode’ that has roots outside of disciplinary structures of knowledge production and foregrounds a type of ‘official pedagogy’ that sees teaching as a technical performance that is solely directed to meeting specific outcomes that relate to attainment improvements. The instrumentalism of this official pedagogy silences knowledge about the broader contexts in which children develop and sidelines debates about the nuances of learning and the management of behaviour, leaving gaps in the knowledge and understanding a new teacher requires in order to make sound educational judgements. Employing Muller’s (2009) discussion of the relationship between knowledge and the curriculum, we argue that the lack of conceptual and contextual coherence in the CCF is illustrative of a misunderstanding of the purpose of teaching. We underpin the argument through a close reading of the CCF, analysis of the language used and scrutiny of three of the

eight sections of 'Learn that' statements (Managing Behaviour, How Pupils Learn and Professional Behaviours).

### **The structuring of teacher professionalism in England**

Beck (2008, 2009) provided an analysis of the trajectory of teacher professionalism in England in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. He drew on Bernstein's (2000) work, not least elements of the pedagogic device, which outlines how symbolic meanings are produced, recontextualised and reproduced by various agents in education systems, with implications for how teachers think about their work and identities. Of particular importance for Beck's work were the relationship between what Bernstein termed the official recontextualization field (ORF), 'created and dominated by the state and its selected agents', and the pedagogic recontextualization field (PRF), which 'consists of pedagogues in schools and colleges, and departments of education' (2000, 33). These fields are located at the centre of the pedagogic device in between the 'field of production' where 'new knowledge was constructed' (Bernstein 2000, 113), and the 'field of reproduction' where 'pedagogic practice' occurs (2000, 113), and thus have a pivotal role in the shaping of ideas concerning teachers' professionalism and expertise.

Beck (2009) noted the dislocation and tension between the ORF and the PRF in England at the time of writing, while also underlining that there was nothing inevitable about such a situation. Indeed, as Bernstein had also suggested, there have been instances of productive relations and 'ideological rapport' (2000, 58) between actors and agencies within the ORF and PRF in England, and joint acknowledgement of the salience of certain educational ideas, often resulting in productive policy-making (e.g. the Plowden Report – see Bernstein 2000, (56-58)). More recent examples can perhaps be seen in curriculum and teacher education policy in Wales and Scotland, which appear to have broad support amongst government, educators and educationalists (Sinnema et al. 2020; Furlong et al. 2021; Menter and Hulme 2011). However, since the arrival of the conservative-led coalition government in 2010 the English context has been characterised by antipathy directed from the ORF towards elements of the PRF, and concerted attempts by the state and its agents (the ORF) to reinforce their control of Bernstein's (2000) pedagogic device, seeking to orientate teachers' work towards a specific policy agenda.

The period since 2010 can also be seen as exhibiting rising tensions over control of educational ideas and teacher professionalism in England. The UK government introduced

curriculum reforms in England that shifted towards a traditional subject-orientated approach, albeit with strong undercurrents of ‘cultural literacy’ from the thinking of E.D.Hirsch (as outlined in Gibb 2015, see also Eaglestone 2021 for a discussion). A series of interventions around [initial](#) teacher education have eroded the role of higher education institutions in teacher preparation in England (Whiting et al. 2017), further severing the connection between the pedagogic recontextualization of educational ideas and official requirements for teacher competence. This is taking place in the context of a restructuring of the governance of schools in England that presages a more centralised accountability system (West and Wolfe 2019). Not only are schools more directly accountable to central government, but also through the recent DfE-directed ITT Accreditation process teacher education will be too. The publication of ‘delivering world class teacher development’ (DfE 2022b) positions the Department for Education at the head of the [ECF](#) ‘delivery infrastructure’, working together with the Education Endowment Foundation as the creator and quality assurer of the ‘evidence informed frameworks’ that underpin the CCF, which all teacher education providers are required to implement.

The UK government has strengthened control of the pedagogic device in England by (i) the embedding of preferences for certain kinds of ‘evidence’ supposedly ‘validated’ by the Educational Endowment Foundation that align with an approach to educational research borrowed from the natural sciences (Hordern, Muller and Deng 2021; Hordern and Brooks 2023; and (ii) producing documents such as the Teachers’ Standards and the CCF which set out the basis for qualified teacher status and mandated content for teacher education. As Beck and Young (2005) highlighted, professional autonomy is closely bound up with sufficient control over professional knowledge, and this has been significantly constrained for teaching in England (Beck 2009). While it can be argued that teachers have never had full control over their own professional knowledge and process of professional development in England, it seems that recent developments are further eradicating any connections to longstanding traditions of educational theory (Hordern and Brooks 2023), in tandem with ‘a scientification of public discourse where the provision of “[evidence](#)” takes the place of moral or philosophical thought’ (Helgetun & Menter, 2022, p. 98).

Echoing Bernstein (2000), recent trends can be seen as a transition away from a ‘region’ of professional knowledge, operating ‘both in the intellectual field of disciplines and in the field of external practice’, and more firmly towards a generic mode, ‘constructed and distributed outside...pedagogic recontextualising fields’ and ‘produced by a functional analysis of...the

underlying features necessary to the performance of a skill, task, practice or even area of work' (Bernstein 2000, 52-53). Such **generic modes** clearly represent attempts to split teaching activity away from disciplinary knowledge bases and philosophical questions and insert frameworks that enable agencies within the ORF to exert greater control over processes of professional development (in this case for teachers). They incorporate what Bernstein termed 'a jejeune concept of trainability' which silences 'the cultural basis' (Bernstein 2000, 53), of professional practices, and is 'directly linked to the instrumentalities of the market' (p.55). The **generic mode** also entails generating in the acquirer a 'capacity and the readiness to both accept and respond' (Beck 2009, 6) to the dictates of others deemed more knowledgeable or authoritative. Such de-professionalisation at the hands of the state also seeks to remove obstacles to policy implementation, undermining the capacity to exercise judgement and take decisions differently at a 'street level' (Lipsky 2010).

### **The ideas underpinning the generic mode**

Underlying much genericism is a form of reductive management theory and behaviorism that has permeated much competency-based training in the Anglosphere, including many forms of professional and vocational education. As Wheelahan has identified, the resulting training programmes may 'provide access to procedural knowledge or to products of disciplinary knowledge', but the students who undertake them 'do not gain access to the 'style of reasoning' within disciplinary structures of knowledge' (2007, 628), thus limiting the extent to which they can (i) exercise some control and discretion 'over knowledge in the workplace' (638), or (ii) exercise expertise creatively to handle new professional problems. As Clarke and Winch (2004) observed, the demands of much contemporary professional work increasingly require a capacity to make innovative use of applied theoretical knowledge, and this cannot be achieved without sufficient induction into a systematic knowledge base. While competency-based training in vocational education has 'locked the working class out' of substantive systematic knowledge which will enable them to make sense of their aspirations and working lives (Wheelahan 2007), the move towards standards and outcomes based on observable competency risks locking teachers out of systematic educational thought.

Beck (2009) drew on the work of Jones and Moore (1993, 1995) to unpack the roots of the competency-based approaches found in the curriculum documents produced by the then Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). While it might be assumed that the

alternative to disciplinary knowledge is simply induction into practice (with no theoretical underpinning), this is not the full story. Jones and Moore (1995) identified that the behaviourist competency movement that spread from the 1980s onwards in the UK had its origins in Taylorist scientific management in the United States and thus aimed to ‘translate the work of professional groups such as teachers into forms amenable to accounting’, a ‘disaggregating’ of work into specific tasks that could be ‘assessed against...performance standards’ (84-85) and rebundled to suit improvement activities. This is underpinned by ‘a reductive form of behaviourist psychology’ coupled with ‘an atomistic form of “functional analysis” that involved breaking up occupational performances and the workplace cultures that sustained them’ (Beck 2009, 5). This process can be manifested through official documents that enscribe ways of ‘reorganising’ workplace practices ‘into sets of isolable (and therefore trainable and measurable) discrete tasks’ (Beck 2009, 5).

The mode of functional analysis practiced by behaviorist competency approaches also carries with it assumptions about control, power and authority. In pulling apart longstanding workplace cultures and seeking to render invisible the tacit and relational aspects of professional activity, functional analysis provides for a codification that enables greater levels of managerial and state control of professional work (Jones and Moore 1995). This is set within a context in which the state has ‘progressively extended its direct control over the sphere of professional expertise’, not least in education, where the ‘liberal professionalism’ and ‘relatively high degree of autonomy’ of educators over teaching practice was subject to a concerted assault from conservative policy-makers in the UK and the USA from the 1980s onwards (Jones and Moore 1993, 390-391).

Yet there is a further dimension to understanding the impact of the behaviourist approach on professional knowledge, which can be contrasted with a more relational, holistic perspective. As Jones and Moore (1995) emphasise, behaviourist and more holistic approaches are ‘grounded in paradigmatically different models of the human (or even animal) subject, and of agency and social action’. While the holistic approach might recognise the significance of ‘deep structures’ (Jones and Moore 1995, p. 79) that shape social life, or the salience of tradition, norm and (normative) practice (Macintyre 2007; Rouse 2007) for understanding how we think about establishing excellence in professional work, the behaviourist version recognises *only* the empirical, measurable and observable. Behaviourism thus assumes a fundamentally different process of learning, acknowledging only that which can be observed through measurement, and thus specific outcomes which are assumed to be indicators of the



individual acquisition of knowledge and understanding. As a consequence, the teaching of substantive professional knowledge can be thinned out – professionals (or students) can be assumed to be competent if they demonstrate (in some form of assessment) the required standard. The ‘deep structure’, including the history, values and longstanding debates that negotiate an underpinning purpose to professional activity, can be deemed irrelevant. As Beck and Young note, the behaviourist approach assumes the ‘inevitable obsolescence of accumulated knowledge’ (2005, 191), suggesting that the only *valid* demonstration of professional competence is a demonstration of individual performance in the here and now, irrespective of the development of a capacity for judgement or systematic consideration of potential action.

It is against this backdrop of a ‘governmental’ professionalism (Beck 2008) married with an atomistic behaviourist approach to competency that developments in the ‘official’ professional knowledge needed for teachers in England since 2010 can be understood. What is noticeable about documents such as The Teachers’ Standards’ (DfE 2011) and now the Core Content Framework (DfE 2019a) is the absence of a commitment to engage teachers with systematically organised accumulated knowledge that will enable them to holistically and coherently make sense of their practice contexts. Muller points to the importance of a ‘foundational disciplinary core’ for the development of professional knowledge and identity, and notes that the curriculum used to induct new professionals may end up being ‘more or less compatible with disciplinary structure’ (2009, 214). However, given that disciplines do ‘impose some constraints on appropriate curricular form’ (Muller 2009, 216), the structure and guiding principles of a discipline matter for curriculum. Thus ‘the more crucial is conceptual coherence’ in the knowledge structure ‘the more sequence matters’ whereas the ‘more segmental’ the knowledge structure ‘the less sequence matters’ and instead ‘what matters is coherence to context, where external requirements and constituencies legitimately take a greater interest in curricular focus, content and adequacy’ (Muller 2009, 216).

Therefore in terms of the content specified for the professional curriculum we would expect to see evidence of *either* a distinct ‘sequence’ and indicators of how ideas and principles interrelate and build on each other, *or* alternatively an indication of how ideas and principles explicitly relate to the context of professional practice (and therefore for that practice to be well-defined and articulated). As we outline below, the CCF achieves neither of these.

## **An official pedagogy for imaginary teaching practice?**

We can perceive in the CCF an attempt to generate an ‘official’ pedagogy (developed in the Official Recontextualising Field) that the DfE (and its political masters) think will most predictably improve attainment outcomes, as demonstrated by ‘the best available educational research’ (DfE 2019, 10). The authors and sponsors of the CCF (i.e. the DfE and EEF) are attempting to foreground a knowledge base for teaching that they consider would meet their vision of the purpose and future of education. In so doing they have turned to a body of knowledge that appears to offer a degree of authority and certainty that can support school and system improvement. This ‘new science’ of education aims to drive ‘significant improvement in educational outcomes by finding out what works through the application of rigorous research’ (Furlong and Whitty 2017, p. 28), and defines its ‘rigorous research’ in terms of large-scale empirical studies that are supposedly directly relevant to policy and practice (Hordern and Brooks 2023). In the terms of the EEF this research focus is justified as part of concerted efforts to ‘to raise the attainment of children and young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds’ through ‘independent evaluations of programmes and approaches’ which focus on the use of ‘evidence in ways that improve teaching and learning’ (EEF 2023, 3).

As Hordern and Brooks (2023) have demonstrated, the CCF is populated with research that is predominantly drawn from a scientific model of educational research, published in journals focused on cognitive psychology, the learning sciences or the economics of education, or in the form of ‘meta-analyses or reviews of topics such as ‘motivation interventions’ and ‘social-psychological interventions in education’ (Hordern and Brooks 2023, 11). A prominent view of teaching found within the CCF is well summarised in ‘What makes great teaching’ by Coe et al. (2014), which is cited three times in the appendices to the CCF. In that publication the authors suggest that ‘effective’ teaching is best defined as ‘that which leads to improved student achievement using outcomes that matter to their future success’ (Coe et al. 2014, p. 2), arguing that research should focus on how best to ‘operationalise good pedagogy’ (p. 10) through studying how ‘well-specified and implementable’ interventions can demonstrably lead to ‘enhanced student outcomes’ (pp. 11–12). In the view of Coe et al. (2014) there needs to be ‘some justification for a causal relationship’ (p. 11) as otherwise there is no contribution in the claims made.

The new science expressed in the CCF shares many of the assumptions of the behaviourist competency movement. It rests on an empiricist approach to educational research which articulates with arguments that all curricula need to be ‘evidence-informed’ (DfE 2022b, 12), but goes further in exhibiting a preference for a particular approach to the production of evidence that accords with its technicist vision of teaching. The new science echoes the focus on the functional analysis of the procedures of teachers’ work that Beck (2008, 2009) identified. There is an impetus towards achieving a type of certainty in the requirement to establish causal relationship, and a concomitant refusal to acknowledge a deep structure to social life, professional activity and the cultural basis of educational practice, and this is designed to concur with the imperatives of government-led educational reform and improvement initiatives.

The structure of the CCF does not provide for either conceptual or contextual coherence, if we draw on Muller’s (2009) terms. The CCF is organised into eight sections, each with their own focus and lists of seemingly disconnected ‘Learn that’ and ‘Learn how to’ statements, along with separate appendices which contain references (139 in total across the CCF). There is a lack of conceptual coherence, as there is no indication of a set of core concepts or ‘conceptual spine’ (Muller 2009, 216) to the knowledge assembled in the CCF, or how the various claims to knowledge are systematically interrelated. And there is little indication of how knowledge might be sequenced and how to demonstrate that ‘sequence matters’ (Muller 2009, 216) when introducing the ideas and findings set out in the literature. As Muller observes, high levels of conceptual coherence ‘presume a hierarchy of abstraction and conceptual difficulty’ and yet the list-like assembly of the ‘Learn that’ statements and the separate listing of references relating to the eight sections of the CCF does not indicate how concepts are hierarchically related so that new teachers can progress their understanding. Perhaps most strikingly the assertion that the CCF has been ‘independently assessed and endorsed by the Education Endowment Foundation (DfE 2019, 8) undermines the requirement for a conceptually coherent curriculum to be somehow ‘internally guaranteed’ (Muller 2009, 216). The Educational Endowment Foundation cannot be compared to the nuanced processes for reviewing new claims to knowledge found in established disciplines as it has no independent peer review system that would be recognised by any other academic body. The EEF cannot provide the processes of systematic revisability or disciplinary criteria that would be an appropriate guarantee for educational expertise (Addis and Winch 2019; Muller 2009).

While there are clear problems with identifying any conceptual coherence in the CCF, there are also considerable limitations on contextual coherence. According to Muller, coherence to a context (for example a specialised form of practice) is a potential alternative which could provide for a professionally or occupationally-orientated curriculum structure. This contextual coherence relies on content being ‘segmentally connected, where each segment is adequate to a context, sufficient to a purpose’ (Muller 2009, 216), and ‘externally guaranteed, often by a profession or professional statutory body’ (ibid.). In such frameworks ‘the more segmental... the less sequence matters; what matters is coherence to context’ (ibid.). Superficially, this appears to be the case with the CCF, in the sense that there are segments (sections) and the CCF appears to be ‘externally guaranteed’ (in this case by the EEF). But there is little indication of the connections *between* the segments in the CCF, with each section having a distinct boundedness and its own set of references (although there are overlapping references which are replicated across sections). Furthermore, the EEF cannot be described as a professional or statutory body that fully represents teaching or provides a holistic grasp of the context of teaching practice. The CCF thus falls away from any notion of the Bernsteinian ‘region’ of professional knowledge and into the realms of the generic [mode](#), where the absence of a connection to a disciplinary structure enables policy-makers to structure and re-structure what counts as knowledge for new teachers.

Due to a lack of either conceptual or contextual coherence, the CCF is concomitant with an imaginary context of teaching, generating an official pedagogy that is technicist, instrumentalist but also unrealistic, as it does not fully take account of the dynamics and contexts of educational practice. The development of the CCF is an illustration of the state, through the official recontextualization field, attempting to suppress authentically educational reasoning and instead seeking to control pedagogical discourse in a manner even more explicit and regimented than that discussed twenty years ago by Beck (2009). It constitutes a further attempt to erode the ‘occupational performances and the workplace cultures that sustained them’ (Beck 2009, 5) through a functional analysis of the tasks needed to teach according to official expectations. The ‘cultural basis’ (Bernstein 2000) of teaching is to be denied, and the normative underpinning of teaching silenced. But the official pedagogy mandated by the CCF will be very difficult to enact due to the contextual and situated nature of teaching practice and the complex circumstances teachers face in the everyday of their work. While new teachers may strive to take on board the postulates of the new science, the

possibilities for putting in place the ‘interventions’ the new science advocates are difficult given the challenges of teaching, the expectations of parents and demands of children and young people.

We now turn to specific aspects of the CCF to illustrate these points further, discussing the (i) notion of behaviourist competency and genericism embedded in the structure of the CCF in the form of active verbs and separation of ‘Learn that’ from ‘Learn how to’ statements and the sections from each other; and (ii) the assumptions underpinning three sections of the CCF – Managing Behaviour, How Pupils Learn and Professional Behaviours. [These three sections of the CCF were selected to explore how various aspects of the teacher’s role are conceptualised in the document, including not only underlying assumptions regarding learning and behaviour management but also how teacher professionalism is portrayed. Focusing on three distinct although related sections also enables further scrutiny of issues of coherence. In our analysis,](#) we claim that the content of the CCF lacks explanatory and diagnostic power, focusing on narrow and technical procedural knowledge rather than developing the basis for well-reasoned professional judgement.

### **Illustrations from the content and language of the CCF**

Beck (2009), in his analysis of the 2007 TDA professional standards for QTS, identified the extensive use of certain types of syntactic structure which are found extensively in reductive and generic competency approaches (see also Wheelahan 2007). Beck noted the ‘performative emphasis’ of the professional standards, which was ‘manifest not only in the content of the individual standards, but also in the discourse that frames them’ (2009, 8). He observed that ‘each separate standard begins with an active verb - for example, ‘Demonstrate the positive values, attitudes and behaviour they expect from children and young people’ (TDA 2007 in Beck 2009, 8). Beck argues that ‘the cumulative effect of this form of discourse is profoundly reductive: it suggests that being a professional educator is a matter of acquiring a limited corpus of state- prescribed knowledge accompanied by a set of similarly prescribed skills and competencies’, and ‘involving the acquisition of trainable expertise’ (Beck 2009, 9).

Throughout the CCF, the ‘Learn how to’ statements rely on a series of active verbs prescribing what performances are expected of the novice teacher, including ‘Learn how to.... demonstrate consistently high behavioural expectations’ (DfEa 2019, 9), ‘Learn how

to...improve at breaking complex material into smaller steps..' (DfEa 2019, 11) and 'Learn how to...deliver a carefully sequenced and coherent curriculum' (DfEa 2019, 13). These 'Learn how to' performances are not connected to each other, or specifically related to the 'Learn that' statements in the adjacent column of the CCF, or clearly linked with the references assembled in the appendices which are said to relate to each section. Any connection there is between them is left implicit, with the implication that teacher educators and teachers themselves must attempt to make these connections if they wish to make any holistic sense of the teaching practice expected of them. The construction of the CCF leaves the impression that teacher educators and teachers are *not encouraged* to make any sense of what is expected of them, but rather to focus on ensuring they are following the imperative of each specific statement. There is no indication of how a 'carefully sequenced and coherent curriculum' might relate to a process of 'breaking complex material into smaller steps' (DfE 2019a, 11-13) - although arguably the relationship between these imperatives is potentially highly problematic and at the very least requires nuanced discussion. Despite the stated imperative for teachers to provide a 'carefully sequenced and coherent curriculum'(DfE 2019a, 13) for children, there is absolutely no indication of how sequencing and coherence can be derived from the CCF.

Beyond the problems within each section and across the various statements, there is also the issue of the absence of connections *between the sections* within the CCF, both at a high level but also across the content. For example, despite issues of motivation and learning being central to sections of the CCF such as How Pupils Learn and Managing Behaviour there is no coherent attempt made to conceptualise motivation and learning *across* the CCF in ways that might deepen teachers' understandings of the relationship between these phenomena. No connections are made between the sections, which instead could be seen as stand-alone areas of competence which could be worked on independently in different times in different settings. What might hold as an interpretation of learning for one section might be interpreted differently elsewhere. The idea of teaching as an integrated, purposeful and holistic activity is subjected in the CCF to a form of 'disaggregating' (Jones and Moore 1995, 85) in the interests of making initial professional education 'trainable and measurable' (Beck 2009, 5).

Underlying this, however, is the assumption within the structure of the CCF about how teachers learn – through a combination of receiving technical prescription and immersion in practice. Along with the scientific underpinnings listed in the appendices (which are taken as truths to structure teaching processes) there is the requirement to 'Learn how' through the

‘practise’ of ‘key skills’ through ‘multiple opportunities to rehearse and refine particular approaches’, in addition to ‘Discussing and analysing with expert colleagues..... using the best available evidence’ to interrogate ‘what makes a particular approach successful or unsuccessful, reflecting on how this approach might be integrated into the trainee’s own practice’ (DfE 2019a, 5). The fact that the CCF sets out (in terms of the sources in the appendices) a statement of ‘the best available educational research’ narrows the possibility of a full interrogation of the assumptions underpinning the CCF and how the purpose of teaching should be understood. Thus the process of teacher learning is likely to be interpreted in terms of how to most effectively implement a set of prescriptive interventions (i.e. what makes an approach successful or unsuccessful (DfE 2019, 5)), rather than the more substantive forms of critical reflection and scholarship that have been suggested (Winch et al. 2015; BERA/RSA 2014).

In the section on Managing Behaviour, the ‘Learn that’ section is comprised of seven statements which emphasise: establishing and reinforcing routines, creating a predictable and secure environment, pupil self-regulation of emotions, teachers’ influence on pupil resilience and beliefs, the important of relationships, pupil motivation and influence of prior experiences (DfE 2019a, 26-28). The focus of these statements is orientated towards the individual characteristics (of both pupils and teachers) that make up the behavioural environment. Through this approach a teacher will learn for example, that they need to establish routines (but not which ones), and that they need to create an environment that is supportive for all students but particularly those with special education needs students (but not what sort of environment is effective for them). The statements focus on endpoints and outcomes, but do not offer explanatory or diagnostic resources to help the teacher think through how best to navigate towards these. They focus on managing behaviour, but do not address why poor behaviour might occur in the first place, which might be seen as related to the wider contexts in which young people develop or issues of systemic disadvantage (Parker and Levinson 2018). The implication of the statements is to suggest that poor behaviour is based on superficial deficits either in the pupil (lack of self-regulation, poor environment, lack of motivation) or in the teacher (poor routines, poor environment, ineffective relationships). There is little to support teachers in understanding how to address poor behaviour, or issues that may emerge from social or cultural disadvantage, or trauma. In terms of professional practice, the focus is solely on the classroom, and not the professional

responsibilities of the school, or the influence school culture can have on developing behavioural expectations.

The ‘Learn that’ statements in the section on How Pupils Learn have been particularly influential, as providers have had to exemplify their curriculum materials in these areas at both stages of the ITT accreditation exercise. In the first stage of the accreditation process, providers had to submit materials which exemplified how they would ‘deliver’ one of the statements in this section. In the second stage of accreditation, providers were asked to provide four sets of curriculum materials to exemplify further how they will ‘deliver’ this particular section of the CCF (DfE 2022a). The How Pupils Learn section also contains references to working memory, deliberate practice, and retrieval practice which have all featured in Nick Gibb’s Ministerial speeches (see Gibb 2017). ‘Learn that’ statements in this section incorporate a definition of learning as ‘a lasting change in pupils’ capabilities or understanding’ (DfEa 2019a, 11), and emphasise the importance of long-term memory, working memory, the role of prior knowledge and pupil misconceptions, retrieval and worked examples in supporting learning. Again, as with the section on [Managing Behaviour](#), taken in isolation these statements reflect *some* of the research in the field. However, taken as a whole they represent a very narrow conception of learning, one that conceptualises learning as memorisation (in various forms). There is little recognition that learning changes through development (i.e the importance of physical learning and motor development in very young children), or the difference between social and emotional learning and factual recall. Learning is presented as a technical activity rather than a social or cultural one, and there is no acknowledgement of the nuanced debates relating to the relationship between learning as acquisition and participation (Sfard 1998) or of the relation between learning, identity and processes of personal transformation (Hager and Hodkinson 2009). There is no attention to debates concerning the application of knowledge (as a process of learning itself), or the development of skills that may promote learning in various forms. Perhaps most surprisingly (as noted above), there is little connection made between this approach to learning and the statement about motivation in [Managing Behaviour](#). There is no overall conceptual coherence between this section and other sections in the document, reflecting the ongoing concern with setting out ‘isolable’ and ‘trainable’ objectives (Beck 2009, 5), rather than induction into any underpinning systematic educational knowledge.



The final section of the CCF is entitled ‘Professional Behaviours’ and is connected to the eighth Teacher Standard ‘Fulfil wider professional responsibilities’. There is a noticeable shift between the Teacher standard reference to responsibility and the CCF section related to behaviours, which reflects the focus of attention in the CCF onto the classroom, and specifically on what the teacher does, rather than what they know or understand, thus echoing the behaviourist focus identified above. This is reflective in the ‘Learn that’ section which are made of up of seven statements which focus on the need for professional development to be sustained over time, the features of effective professional development, the role of contributing to the life of the school, building effective relationships with families, working with teaching assistants and other specialist colleagues (DfEa 2019). As with other sections of the CCF, there is little explanatory or diagnostic resource to these statements, as they are positioned without elaboration on what might constitute effectiveness. The reference list in the appendix for this section (DfE 2019, 47-48) is notable for its lack of academic work that would relate to some of the relevant ‘Learn that’ statements, not least on ‘building effective relationships with parents, carers and families’ (DfE 2019, 29), or on how ‘Teachers can make valuable contributions to the wider life of the school in a broad range of ways’, or indeed how ‘SENCOs, pastoral leaders, careers advisors and other specialist colleagues also have valuable expertise and can ensure that appropriate support is in place for pupils’ (DfE 2019a, 29). Instead the sources provided focus most explicitly on how classroom instruction (with the primary objective of measurable improvements in attainment) can be enhanced through professional development and the support provided by Teaching Assistants. This is a narrow view of the professionalism of teaching and obscures the important collaborative and transformative aspects identified by other authors (Menter, Hulme et al. 2010).

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### **Concluding remarks**

The approach taken in the CCF does more than promote a narrow knowledge base for teaching. The CCF is presented as the ‘the minimum entitlement of all trainee teachers’ (DfE 2019, 3) and thus will become the cornerstone of the skeletal initial teacher education curriculum in England. The onus is placed on providers to augment the framework with necessary content (DfEa 2022a), as the content needed to do justice to issues such as ‘how pupils learn’ or ‘managing behaviour’ is not indicated within the CCF and therefore is at risk of omission. However, the opportunity to supplement the CCF with any substantive

explanatory or diagnostic resources which might assist teachers in making sense of the complexity of their practice is limited. The guidance for providers states that further material ‘beyond that cited in the CCF may be used, as long as it is coherent with the framework’ (DfEa 2022, 7-8). This so called coherence, which is perhaps better described as *alignment* needs to be demonstrated in a manner that suits the underpinning scientism of the CCF, as ‘claims or guidance that build on or go beyond the CCF’ must be ‘supported by suitably robust sources of evidence such as a high-quality systematic review’ or forms of ‘quasi-experimental design’ that contain comparison groups (DfE 2022a, 8). Any research relating to teaching must therefore fit the pre-conceived parameters of the official pedagogy.

The structure of the CCF document, placing the ‘Learn how to’ statements alongside the ‘Learn that’ statements, has the particular effect of emphasising the primacy of technical knowledge and the specific experience of implementing that technical knowledge. Learning to teach is seen as driven by experience, but the ‘experience’ valued by the CCF is that which is framed within the narrow purview of the ‘Learn that’ statements with their emphasis on instructional techniques. The CCF therefore suggests teachers require initial education and training, but within the frame of an incoherent and imagined notion of instructional practice that does not fully acknowledge the challenges of teaching or the broader contexts which influence the lives of children and young people. The CCF does not address the philosophical, social, and ethical aspects of teaching and learning necessary for the formation of a professional, and thus silences the culture and practice that Beck (2008, 2009) referred to. The presentation of knowledge in this way casts other educational theories and insights as being less than the ‘best available evidence’ and thus irrelevant for the instrumental objectives of initial teacher training.

The reforms to initial teacher training in England constitute a further embedding of the dominance of the ‘official’ as opposed to the ‘pedagogic’ recontextualising field. In this respect, in the terms of Bernstein (2000) and Beck (2009), the advent of the CCF and its statutory status in England, as reinforced by inspection mechanisms and accreditation processes, constitute a *generic mode* that renders most of the educational knowledge traditions outlined by Furlong and Whitty (2017) increasingly redundant for the objectives of ‘official’ teacher preparation. In detaching professional knowledge from its disciplinary base, these reforms enable the processes of ‘trainability’ that Bernstein (2000) identified, and thus a

form of deprofessionalisation that seeks to deprive teachers of the intellectual resources to make good sense of new initiatives or claims to knowledge, and undermines their capacity to navigate ongoing social, economic and technological challenges that have implications for schools and education systems more broadly. As Deng (2020) suggests, at the heart of the expertise of the educator is the capacity to discern the ‘*educational potential*’ of content in the best interests of their students, as part of the curriculum-making process. Such a capacity is not best developed through a focus on technical competence to meet instrumental objectives set by government department, or by a view of teacher preparation that is neither conceptually or contextually coherent, or indeed by denying the deep structures which underpin educational activity and sound professional judgement.

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