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The (missing) subject in initial teacher education: seizing the remains of the day

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the novel *The Remains of the Day* is used as a framing device to explore government policy for initial teacher education in England. Referring to the lack of freedom to 'act in and with the world', we draw on Biesta's work on subjectification and Heidegger's concept of Being to argue that teacher educators' freedom to use their professional judgement and expertise is being stifled by an overly technicist policy framework, making teacher educators themselves the 'missing subject' in teacher education. In the empirical section of this philosophically driven piece, we present comments from 13 teacher educators who were interviewed to investigate the extent to which they believe the current policy framework provides a sufficient basis for teacher education. The paper offers original insights into the cost of policy constraints at an ontological level, which lead to the detriment of pre-service teachers and ultimately the pupils they teach. The paper concludes with a call, as in the novel, to 'seize the remains of the day' and seek redemptive possibilities for change.

KEYWORDS

Initial teacher training and early career framework; subjectification; pre-service teachers; Biesta; Heidegger

The Remains of the Day

> It is hardly my place to critique my employer's decisions
> (Stevens, in *The Remains of the Day*)

It may seem that Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *The Remains of the Day*, first published in 1989, is an unusual starting point for thinking about education and teacher education policy. The novel concerns the story of Stevens, an English butler serving in a grand house during the inter-war period. Set in 1956, Stevens decides to journey to visit a former housekeeper, Miss Kenton. However, during its exploration of duty and authority, memory, profession and the passage of time, Stevens reflects on a life of service and the choices he has made which have affected both his personal life and his own professional identity. Throughout his journey, not only geographical but also often one of introspection, the novel examines the consequences of Stevens' unquestioning loyalty to previously valorised systems of professionalism, identity and being, dignity, purpose and choice, set against a backdrop of change and a new era of redemptive possibility.

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Stevens recounts immersing himself entirely in his role as a butler, subordinating his subjective self to the technical demands of professionalism and societal expectations: those often dominant aspects in the modern age of what Heidegger (1978, p. 197) terms, 'the peculiar dictatorship of the public realm', to which we have become subservient. Stevens' obsession with 'dignity' ('. . . a butler's ability *not* to abandon the professional being he inhabits') epitomises his inauthentic existence – he defines himself entirely by external standards rather than his own potential for moral being. Such limiting understanding of his professional life means that he does not (he *cannot*) question the meaning of his actions or his own unique existence. He exists to excel at standards set by his superiors, or even the neutral, impersonal 'they', which limits any genuine possibility and forces him to keep distance from others and even from himself.

The novel addresses ideas about being the object of others' lives and priorities, rather than the subject of one's own life. Stevens, the subject and central character, is strangely and alarmingly absent from any meaningful input in responding to the momentous events of the time, responding to the minutiae of the technical aspects of his role as butler but absenting himself from any other overarching purpose. His only account is to a symbolic order or authority, and this being-for-others shapes and confines his freedom.

It is these themes that resonate with the current context of teacher education and which this paper aims to explore, using this narrative as a means to foreground Biesta's concept of subjectification (2020), and Heidegger's 1946 critique of Humanism.

Structure of the paper

An overview of education policy in England is presented first, with particular attention to the interrelated initial teacher education policy framework. Following this, we explore the idea of the 'missing subject' in initial teacher training, through Biesta's concept of subjectification and Heidegger's philosophy of Being in the world. Next, the empirical research is explained, followed by findings and analysis of the data. In the final section we discuss re-placing the teacher in teacher education, considering the impact on the self and Being of a technicist teacher education framework and we highlight redemptive possibilities.

The policy context in England

Whilst this paper is focussed on Initial Teacher Education (ITE) it is important to briefly consider the policy context of schools in England, given that policy related to ITE, in particular the Initial Teacher Training Core Content Framework – a core element of the ITE curriculum – has been developed and mandated by the Department for Education (DfE), in order to prepare pre-service teachers for the context they will eventually teach in and one that government policy directs. Hence the two areas of education policy are inextricably linked.

Government education policy since 2010 has featured consistent rhetoric around the imperative of creating a 'world-class' education system. Whilst this might be considered an important and noble aspiration, it has been underpinned by consistently problematic language around an apparent 'crisis' in our schools, and the claim that our children are being 'left behind' (Department for Education (DfE), 2010, p. 3; 2016, p. 5; 2022b, p. 7), or

remedying a situation left by the previous government, thus positioning it as, 'a policy problem needing a solution' (Mayer, 2021, p. 123). This built the rhetoric for the need for policy reform across the sector. This is evident within, for example, the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy (DfE, 2019c) which outlined retention as a growing challenge, with over 20% of new teachers leaving the profession within their first two years of teaching, and 33% leaving within their first five years.

Such rhetoric has resulted in a policy trajectory which has elevated the rationalities of the market-place: performance, calculation, comparison and competition – all endorsed by government. Much like the smooth running of the household does for Stevens, who prioritises predictability and certainty, formality and systematic consistency, educational policy in the modern era equates its 'excellence' with excellent *results*, consistent, classified and categorised, and often at the expense of the subject – complex, contingent and context bound.

Thus, we have seen a shift to a knowledge-based curriculum in English schools and rather than this being broad and balanced, as claimed by policy makers, it has become narrow and restrictive for many, with a focus on core traditional subjects and the reduction of 'creative' and vocational subjects (Neumann et al., 2020, p. 707). This has particularly impacted on pupils in schools serving deprived areas as these schools have seen the largest cuts to their funding (Sibieta, 2021). Hence, resources to enhance learning with extra-curricular activities are reduced (Hawksbee, 2022), undermining the government view that 'these opportunities are an essential part of a broad and ambitious curriculum' (DfE, 2022b, p. 29). This narrowing of the curriculum has been accompanied by a shift from pupil-centred, 'progressive' pedagogies to a particular model of direct instruction that is teacher-led learning with little opportunity for pupils to engage in critical thinking activities (Abrams, 2017). The accompanying trend for some schools to require teachers to use imposed scripts, instructions and resources also compromises teacher professionalism, agency and authenticity as prophesised by Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p. 102), who suggested that 'eventually some technization of practice will probably result from pedagogies being a policy focus', leading to de-professionalisation and undermining pedagogy as historically the 'domain of professional teacher autonomy'. Such pedagogical practices also reduce opportunities for pupils to develop skills such as critical thinking and problem solving, and erode the freedom and agency to engage with the world and contemplate their place within it.

Education policy in the 21st century has increasingly prioritised examinations over coursework in schools as the preferred method of summative assessment for qualification, reflecting government discourse that examinations provide a more systematic and accurate measure of achievement (Hyman, 2021). This accountability-driven approach further reflects a government fixation with education that can be measured and ranked whilst simultaneously demonstrating a lack of trust in teacher assessment. Examination, regarded as 'objective' and 'measurable', reflects a technical approach to education, allowing governments to track 'performance' via national and international league tables. Such a system is high risk – not only for the pupils who are solely measured on their ability to perform in examinations, but also for the teachers who may have joined the profession to inspire young minds and generate curiosity (Goller et al., 2019; Heinz, 2015; Kass & Miller, 2018), and rather find their role reduced to the ability to prepare pupils to pass examinations and what might be described as 'shallow functions'.

Such significant shifts in education policy have also impacted on teacher education in England, with the sector subject to unprecedented reforms, particularly in relation to curriculum. The Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework (DfE, 2024) – the ITTECF as it is commonly known, and what we will call the Framework – has emerged from combining the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework (CCF) (DfE, 2019b) and Early Career Framework (ECF) (DfE, 2019a). In addition, the change of terminology, from what was formerly known as Initial Teacher *Education*, to Initial Teacher *Training*, is itself indicative of the de-professionalisation of the sector (Parker & Murtagh, 2026).

The roots of the ITTECF stem back to the Carter Review (2015) which suggested a need for 'a framework of the essential elements' (p. 49) of a curriculum that would apply to all providers of ITE in England, with a recommendation that it was 'critical' that a framework for ITT was developed 'by the sector, rather than by central government' (Carter, 2015, p. 49). There were only eight people on the Expert Advisory Group that developed this Framework, and whilst there may have been some engagement with different stakeholders as it was being developed, the final outcome and subsequent critique of this Framework (Ellis & Childs, 2023; Hordern & Brooks, 2023; Steadman, 2023) pointed to the limitations of this engagement with the sector, with concerns around its technical nature and the exclusion of important foundational knowledge. As this Core Content Framework was developed it formed the first part of what the government referred to as a 'golden thread' in teaching – the first in a set of 'evidence-based' frameworks of professional development from ITE, to early career teachers and on to different levels of leadership (DfE, 2022a), representing a very technical, criteria-focussed approach to continuing professional development which diminishes the breadth and scope of deeper learning.

The ITTECF defines the parameters of what pre-service teachers should learn through the 'Learn That' and 'Learn How To' statements (initially presented as distinctions between categories of knowledge in order to challenge the idea that intelligent action depends on prior reasoning and stored knowledge by the philosopher Gilbert Ryle [Ryle, 1949/2009]) that are expected to result in an effective teacher, reflecting an inherent premise that A+B will equal C (Taubman, 2009). It is a technical approach, designed to steer pre-service teachers to perceive education in a limited way both within their initial teacher education and early career. There is little room for reflection on what education is for and less opportunity to engage in knowledge construction or theorising which Britzman (2003) suggests is essential if they are to have 'a form of engagement with and intervention in the world' (p. 69). In addition, there is an expectation to adhere to what are described as 'best practice' and 'evidence-based' practices, with providers of initial teacher education being compelled to justify the use of broader research or an alternative evidence base. Such a move towards conformity for ITE providers and teacher educators via the imposition of standards and a standardised curriculum can be seen in other countries too, such as Australia where standards for ITE accreditation have been updated to reflect what is needed for 'classroom readiness' (Mockler, 2017, p. 336). This current policy threatens to reduce teachers and teacher educators to technocratic automatons, diminishing professional status, undermining the intellectual and foundational basis of teaching and teacher education (Hordern & Brooks, 2023) and risking the development of a fragile profession in which knowledge of teaching is generated apart from practitioners, to be merely applied by them.

The teacher education sector in England has been *required* to demonstrate complete adherence and fidelity to policy in order to survive, through compliance with the outcomes of the Initial Teacher Training Market Review (DfE, 2021b) and the subsequent two-stage accreditation process (DfE, 2021a). Critically, this process and policy is intended to ensure that new teachers are prepared for working in schools in a way that supports this policy context. In contrast, Biesta suggests the real crisis, or risk, is that education 'becomes nothing but perfect reproduction and thus turns into indoctrination' with 'no opportunity for students to exist as subject', arguably education's ultimate endeavour (2020, p. 103).

Many examples of policy represent teacher education as a 'complicated system' with an assumption that 'fixing' one part of the system will lead to improvements across the whole (Mayer, 2021, p. 125). Savage (2020, p. 2) describes this as 'alignment thinking', a form of technical rationality that seeks to impose systems that are 'made to cohere'. However, the removal of agency from schools and ITE providers is likely to feed the very problem that these policy reforms set about to address.

The missing subject in initial teacher education

Biesta (2020) refers to three domains related to the purpose of education: qualification, socialisation and subjectification. Within the ITE sector, the requirement to ensure that pre-service teachers are prepared to set pupils on their path to individual opportunity – by achieving *qualification* – is prioritised and wholly embedded. To a lesser extent the imperative for *socialisation* of young people into their culture is acknowledged. Yet this rendering of education reduces educational experience to what can be expressed in formal, rational and largely measurable terms.

What is missing is evidence of *subjectification* – the more complex domain referring to the freedom to 'act in and with the world', both natural and social (Biesta, 2020, p. 89) and which has an ethical dimension, acting in opposition to docile compliance with the requirements of much method and policy. It is this important domain that is also missing in schools and within teacher education that is further explored here.

Biesta emphasises that education should enable individuals to develop rather than deny identities, to understand rather than neglect their own values and beliefs. The notion of subjectification – which Biesta asserts is 'arousing a desire in children and young people to exist as the subject of their own life' (2020, p. 20), the 'freedom to act or refrain from action' (p. 93) in and with the world – is not always so readily apparent in many schools, and nor is it evident in teacher education policy, in which pupils and pre-service teachers can question not 'who I am' but 'how I am', or how they exist in the world (Biesta, 2020, p. 99).

Subjectification for teachers and teacher educators is denied in a policy context that requires future teachers to be bound by the need to demonstrate fidelity to systematic and predetermined universal approaches. The three conditions that Biesta suggests are important for subjectification are notably absent in initial teacher education. There is little time on teacher education programmes, particularly post-graduate programmes, for any *interruption* to the timetabled programme in order to enable pre-service teachers to engage with ideas, 'encounter the world' and make sense of this, especially when there is a requirement for programme sequencing that

allows for little deviation. It is not generally possible for *suspension* of elements of the programme, a slowing down to enable pre-service teachers to reflect, to question and make sense of any new knowledge or understanding, and in terms of the third condition – *sustenance* – again there is little space for pre-service teachers to ponder the existential questions around 'how I am' and how they exist (Biesta, 2020, p. 99). Whilst there is no doubt that qualification and socialisation are important, Biesta (2021) argues that educational priorities should change so that subjectification is considered essential.

In Heidegger's 1946 critique of Humanism, to be human is merely to be one amongst others, and to be specified as such (Heidegger, 1998). For the teacher educators in our research, and for Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*, a humanistic enframing of professional identity has specified *what* the professional must become before any opportunity is given to show *who* they are and *how* they are to be. This structuring mode of thought frames and limits the way we perceive, understand and engage with the world, especially within the context of education and knowledge production. It therefore forecloses the possibility for uniqueness (Biesta, 2006) to the extent that the education of teachers can only socialise – by inserting the subject into a pre-existing and boundaried order – and the individual teacher becomes merely one amongst others.

With the removal of conscious agency, understanding becomes tranquillised through what Heidegger refers to as the 'they-self', Das Man, imposed yet anonymous collective norms and social convention that shape everyday behaviours, wherein individuals lose themselves in impersonal roles. Existing in this frame of mind we are merely carried along by the busyness of our immediate practical concerns and the common-sense of the they – what others think and say. A Heideggerian view of authentic living sees the professions we inhabit, the education we receive, as the places where beings show themselves. Central to Heidegger's (1962) characterisation of human beings is his use of the term 'Dasein' to denote the very subject that experiences (and questions) the world within which it is situated. It signifies a 'being-there', an understanding of our 'being-in-the-world' as it manifests itself to us and as it is experienced on a daily basis. This subject ceases to hold things in ways which are taken for granted, and laden with rarely articulated assumptions which are embedded in practice rather than in explicit thinking (Peim, 2018). We live understandingly, with conceptions of ourselves in situations in which there are choices to be made.

Both Heidegger and Biesta identify objectivity – the 'uniform accessibility of everything to everyone' (Heidegger, 1978, p. 197) – as limiting and destructive, reducing Being to only having value in utilitarian terms to be manipulated, administrated, managed and possibly exploited. On Heidegger's account then, being a professional does not concern itself with acquiring skills necessary to feed the demands of the employer, or regimes of inspection and government – it is pre-eminently concerned with the value, worth and meaning we derive from the work and our conceptions of ourselves as responsible participants.

The empirical research

In this section we present the research methodology, method and data analysis which forms the empirical research of this paper.

Methodology

Given the critique of the ITTECF highlighted above, this interpretivist, qualitative, small-scale research study was informed by the question, 'To what extent do teacher educators believe the Framework provides a sufficient basis for the education of pre-service teachers?' To elicit further information, participants were asked, 'Do you feel anything is left out or missing and what would you add or remove, if anything, given the chance?' The questions aimed to capture teacher educators' views on this key document as a foundation for their professional work.

Recruitment of participants

A purposeful sampling strategy was used to recruit participants from the Yorkshire and Humber region in the north of England, enabling the identification and selection of 'information-rich' cases in this small-scale study (Quinne Patton, 2002). This was achieved through responses to notifications in regional initial teacher training (ITT) networks, peer recommendations and an element of convenience of teacher educators in the region known to members of the research team. Emails were sent to department managers and other contacts who were asked to forward the invitation to their ITT teams and respond directly to the researchers should they wish to participate. These communications contained the aims of the study.

Thirteen participants chose to take part in the study. Three institutions were represented by the participants: a Russell group university and two newer 'post-1992' universities, that were created through transforming vocational colleges and polytechnics into universities in the 1990s and 2000s. Of the 13 participants, 10 taught on Primary ITE programmes, one on a Secondary ITE programme, and two taught across both Primary and Secondary programmes. The majority of curriculum subjects were covered by the participants in terms of subjects taught in their current roles; this included all core subjects and several foundation subjects, plus other areas of specialism such as Early Years education. All participants had a background in teaching, varying from seven to 30 years in the profession, with a range of roles being held, including headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject or key stage lead, and class teacher. The participants had worked in ITE for varied lengths of time, spanning from just a few weeks to 16 years. This is shown in Table 1.

Method

Semi-structured, online interviews were conducted by a research assistant, taking place in summer and autumn 2022. Interview questions were designed to investigate the teacher educators' views about the then Core Content Framework (CCF) as a basis for teacher education. Since this time, the ITTECF has been published, combining and replacing the CCF and the ECF. Changes to the content of the Framework were relatively minimal in relation to the focus of this study, as explained above, so reference below is made to the ITTECF within this paper as the current framework for ITE.

Each interview lasted approximately 25 minutes and used an interview guide script. All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and anonymised by the research assistant

Table 1. Participant information.

Participant	Length of time in school/role	Phase	Length of time as a teacher educator in higher education
1	21 years, including 10 years as a headteacher	Primary	16 years
2	7 years as a class teacher	Primary	13–14 years
3	22 years, including time on senior leadership team	Primary	11 years
4	13 years in school, 5 years as subject consultant in a local authority; also worked in schools abroad	Primary	2 years
5	18 years, including as deputy and acting headteacher	Primary	13 years
6	6 years, including 3 years as head of department	Secondary	1 year
7	16 years, including as assistant head	Primary	6 months
8	3 years, advisory service for 10 years	Secondary	10 years
9	17 years including middle management	Primary	7 ½ years
10	24 years	Primary	5 weeks
11	30 years, including 20 years in senior leadership	Primary	2 years
12	16 years as a class teacher	Primary and secondary	4 years
13	10 years as a class teacher	Primary and secondary	16 years

so that neither individuals nor their institutions were identifiable. Each transcript was coded to enable the research assistant to locate it should the participant wish to withdraw from the study.

The semi-structured interview format enabled the interviewer to ask follow-up questions in response to participants' answers, to stimulate further explanation and examples of points made, with the purpose of developing understanding and interpretation of the information and perspectives provided (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, pp. 357–8).

Ethical approval

The research gained ethical approval from the York St John University School of Education, Language and Psychology Ethics Committee (approval code: RECEDU00068). In accordance with this ethical approval, research participants and their institutions are anonymised. As part of the process of accepting the invitation to interview, participants signed a consent form which assured them of their anonymity and their right to withdraw at any time. The interviews were conducted with a concern to treat participants 'fairly, sensitively, and with dignity and freedom from prejudice' (British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2024, p. 11).

Data analysis

As researchers, we accessed the transcripts once they had been anonymised by a research assistant. We familiarised ourselves with the data and used an abductive approach to data analysis, consistent with the interpretive tradition. In this approach researchers work iteratively 'from surprises and tensions toward theoretical insight' and 'engage theory and other prior knowledge early in the research process and creatively throughout' (Van Hulst & Visser, 2025, p. 568).

In the first iteration of data analysis, we identified three main categories in response to participants' views about the adequacy of the Framework for the education of pre-service teachers: first, the limited research base of the Framework; second, the lack of

subject specific guidance; and third, what we first called 'broader areas', which contained a wide variety of issues such as teacher identity, culture and society, consideration of ideology and values including social justice – including challenging social issues like racism and misogyny, promoting criticality and autonomous thinking and re-focussing on inclusion and considerations around teaching the 'whole child'. Upon reflection this 'broader issues' category seemed to be raising, either directly or indirectly, issues around the ontology of teacher educators and the pre-service teacher, their desire to express and embody Dasein, or 'being-in-the-world', and the space given to express issues of significance with which they are concerned and preoccupied in their practice. It also appeared to be addressing the rendering of professional values as irrelevant.

The teacher educators' words could be understood as highlighting the missing dimension of freedom to express the question, 'How am I to be in the world?' of their professional roles and preparing the pre-service teachers to address the same question in their practice. As previously discussed, this aspect of subjectification, who and how the teacher educator is to be, and therefore the subject of the teacher educator, is not considered in the Framework.

Interview findings and analysis

We have divided the teacher educators' responses into two overarching themes from these 'broader areas' from our analysis: first, the lack of scope for professional agency and, second, the obsession with the technical at the expense of wider values and purposes.

Lack of scope for professional agency in the framework

Across the interviews, there is a balance of discussion between the need to standardise and insist on minimum requirements within teacher education, as Participant 12 described, 'In terms of a structure, I guess it offers clarity to everybody across all ITE', but also how the framework is mechanistic, shallow and limited. It takes a universal 'one size fits all approach', not considering context or the stage of learning of the intended audience (Participant 8). Participant 2 expressed concern that the 'narrowly constructed framework reflects … a particular kind of ideology because I think it's reflecting that whole sort of sense of direct instruction' and a pedagogy that is 'quite reductionist'.

The narrow approach of the Framework includes the research underpinning it, according to participants. A reference list is included within each section of the Framework with reading recommendations highlighted. These lists are limited and bring a sense of 'unspoken pressure' and 'an implicit message that those areas of research should be the ones that we are then presenting to the pre-service teachers as "specified" from the research base of the curriculum' (Participant 1). This limited evidence base leads participants to question the validity of the research but with the feeling that they have no voice to question this dogmatic approach: 'There's no room for any challenge. It's "this is the way we do it"' (Participant 11). The Framework advocates the teaching of early reading through systematic synthetic phonics (SSP). To further reference the SSP in the Framework, the DfE has also published a list of validated SSP programmes which adhere

to their core criteria. Discussing the teaching of phonics, for which they explain, 'It's the Government's preferred method', Participant 11 states, 'I don't . . . say what my opinion is. I kind of say this is what we have to do, this is what we have to teach'. Alluding to the cost of using professional judgement and agency to challenge this orthodoxy they explain, 'I know universities that have challenged the teaching of phonics or the debate around the teaching of phonics, which is very, quite contested, and [they] got into trouble'.

The 'learn that' statements within the Framework are 'informed by the best available educational research' (DfE, 2019a, p. 19). This is subjective but suggests that the authors of the Framework are best placed to make this decision. The underpinning research of the Framework is 'like set books' for Participant 3 which for them is 'a little bit (of a) step too far, because they're basically saying what these researchers or these authors are saying, it should be the answer to training teachers, [whereas] I believe that it's one possible answer to that'.

> They believe that the government is almost saying, 'This person is the person that we should be following for behaviour', and I just sort of think, no, we want to create teachers who are critical, who are reflective, and we are not afraid to give them a whole variety of books and resources and say, Okay, what do you think? (Participant 3)

Participant 9 questions whether a wider research base would allow for pre-service teachers to 'develop a critical way of thinking rather than accepting' and they advocate leaving room for 'more autonomous thinking'. Again, this suggests adherence to specific approaches, theories and pedagogies which stifle a broader approach and choke out the possibility of professional agency, working against critical engagement which might enable a 'research informed workforce where people are able to think for themselves' (Participant 9).

Commentary from the participants suggests the Framework renders invisible the notion of subjectification whereby teachers and teacher educators have autonomy in their practice and levels of freedom in decision making, based upon professional values: there is little 'freedom to act or refrain from action' (Biesta, 2020, p. 93). Their actions are controlled, within set parameters of the Framework which acts as the great leveller, defining ethical and professional acceptability and against which they must measure themselves. Greater levels of autonomy would allow for teacher educators to draw upon their own research, experience, subject expertise and enable greater subjectification. For example, Participant 9 states:

> I think students enjoy your anecdotal knowledge of what you did and either how it worked or particularly it didn't work. And I think for me I can't see the point of doing research in education with teachers, with [pre-service teachers], without then sharing some of that with the students that you're working with.

These insights generated from research by teacher educators could challenge pre-service teachers' thinking, allowing them to exercise criticality and become autonomous thinkers. This reflects what Biesta (2020) considers the real risk to education – that it becomes merely reproduction of existing assumptions and practices.

The absence of the processes which might promote professional identity were highlighted by Participant 2 who identified lack of scope to encourage pre-service teachers to explore questions of their place in the world of education: 'You know, who

am I as a teacher? How do I articulate my values? What educational sort of, what philosophical underpinnings are there to my practice?', alluding to the absence of sustenance, one of the three conditions that Biesta suggests are paramount for subjectification.

Obsession with the technical at the expense of wider values and purposes

Many of the participants alluded to the Framework being 'contrived' and how it does not consider the complexities of teaching (Participant 10) but rather presents teacher educators as 'technicians' (Participant 5). 'I think if a [pre-service teacher] left having only experienced what the [Framework] says they should, I think they would be a pretty wobbly teacher. It's very kind of technicist really. It's a bit more of a kind of tick list' (Participant 9), indicating the shift towards what Taubman (2009, p. 18) describes as 'mechanistic approaches to pedagogy and curriculum' and the imposition of imposed and collective norms in which Heidegger highlights the loss of the self.

The Framework lacks understanding of the softer skills which are unquantifiable, such as communication and building relationships; there needs to be recognition that teaching is a pastoral as well as an academic role, according to Participant 5. It is these aspects that are difficult to describe or put into a document, as Participant 4 explains:

> when you're in the classroom that in the moment connecting as a human being to children in your classroom and you're, yes you're thinking oh right okay you're doing that so therefore I can push you on here in terms of this knowledge but actually you need to develop a little bit of social skills so I'm just going to do this over here.

Participants 2 and 5 also allude to a lack of human connection within the Framework; some examples given include a lack of focus on dialogue or on social or emotional aspects of learning and development. This is summarised as a lack of understanding of the wider role of the teacher by Participant 10 as the 'wholeness' of the role that cannot be compartmentalised. Participant 9 advocates for a focus on teacher well-being within the Framework, highlighting the role of the teacher educator beyond that of a technician.

As the Framework provides a 'minimum entitlement to training and not a full curriculum' (DfE, 2024, p. 5), ITE providers are encouraged to create their own curriculum, going beyond the Framework, though time for this is limited. The content beyond the Framework is described as 'enrichment' by Participant 13, which provides the 'exciting, creative, innovative material that our students seem to really engage with, and get very excited about, and want more of really'. The curriculum beyond the Framework is where pre-service teachers can learn 'the craft' or 'art of teaching' something that cannot be diluted to tick box standards (Participant 4).

Technical aspects take away from the focus of the wider purposes of education. Participant 6 takes the example of the focus on memory which appears within six of the 'learn that' statements around long-term and working memory. They point out that such a focus does not address complexities such as, 'how do we help students to make meaning of what they're learning, to make sense of it, to work out how new knowledge that they've gained has changed the knowledge they've got and to keep developing?' In addition, the Framework does not address what they term as the:

> really important aspect of historical consciousness which is what is the meaning of this [for] pupils? Why are you learning this? What meaning are you making of it? Why is it important that we consider these things at this age in your education? (Participant 6)

A further example comes from Participant 4 who states, 'we talk about attitudes and values and blockers and motivations. Those abstract spaces that go beyond can they write a poem, you know, or the difficulties with phonics'. The challenges in facilitating those 'spaces that go beyond' is likely compounded by the lack of time to deliver the statutory content and as such, any 'interruption' to the ITE programme.

Initial teacher education is broader and more complex than the Framework suggests, according to the participants. For pre-service teachers, 'It's not just about them learning, it's not just about them gaining knowledge or creating knowledge. It's about them developing as people' (Participant 10) or as Biesta states, 'to be able to exist as a subject in their own life' (Biesta, 2020, p. 20). In other words, developing identity and autonomy, and therefore evolving as a professional, is something that the Framework stifles according to this participant. It does not acknowledge that different approaches, beliefs and sets of values are needed within different classroom contexts. It does not consider the complexities of different school structures, policies and pupil populations or sense that authentic living in a profession is a place where beings can show themselves, in Heidegger's terms.

Participant 4 discusses the need for pre-service teachers to be guided beyond the 'directed stuff'. They suggest that teachers who host pre-service teachers on placement are key in showing them how to adapt their teaching within different schools and for different classes. Further highlighting the need for a greater understanding of adaptive teaching and planning to meet the needs of pupils within a specific context, Participant 13 states, 'there is no mention of English as an Additional Language . . .. There are huge gaps that are missing, that should be there, because it's what our culture and our society is. But that's not recognised [in the Framework]'. The Framework reduces the complexities of the classroom to something that is, 'objective, transparent and measurable' (Taubman, 2009, p. 19). A move towards greater consideration of the context and individual needs would also see a shift towards subjectification and the way we expect children to learn and understand their place within the world.

Re-placing the subject: seizing the remains of the day

The teacher educators in our study, all ex-teachers, bemoan the loss of the self, and the 'how I am to be' as a professional, with its essential ethical dimension. They highlight a loss of authentic educational experience, where the richness of teaching, learning and thinking is sacrificed for standardisation and accountability. They suggest that attempts to represent or measure the education of new teachers has involved a reduction of its lived, complex reality. The findings from analysis of the interviews with the teacher educators above are consistent with extensive critique in the literature of government policy as currently articulated in the ITTECF and other publications highlighted in this article.

In this paper, we offer insights into the cost of the constraints of this policy on an ontological level. Drawing on Biesta and Heidegger, we argue that the subject of the teacher educator, who has a professional and ethical commitment to the development of

pre-service teachers, is missing from consideration in policy. Within our respondents' comments regarding mechanistic, reductionist and universal descriptions of best fit practices, is a demonstration that they see modern education systems, under the influence of technocratic and managerial logics, as tending to organise professional knowledge, learning and potential into measurable, controllable and efficient forms. These have reduced pre-service teachers to resources or outputs within a system geared towards productivity and performance metrics. This presents a risk to the profession and to the education of children and young people in our schools. The teacher educators in our research have expressed a sense of constraint that is imposed upon them by a technicist curriculum, which enables a focus on qualification, acknowledges socialisation but is silent on subjectification, in other words that process by which they, and their pre-service teachers, become the subject of their own lives, rather than the objects of others. The teacher educators' responses reveal frustration at the lack of professional agency and judgement afforded to them in the Framework. They highlight its focus on the technical aspects of their role, but with the absence of any sense of acknowledgement of what they bring to their profession or an overarching purpose for teaching pre-service teachers beyond a narrow technicist approach as a means to an end; merely a controllable causal mechanism within a network where 'instrumentality reigns' (Heidegger, 1977, p. 6). The person and professional, that should be the subject, is missing. As a result, teacher educators have become instead objectified and reduced, which threatens to lead to experiences of alienation or even subjugation.

Rather than the time-worn values of loyalty and blind obedience, subjectification for teachers and teacher educators involves fostering their own freedom to act responsibly and maturely and emphasises autonomy and an ethical engagement with their own decision-making identity. We might refer to this as the 'heart' of the teacher/teacher educator, which Palmer (2007, p. 11) suggests links the professional identity-voice and integrity-ethics as they meet in 'the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self'. In *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens' own professional self is inextricably bound to the social and hierarchical context of servitude; his rigid adherence to the 'world' of service blinds him to deeper aspects of his Being, such as his suppressed emotions and personal aspirations. It could be argued that teachers and teacher educators are also bound by such servitude; they are expected to rigidly adhere to officially sanctioned yet contingent practices, processes and procedures of an education policy context (Clarke & Phelan, 2017) which dominates their experience of education.

The moments of classroom practice which respondents describe and the connections which occur there explain both living and learning as a highly participatory affair, requiring total engagement, not to be instilled or dictated from without. Nor should either be conceived of in terms of the achievement of a set of pre-determined objectives or frameworks. It must be experienced, not imposed or made mechanical; this merely enframes life and thinking within pre-specified and instrumental structures which close down life and professional possibilities.

The demand of policy to give an account of oneself under norms not of one's own choosing – a form of ethical coercion – minimalises or discards opportunity for the application of practical reason, tolerance, particularity and difference. Rather than the relationship between either professional and employer, or pre-service teacher and tutor envisaged as a vehicle for conveying a pre-specified set of duties or a curriculum, teacher education is seen

as an open space which arises as a free response to engagement with materials and classroom experience.

Looking to the future we consider that in order to address the issues of the 'missing subject' raised in this paper, a recalibration of the teaching profession would be required. We advocate for a rebalancing that restores room for a more pluralistic, context-sensitive and ethically grounded intellectual framework that would see government policy shift to refocus on the broader purpose of education and the values of schools to contribute to 'genuine equity of education' where teachers and teacher educators would not be 'compliant survivors' but rather be 'thoughtful contributors' (Roberts, 2018, pp. 155–156) and engineers of such change.

However, in the absence of any significant change in government policy teacher educators must consider how professional autonomy can be reclaimed and exercised even within prescribed parameters. By working creatively within existing structures, teacher educators can embed sophisticated pedagogical understanding and critical thinking capabilities. Such an approach requires neither wholesale rejection of policy requirements (that might jeopardise accreditation) nor passive acceptance of limitations, but rather the sophisticated navigation of competing demands in service to the best interests of our student teachers and the profession. By reclaiming some autonomy, even within existing structures, teacher educators might fulfil their fundamental obligation to prepare pre-service teachers for the full complexity of educational practice, ensuring that the next generation of teachers enter classrooms equipped not merely to implement prescribed technicised approaches, but to think critically, adapt creatively, and serve their pupils with professional expertise and ethical commitment.

Returning to *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens is profoundly shaped by history, especially that of his own service. His journey across the English countryside represents a confrontation with his past choices and a reflection on how they come to shape his present. However, he often struggles to integrate these temporal dimensions authentically; perhaps like those who construct policy he holds to an idealised and conservative vision of the past rather than embracing his potential to shape a new future. But certainly, an adherence to and absorption in the expectations or demands of others, of *their* systems and uniformity, distracts him from acknowledging the contingent nature of life and his worth in it. Similarly, teacher educators see themselves as bound to requirements to demonstrate fidelity. By the novel's conclusion Stevens returns to the symbolic language of duty and a stifled professional identity. We might hope instead that there remains enough light in the day for greater subjectification; to avoid an endless circuit of unfulfilled, unarticulated hopes and to control the course one's life – and profession – will take.

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