Est. 1841 | YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY

Unsworth, Ruth, Clarke, Matthew and Rüsselbæk Hansen, Dion (2023) Immunitas and (un)desirable teacher knowledge in teacher education. European Journal of Education, 59 (1).

Downloaded from: https://ray.yorksj.ac.uk/id/eprint/8819/

The version presented here may differ from the published version or version of record. If you intend to cite from the work you are advised to consult the publisher's version: https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12577

Research at York St John (RaY) is an institutional repository. It supports the principles of open access by making the research outputs of the University available in digital form. Copyright of the items stored in RaY reside with the authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full text items free of charge, and may download a copy for private study or non-commercial research. For further reuse terms, see licence terms governing individual outputs. Institutional Repositories Policy Statement

RaY

Research at the University of York St John

For more information please contact RaY at ray@yorksj.ac.uk

Check for updates

Received: 21 February 2023 | Revised: 8 August 2023 | Accepted: 25 September 2023

DOI: 10.1111/ejed.12577

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

WILEY

Immunitas and (un)desirable teacher knowledge in teacher education

Ruth Unsworth[1] | Matthew Clarke[2] | Dion Rüsselbæk Hansen[3]

[1]York St John University, York, UK

[2]University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, UK

[3]University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark

Correspondence
Ruth Unsworth, York St John University, York, UK.
Email: r.unsworth@yorksj.ac.uk

Abstract

Since the latter half of the 20th century many political efforts and initiatives have been launched to ensure that teacher education provides teachers with a positive (orderly) knowledge base. This includes things like professional teacher standards and notions like 'best practices' and 'evidence-based practice'. Building on the work of Esposito and with inspiration from psychoanalytic theory, we argue that today's educational policy can be seen as an attempt to immunise (teacher) education from risks associated with negativity - disorderly, disruptive and 'destructive' matters that can problematise and question the normal order of things within political debates and policy-based reforms. Drawing on examples from England and Denmark – contexts in which the authors work – we demonstrate how a dichotomy between desirable sound/healthy knowledge and undesirable unsound/unhealthy knowledge exist within teacher education. We examine how this produces epistemic injustice in that negative modes of thought and practice are rendered invisible, unthinkable and illegitimate. Being able to traverse such injustice, teachers must be encouraged to approach any and all sources of influence on their professional knowledge base with a sort of agonistic pragmatism, which may allow them to be faithful to the ethico-political situation they are engaged in. What we suggest in this regard is that teacher education must

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.
© 2023 The Authors. *European Journal of Education* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

provide time and space for (student) teachers to engage with plurality, contingency and absence because such negative 'stumbling blocks' (always) play a vital part in education, preventing control, stability and harmony.

KEYWORDS
defence strategies, epistemic injustice, negativity, risk, security

1 | INTRODUCTION

Controlling teachers' knowledge has been a topic of political debate and policy-based reform in Europe since the professionalisation of teaching in the latter half of the 20th century (Day, 2002; Oancea, 2014). Political directives as to what and how teachers should teach now permeate our education systems (Pinar, 2008). In schools and teacher education programmes throughout Europe, many (sometimes competing) policies are enacted simultaneously (Clarke, 2019) - those pertaining to curricula, standards/ competencies, assessment, and quality for example. Increasing government direction of what the teacher should know and do reflects the growth of 'educationalization' (Fendler, 2018), involving the attribution to education of a wide range of indicators of social and individual wellbeing. Such educationalization is evident, for example, in the assumption that socio-economic problems found in national/global societies can be addressed "through the production of policy texts … and insertions into practice" (Ball et al., 2012, p.2) within the field of education. This policy-instrumentalism has consequences for teachers, including the way it regulates public and personal conceptualisations of teachers' professional knowledge (Buchanan, 2015; Carusi, 2022). For example, instrumentalism shapes what it means to have and use 'effective' knowledge, constraining ideas of effectiveness within a limiting and reductive ideology of standards and standardisation (Taubman, 2009). Our overall starting point in this paper is that this policy instrumentalism, fuelled by and reflective of the positioning of teacher education as a 'policy problem' (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018; Holloway, 2021; Mayer & Mills, 2021), along with the consequent imposition of outcomes-focused technologies of audit and accountability including numerical data and evaluative tools, has led to a situation where teachers in a range of international contexts, including England and Denmark, face "increasingly rigid control over their autonomy and practice" (Holloway, 2021, p. 159). A political desire for control has led to a limitation of spaces for plurality in which disagreement, conflictual and opposite views can be expressed and discussed. Put otherwise, more and more educational spaces are trapped within a performativity culture, which can be difficult to resist. Not to forget is how teachers' voices informed by, for example, lived experiences, academic knowledge, and convictions (Pinar, 2015) seem to be perceived as undesirable 'noise' by politicians.

One way of making sense of policy's influence, and the way it shapes epistemic and institutional life within the irremediable complexity of the educational reality, is to view it in terms of a complex dialectic between positivity and negativity. In this framing, the positive represents the given, including "those [educational] institutions – symbolic language, subjectivity, knowledge as well as a mode of producing structures, social stratifications, and cultural practices – that have become reified, totalised, ossified" (Coole, 2000, p. 10). Examples of the positive in teacher education would include things like professional teacher standards and notions like 'best practices' and 'evidence-based practice' (Clarke & Phelan, 2017, p. 15). Such 'orderly' things are typically taken for granted, naturalised and normalised as something desirable and valuable within the contemporary educational order. In this conceptualisation, the 'rigid control' of teachers and teacher education mentioned above can be read as a surfeit of the positive. By contrast, the negative represents a destructive/creative 'disorder' that unsettles the status quo and challenges a given order of the positive (Rüsselbæk Hansen & Phelan, 2019). As such, the negative is disruptive and unpredictable, but also generative, in the face of the potential inertia, stagnation and atrophy represented

14653435, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ejed.12577 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [04/10/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

by the positive (Žižek, 2009). In this view, educational reality can be characterised as an ongoing dialectical struggle between negativity and positivity whereby both produce a constitutive *otherness* to one another.

In this paper, we draw on this dialectical framing in order to build on the work of Esposito (2011) and on insights from psychoanalytic theory (Kapoor & Zalloua, 2022; McGowan, 2013), exploring certain educational policy moves in (teacher) education, including the mandating of prescriptive teacher education curricula and narrowly conceived teacher professional standards, as *immunisation projects* impacting the development of the professional knowledge base on which teachers might base their professional action. Using this framework, our aim is to offer an alternative way of problematizing the logics attached to, and the possible effects of, such policy, including for example, how policy favours particular forms of knowledge that must be put to use by teachers in their practices. Drawing on examples from England and Denmark – contexts in which the authors work – we demonstrate how today's educational policy can be seen as an attempt to *immunise* (teacher) education from risks associated with the 'other' – negative spaces outside of a positive knowledge base.

By analysing influential English and Danish educational policy documents that contain strategies of improvements, reforms, objectives, and desirable values, we argue that, viewed as attempts at immunisation, these biopolicies (Foucault, 2008) seek to manage teachers as a population by installing a dichotomy between desirable sound/healthy knowledge and undesirable unsound/unhealthy knowledge. As such, policy "increasingly seeks to maximize [its own] circulation by reconstituting the world and eliminating what it cannot incorporate and redesign. As it does, it undermines the commons and renders people incapable of democracy" (Coles, 2016, p. 84). This means that such policies can contribute to what Fricker (2007) calls *epistemic injustice*, insofar as some potentially "negative" modes of thought and practice are rendered invisible, unthinkable and illegitimate. Being able to problematize and *traverse* such injustice, teachers must be encouraged to approach any and all sources of influence on their professional knowledge base with a sort of agonistic pragmatism (Rorty, 2021; Wenman, 2013), which in Badiou's terms may allow them to be faithful to the ethico-political situation they are engaged with and find themselves in (Badiou, 2001 p. 15). What we suggest in this regard is that teacher education must provide time and space for (student) teachers to engage with plurality, contingency and absence because such negative 'stumbling blocks' (always) play a vital part in education, preventing control, stability and harmony (Kapoor & Zalloua, 2022, p. 17).

2 | EXPLORING THE IMMUNISATION METAPHOR

The Covid-19 pandemic has posed a mortal threat to our biological bodies. That said, the impact of epidemiological notions of contamination and contagion can be seen to have spread beyond the confines of medicine and biology and into the public, technological, political and educational realms (Agamben, 2021). This view takes the stance that

> a biological function [immunisation] is extended to a general view of reality dominated by a need for violent defense in the face of anything judged to be foreign. (Esposito, 2011, p. 17)

This sense of a 'violent defence' is possibly most visible in the regulatory and symbolic orders of law and language – the policies, and discourses about policies, which play key roles in the construction of our social realities.

In considering government policy-making and policy discourse in terms of immunisation, it is worth pausing to consider what we mean by 'policy'. The word 'policy' seems rather technical to contemporary ears (Rose, 1999), linked to dull bureaucratic processes such as policy-making, policy-frameworks, policy documents and even policy science; yet it is worth noting here how "the sparseness of the term contrasts sharply with the etymology it shares with polity and with police" (Dean, 2005, p. 258). As Dean goes on to note, "for all its pretensions to neutrality or to technical or scientific status, and for all its liberal heritage, behind 'policy' stands a shadow of an omnipotent

14653435, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ejed.12577 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [04/10/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

state, administration, or bureaucracy issuing detailed regulations of individual and collective life" (p. 260). Connecting these two senses of policy, the technical and the political, is the notion of a risk posed to the body politic, against which policy serves as a form of necessary insurance.

Within this paradigm, the notion of risk or threat to the body politic/ to society at large can be perceived as a consequence of interruptions, or perceivable interruptions, by "anything judged to be foreign" (Esposito, 2011, p. 17) to the social group. Foreignness is, in this case, caught up in the idea of a "strange otherness" (McGowan, 2013, p. 35) – an entity, thought, belief, practice (and so on) which is positioned as unfamiliar or unhelpful to sustaining and maintaining the social world at hand. For example, populist political developments such as Brexit can be seen as a move to protect British 'sovereignty' and values from dilution or contamination by 'unaccountable' and 'bureaucratic' European influences. Similarly, the Danish 'citizenship test', which contains questions about everyday life in Denmark including Danish values and culture can be viewed as a defence strategy to protect Denmark from contamination of foreign cultures and the interruption of strange others that are not familiar with Danish values and culture. What these examples mirror – despite their differences – is a tendency towards protection, a 'vaccination', against others and otherness that can be a threat to a particular form of nationality and the existing social order.

In this reading policy becomes "a protective response in the face of a risk" (Esposito 2011, p. 1) – a move to counteract or address unwanted and undesirable issues that can cause anxiety. As such, policy may become a 'prophylactic vaccine' to protect – to immunise – against risk or the emergence of future risks and unpredictable events impacting the social group. In other words – and in terms of the positive/negative dialectic – policy immunises the social world in the provision of a positive defence strategy in order to resist as well as overcome the disruptive and uncontrollable 'other' existent in (negative) spaces outside of this positive, knowable field (Rosa, 2020).

For underlying this notion of risk, we can also identify an associated sense of a lack, or absence – of something lost or missing from the social world at hand (Brennan et al., 2022). To take an example from education policy, lurking beneath the agenda of "fostering a world-leading, evidence-informed profession" (DfE, 2016, p.37) is the implication that without this policy intervention – without this immunisation in the sense used in this paper – teacher knowledge is liable to be *not* world-leading and *not* evidence-informed. In other words, without policy efforts to ensure the development of 'evidence-informed' practice, there would otherwise be a lack, or absence, of this in education. Or, to explore this particular lack further, that the profession is vulnerable to risk of contamination by teacher knowledge that is sub-standard, disorderly and ineffective and which may propagate throughout education.

Importantly, policy-based immunising efforts are often reactionary to an identified lack or risk:

> The immunitary paradigm does not present itself in terms of action, but rather in terms of reaction – rather than a force, it is a repercussion, a counterforce, which hinders another force from coming into being. (Esposito, 2011, p. 7)

Within this reactionary dynamic inheres a dual sense of adding something and taking away another thing. As the Danish Ministry of Education (2014) stated in terms of public school improvement, efforts must be made to "improve the quality of the [teaching] lessons and ensure measurable improvements" (p. 11) by means of common objectives and goal-oriented teaching. In this regard, teachers must use the latest evidence-based knowledge "in the daily teaching and the daily interaction with the children" (p. 19). And in the words of England's Department for Education: "We'll ensure discredited ideas unsupported by firm evidence are not promoted to new teachers" (Department for Education (DfE), 2016, p. 12). What qualifies as evidence in both examples is not explicated, which is a typical tendency in policy documents (Biesta, 2010). What is taken away from the social world (in this case of educators) in both cases are (ambiguous) risks caused by a lack of an evidence-base, scientificity, or rigour in their professional knowledge. What is added are certain types of professional knowledge – examples of 'what works' verified by an ambiguous and sometimes uncertain source. Knowledge outside of this evidence-based practice movement remains as an undefined, ambiguous and illegitimate other

14653435, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ejed.12577 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [04/10/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

– a threat to the quality of teaching existing in the negative spaces surrounding 'evidence informed' movements in both countries.

The promised 'evidence' is positioned as a positive entity: readable, touchable, exactable. In this sense of adding and taking away something from the social group – in this case, from the world of educators – policies are inherently exclusive. They reify certain knowledge(s), whilst simultaneously excluding, discrediting others. In other words, they represent the (positive) naturalisation, normalisation and sedimentation of partial – in both senses of the term – knowledges and practices in ways that preclude the (negative) possibility of other(ed) perspectives having voice and visibility.

3 | EDUCATION POLICY AND THE IMMUNISATION PARADIGM

In England and Denmark's education policy, immunisation of teacher knowledge takes place through a well-established movement by national governments to regulate, standardise and formalise teacher knowledge. The foundations of this movement can be seen in government efforts since the 1980s to professionalise teaching (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996; Hoyle, 1982) through a series of interconnected standardising moves relating to teacher education, curriculum and assessment. Government policy-making at this time aimed at creating a systemic national professional knowledge base for teaching, based on research 'evidence', which could be reliably and consistently delivered by all (at least in principle). Repeated acts of standardisation through policy – curricula, standards or competencies documents, assessment systems and so on – aim to *homogenise* teacher knowledge into that specified within policy. Over time, the homogenisation and narrowing of teacher knowledge to a purported evidence-based and/or practised based body of reliable and useful knowledge (Eraut, 1994) has been compounded by its proliferation as the basis for government-led discourses of accountability, effectiveness, and quality (Biesta, 2009). The resultant culture of performativity currently dominating discourses in education (Ball, 2003) serves to recursively reify standardisation efforts, maintaining the content and method, the nature and scope, the borders and direction, of teacher knowledge.

Much critical scholarship has, understandably, focused on the way these centralising policy moves target curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in teacher education (e.g. Holloway, 2021; Taubman, 2009). Here our focus is on less commented upon foci of policy control. In this standardisation movement, we can see an act of immunisation of teachers' professional knowledge base, in which governmental policy seeks to protect teacher knowledge against plurality, diversity and otherness in knowledge bases outside of those officially desired and prescribed. The instruments of immunisation – government-funded institutions promoting certain 'policy-fit' pedagogies, mandated textbooks, performance-based reviews based on teacher professional standards – act in a way to 'teacher proof' practice (Priestley et al., 2015; Taylor, 2013). Or, to extend the immunisation metaphor, to *vaccinate* teaching practices against the influence of the teacher subject's autonomy, judgement and ethics, or against other interruptions, for example, critical, agonistic and negative forms of thinking that can be used to question and disrupt the smooth and desirable function of the political regulated and monitored 'school fabric' (Ball, 2017).

In an English context, for example, politicians speak of 'disparities' (DfE, 2022a) or of 'revolutionising' and 'returning rigour' (DfE, 2022b) to curriculum and pedagogy. A lack of rigour is an implied risk of not taking policy action. In a Danish context this lack is evident in the way politicians constantly seek inspiration for school improvement and quality assurance in other contexts. In other words, there is a tendency to 'cherry pick' things that can be incorporated into Danish schools so they can deliver world class education (Danish Ministry of Children and Education, 2018). For example, Parliament members, the School Council and municipalities interested in the 'miracle' of Ontario (as it has been named) "went on study trips to discover the [evidence based] factors for success" and how they could be transferred into – and be used in – a Danish context (Reder & Ydesen, 2022, p. 98). Teacher knowledge is positioned in such policymaking and policy discourse as at risk of undesirable influences, as in need of intervention – immunisation – against this risk.

14653435, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ejed.12577 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [04/10/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Bringing examples of government immunisation of teacher knowledge to light, and considering their potential outcomes on the knowledge base of teaching, is important in two main regards. Firstly, there is a pressing need to re-problematise established education policies which may otherwise maintain an authoritative and accepted presence in the knowledge base of the profession. Research examining how policy travels into practice has identified how certain policies infiltrate teachers' practices or ways of thinking, accepted as matter-of-fact ways of 'doing things around here', rather than held as problematised, fluid and contingent aspects of the social world (Unsworth & Tummons, 2021). In this sense, policy reifies, solidifies and sediments as positive entities of a particular notion, idea or practice, through usage within professional spaces and systems – performance-related discussions based in teaching standards/ competencies policy, for example (Liew, 2012). A substantive character is generated by, and of, 'protecting policies' which lends policy a sense of authority that belies or even conceal its contingent, constructed and contestable nature. Holding such policies as England's 'Fundamental British Values' and Denmark's focus on three national education objectives up to the light of the immunisation metaphor, as we do below, offers a way of speaking to what has been added or taken away from teachers' professional knowledge base via (partial or whole) assimilation of different policies over time.

Secondly, immunisation may prove *toxic* to those whose interests it is designed to protect. Immunisation's preference for particular bodies of knowledge, that in turn underpin certain ensembles of policy and practice, may serve to exclude consideration of other, alternative bodies and perspectives which may be beneficial to the social group. This has been explored in relation to education policy from several angles. The trend towards government intervention in education research has been criticised as a method of engendering accountability to government goals, whilst simultaneously limiting the scope and methods of education research (Hammersley, 2013). Additionally, research based on 'what works' discourses may exclude professional knowledge grounded in richly contextualised and localised experiences, which may contrast to available evidence (Biesta, 2012). In other words, governments' attempts to *immunise* teachers against particular forms of (critically orientated) research, and instead direct them towards (ideologically) preferred approaches, may end up depriving the profession of valuable insights, thereby undermining the avowed intention of those promulgating the policy. The exclusive nature of standardising moves around teacher knowledge can thus be seen as 'deprofressionalising' the teaching profession (Clarke & Phelan, 2015, 2017; Hoyle, 1982). In this sense, immunisation can be seen as a form of *epistemic injustice* (Fricker, 2007) involving an exclusion and silencing of knowledge, brought about through the privileging of other, officially recognised and limited, knowledge.

In the remainder of this paper, we explore these issues using examples of government immunisation of teachers' professional knowledge base in the UK and Denmark. To best exemplify the immunisation metaphor in relation to the knowledge base of teacher education, we have deliberately selected two policies which are particularly strong examples of government attempts to steer education towards particular knowledge/ to exclude other knowledge(s): England's 2014, post-9/11, policy promoting Fundamental British Values and Denmark's 2013 drive to reform 'standards' in public schools. Many other policies may be read in a similar way. For each policy initiative, we describe how the immunisation plays out – the initial perception of lack/ risk, the development of a 'cure' and how the immunisation of teachers against lack/risk plays out through the systems and texts that constitute it.

4 | IMMUNISING TEACHER KNOWLEDGE: AN ENGLISH CONTEXT

Immunitas is caught up with notions of protecting (symbolic) identities, communities and borders against threats from aliens or strangers (Honig, 2001; Mamdani, 2002; McGowan, 2013). As Lemke puts it (2014), immunitas

> is a risk minimising activity characterised by the reduction of critique to a juridical procedure and a system of codes regulating proper belonging and legitimate access. As a result, the community

14653435, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ejed.12577 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [04/10/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

> is defended against strangers – hence exactly against what founds the community as an always unstable and shifting identity. (p. 73)

In this regard, the events of 9/11 marked a shift in the nature of politics in many Western contexts (Mamdani, 2002, 2004; Zuboff, 2019). This shift, intensified since by subsequent events such as the 2005 London terror attacks, the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris and the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing, and linked to other factors such as increasing global flows of people, food, energy, weapons, data and disease, can be characterised as one from a state oriented to promoting and expanding social welfare to a security state ever more preoccupied by managing fear and risk, belonging and access (Gros, 2014).

Against the background of this climate of fear and the shift from a welfare to a security state, education, schools and teachers have become positioned as a key line of defence in the 'war on terror' and attendant efforts to prevent the 'radicalisation' of students. This new responsibility is embodied in what is known in the UK context as the Prevent duty which dates back to 2006, reflecting the Blair government's belief that *all* government agencies, not just the police and security forces, must contribute to countering activities deemed as terrorism under the UK's wide-ranging counter-terrorism legislation. The Prevent agenda took on renewed urgency in relation to teachers and teacher education when the then secretary of state for education, Michael Gove, announced in 2014 that schools in Britain would be required to "actively promote British values", following allegations of Muslim extremism in some schools in Birmingham and following the extension in 2013 of professional standards for teachers in England to include a new commitment to "not undermining Fundamental British Values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs" (Department for Education (DfE), 2013). The discourse of 'Fundamental British Values' has been critiqued on a number of grounds, including that they reproduce assumptions that British traditions and values are somehow superior to the rest of the world (Tomlinson, 2019); that values like democracy, tolerance and rule of law are somehow 'British' values rather than being part of a wider liberal tradition (Easton, 2022) or part of broader universal human rights discourses (Struthers, 2017); and the assumption of a consensus regarding a political model of Britishness that is rooted in values that are exclusive and excluding with difference rather than homogeneity positioned as problematic (Elton-Chalcraft et al., 2017, p. 32).

The Prevent agenda and the requirement placed on teachers and teacher educators to promote Fundamental British Values can clearly be read as instances of immunisation seeking to protect the body politic against dangerous and potentially deadly unwanted 'outside influences'. Such edicts misrecognise bolstering democracy as merely a matter of integrating and purifying the people constituting the demos – for "democracy is always about living with strangers under a law that is therefore alien. …about being mobilized into action periodically with and on behalf of people who are surely opaque to us and surely unknown to us" (Honig, 2001, p. 39). Such edicts also fail to see that "the possibility of 'We,' of communality, is granted on the basis that every familiar is ultimately strange and that, indeed, I am even in a crucial sense a stranger to myself" (Santner, 2001, p. 6). In other words, notions like Fundamental British Values (and we can add Danish and all other national values as well) are always fictions, urging us to forget or ignore the multiple complex realities constituting any polity. At the same time, in positing such fictions, the state distracts attention from the political acts of inclusion and exclusion that are inevitably entailed. For these reasons, for many teachers and members of the wider public, the assertion of an entity such as 'Fundamental British Values' is not just simplistic and reductive – the translation of cultural politics into matters of 'tea and the queen' (Vincent, 2019) – but deeply disturbing.[1] As Mari Ruti reminds us, "there is always something totalitarian about the search for an ontological foundation for group solidarity" (2015, p. 71).

In other words, the notion of Fundamental British Values is, ironically, given its appeal to the past, characterised by unreflexive disengagement with history and politics. It is a policy that evinces no sense of awareness of its enactment of what Brown (2006, pp. 19–24) describes as the 'culturalization of politics', with the excluded Other reduced to a mirror on which to project and affirm one's own self-image. This process of culturalization

14653435, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ejed.12577 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [04/10/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

is characterised by a tendency to divest Western political life of any cultural associations, while simultaneously reducing non-Western forms of politics to mere expressions of culture, thereby depoliticising them. As part of this depoliticising process, teachers are expected to carry out significant political work on behalf of the state, even as the political dimensions of this work are disavowed, including the politics involved in decisions as to where, and by whom, the lines of division between 'British' and 'non-British', inclusion and exclusion, tolerance and intolerance, are drawn.

5 | IMMUNISING TEACHER KNOWLEDGE IN A DANISH CONTEXT

> The Danish public school is also facing significant challenges. The academic standards – especially in reading and Maths – are not sufficiently high. Danish students perform on the average within the OECD in Danish, Maths and natural sciences when leaving the public school. (Danish Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 1)

Indicated in this quote is the notion that Danish students do not perform well enough – their "academic standards – especially in reading and Maths – are not sufficiently high". It is not enough to "perform on the average" as we are told as it mirrors a lack of success. Denmark cannot be world-leading, and be on the top, based on such performance. Schools and teachers must be able to realise every student's full potential - only then can Denmark "compete successfully on the increasingly international market" (p. 1), which is one of the main goals that schools must strive to realise. That said, there is a *gap* between the political ambitions to make Denmark world-leading by means of world class education and the reality in which Danish students only perform "on average". This gap is assumed to be a result of *inefficient* teacher performance, which does not correlate with excellence and quality, as well as to be a result of a lack of professional knowledge. Within today's dominant policy framework it is typical to blame "symptoms and individuals rather than broader social and political structures" and thereby "mystifies the social causes" as something that is undesirable to address (Kapoor & Zalloua, 2022, pp. 11–12). They must be taken out of 'the equation'. This means that the 'illness' (or failure) must be cured by means of a strong focus on three national objectives. In an individualising manner, it is up to the teachers to challenge all students so they can "reach their fullest potential", to reduce the significance of students' social background for academic results and "to enhance students' well-being" and positive feelings (Danish Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 18).

However, if teachers should be able to ensure that students reach and realise their fullest potential, they must possess a particular knowledge about every single student. And this must be generated by *mapping*, for example, the students' reading and maths abilities, their skills, talents and socio-economic backgrounds as well as their needs, moods, feelings, values and morals. The underlying logic behind this mapping is that it provides the teachers with a knowledge base of *who* the students are and *what* they can(not) do, which they must draw on when they plan, carry out and evaluate their work. At the same time this knowledge base must be used by teachers to spot pathological signs or symptoms that can indicate whether students seem to be at risk; for example, if they have been infected by bad ideas, habits, thoughts and feelings that might hinder them from realising their potential (Esposito, 2011; Ruti, 2018).

Put in other terms, it is of great importance that everything that can prevent teachers from realising the three mentioned national objectives should be avoided by offering teachers *prophylactic* immunisation/biopolicy strategies with a 'human face'. Such strategies are closely linked to classroom management. This is also the reason why a corps of national experts, learning consultants, has been established to guide teachers with their tasks by means of "gathered knowledge, tools and methods concerning classroom management" (Danish Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 20) and by means of best practices and good methods (p. 21).

14653435, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ejed.12577 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [04/10/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

6 | DISCUSSION

The policies highlighted in this paper are perhaps rather extreme examples of the *immunisation* metaphor in relation to education policy. Such strong examples have been purposefully used to provide provocation around the use of this metaphor in exploring the relationship between government education policy and teacher knowledge. However, it is important to mention that we have not argued that spaces of plurality have been replaced by totalitarian ones in which teachers have been deprived of their agency and autonomy to raise critical questions and to come up with alternatives to the existing order. What we claim is that critical and alternative initiatives do not correlate with the contemporary political agendas that aim to control and to limit such disorderly and undesirable things in teacher education, both in England and Denmark.

These examples particularly highlight how certain policies - England's 'Fundamental British Values' and Denmark's focus on three national education objectives – reify certain knowledge as positive, conclusive. The ways that this 'positive' knowledge gains authority – through the policy systems of dissemination and implementation they form part of – may also be explored as systems of immunisation. For these policies do not often enter teacher education programmes alone, but rather infiltrate crucial systems of knowledge-formation. For example, the Fundamental British Values discussed in this paper enter English initial teacher education programmes as part of Teaching Standards policy, which in turn becomes part of an Early Career Framework, which together form the basis of teacher education curricula and evaluation of student 'success' in learning to be a teacher. It is through these systems that policy becomes 'high stakes' in that it is reified as a measure of being successful. Juxtaposed with notions of episodic memory (Nespor, 1987), the knowledge included within policy comes to characterise (trainee) teachers' experiences, which are repeatedly filtered through the lens of the policy, in various forms (Mulcahy & Perillo, 2011). This can be seen to influence teachers' conceptualisations of their professional knowledge and identity (Hamilton, 2009), solidifying and sedimenting the additions of knowledge proposed by policy – the 'protection' against 'harmful' knowledge(s) provided by each policy.

The impact of the establishment of each policy on teacher knowledge also in each case involves an unarticulated lack – an 'other' in the sense of what is implied to be currently missing by the need for such a policy. In each case discussed in this paper, this lack was spoken to in terms of nostalgic fantasy – that a certain ideal form of life can be established if we can just recover what has been lost (McGowan, 2013, p. 39) - fundamental patriarchal values or three areas of national focus. Such fantasy supports a belief in 'uninfected' national values or education goals. However, pure values and goals without foreign interference – without the influence of the other which incited their development – are a paradoxical concept: they have never existed and never will. Still, the endless desire for returning to or finding/producing them can instil cruel optimistic forms of hope about a utopian future with a minimum of anxieties and risks, which might be one of the reasons why they have such powerful effects on today's politics (Berlant, 2011).

By their nature, policies are exclusive and speak to a marginalised other that serves as a constitutive outside to be defended against. However, in many education policies, such as the examples discussed in this paper, immunisation against the influence of a potentially harmful other enacts a backgrounding of polymorphous cultural influences which are part of the rich fibre of humanity. In the English policy context, negative knowledge spaces – the spaces of 'risk' not to be entered into – are created which hold all other values systems than those woven into statutory policy and declared as 'British'. In the Danish context, negative knowledge spaces contain a wealth of backgrounded cultural and educational assets which are, if not excluded from teacher knowledge, at least backgrounded in influence. This speaks to discourses of 'subtractive schooling' (Valenzuela, 2005) in the sense of exclusion or reduction of cultural assets – the living, breathing people of the school and its community – within education programmes and institutions in favour of standardised, politicised bases of teacher knowledge. The immunisation of policy, in this regard, proves toxic to the potential for cultural richness in our education establishments.

This exclusion, backgrounding and silencing of aspects of teacher knowledge into negative spaces surrounding the positivistic advocated policy knowledge can thus be seen as a form of *epistemic injustice*

14653435, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ejed.12577 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [04/10/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

(Fricker, 2007) in relation to the education of the teacher. For a resultant dichotomy between sound/healthy knowledge and unsound/unhealthy knowledge produced by government policy-making risks producing an imbalance and narrowing in the development of teacher knowledge. 'Healthy' knowledge presented in policy gains credence, whilst 'unhealthy' knowledge outside of this policy is excluded from the formation of teachers' conceptualisations of professional knowledge – other modes of thought and practice are rendered invisible, unthinkable and illegitimate.

7 | CONCLUSION: AGNOSTIC PRAGMATISM AS A WAY FORWARD

Government policy directives aimed at guiding and standardising the knowledge base of (teacher) education have been continual in Europe since the late 1990s. We have explored but two examples to speak to how this method of control of the developing and practising teacher favours particular forms of knowledge whilst *immunising* against knowledges excluded from the policy. We have presented these examples in light of the immunisation metaphor to highlight the potentially harmful consequences of some education policies in England and Denmark. This metaphor, we argue, is useful to conceptualise positivity and negativity in the development of teacher knowledge. For the notion of immunisation does not only have a positive, protective function; it also involves a logic of negation. Just as biological immunisation involves allowing a little of what threatens the body to transgress its protective boundaries, so too in immunising the body politic, law and language perpetrate violence in the name of protection (Esposito, 2011).

Whilst we have drawn on two controversial policies in order to best highlight our point, we argue that many more policies than the examples discussed in this paper can be seen in this light. Moves towards formalising and standardising knowledge in teacher education across Europe, underpinned by a dominant discourse of 'evidence based' policy/practice and a prevailing emphasis on 'what works' (Biesta, 2010), have led to repeated attempts to immunise the profession against unhealthy or undesirable influences that might threaten and undermine educational 'wellbeing'.

One such counter to this ideologically-driven epistemic authoritarianism that we would advocate involves a notion of 'agonistic pragmatism' (Rorty, 2021; Wenman, 2013). This approach is one that relinquishes hubristic fantasies of certainty, control and consensus and in their place offers values of openness, autonomy, pluralism and contestation. Rather than attempting the domination, subjugation, marginalisation, rejection or assimilation of the other, agonistic pragmatism "is associated with the enabling inoculation, differentiation and pluralization of life stemming from the encounter with the other as precisely that force which cannot be incorporated, that which resists an annihilating incorporation" (Lemm, 2014, p. 214). In terms of the development of teachers' professional knowledge, this approach would encourage an openness to pluralisation and diversification rather than an insistence on consistency and standardisation.

We thus suggest that teacher educators encourage teachers to engage with plurality, contingency and absence and recognise that such 'stumbling blocks' play a vital part in education (Kapoor & Zalloua, 2022, p. 17). This would offer space for teacher educators and teachers to problematise policy and consider other directions for practice – to consider the shadow economy of the policy which the latter seeks to exclude from practice; to consider this in relation to the teaching situation at hand. While this may be a far cry from the current realities of teaching and teacher education in European countries, we offer it here as a form of critique in its anticipatory mode: in the hope that the notion of immunisation will contribute to the pool of conceptual vocabularies available to teacher educators when considering the development of teachers' professional knowledge base.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Not Applicable.

14653435, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ejed.12577 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [04/10/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

ORCID

Ruth Unsworth https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4900-3590

ENDNOTE

[1] http://www.irr.org.uk/news/the-great-british-values-disaster-education-security-and-vitriolic-hate/.

REFERENCES

Agamben, G. (2021). *Where are we now?: The epidemic as politics*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Badiou, A. (2001). *Ethics: An essay on the understanding of evil*. Verso.

Ball, S. J. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, *18*(2), 215–228.

Ball, S. J. (2017). *Foucault as educator*. Springer.

Ball, S. J., Maguire, M., & Braun, A. (2012). *How schools do policy: Policy enactments in secondary schools*. Routledge.

Berlant, L. (2011). *Cruel optimism*. Duke University Press.

Biesta, G. (2009). Good education in an age of measurement: On the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, *21*(1), 33–46.

Biesta, G. J. (2010). Why 'what works' still won't work: From evidence-based education to value-based education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, *29*(5), 491–503.

Biesta, G. J. (2012). Giving teaching Back to education: Responding to the disappearance of the teacher. *Phenomenology & Practice*, *6*(2), 35–49.

Brennan, M., Carusi, F. A., Clarke, M., Heck, D., Heimans, S., Reid, J.-A., & Singh, P. (2022). What has been 'missing' or 'missed' over the last 50 years in APJTE? *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, *50*(3), 233–248.

Brown, W. (2006). *Regulating aversion: Tolerance in the age of identity and empire*. Princeton University Press.

Buchanan, R. (2015). Teacher identity and agency in an era of accountability. *Teachers and Teaching*, *21*(6), 700–719.

Carusi, F. T. (2022). Refusing teachers and the politics of instrumentalism in educational policy. *Educational Theory*, *72*(3), 1–16.

Clarke, M. (2019). *Lacan and education policy: The other side of education*. Bloomsbury.

Clarke, M., & Phelan, A. (2015). The power of negative thinking in and for teacher education. *Power and Education*, *7*(3), 257–271.

Clarke, M., & Phelan, A. (2017). *Teacher education and the political: The power of negative thinking*. Routledge.

Cochran-Smith, M., Stringer Keefe, E., & Carney, M. C. (2018). Teacher educators as reformers: Competing agendas. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *41*(5), 572–590.

Coles, R. (2016). *Visionary pragmatism: Radical and ecological democracy in neoliberal times*. Duke University Press.

Coole, D. (2000). *Negativity and politics: Dionysus and dialectics from Kant to poststructuralism*. Routledge.

Danish Ministry of Children and Education. (2018). *LifeLong Learning*. https://eng.uvm.dk/general--themes-and-projects/lifelong-learning

Danish Ministry of Education. (2013). *Aftale mellem regeringen (Socialdemokraterne, Radikale Venstre og Socialistisk Folkeparti), Venstre og Dansk Folkeparti om et fagligt løft af folkeskolen. Agreement between the Danish Government (the Social Democrats, the Social- Liberal Party and the Socialist People's Party), the Liberal Party of Denmark and the Danish People's Party on an improvement of standards in the Danish public school (primary and lower secondary education)*. https://www.uvm.dk/-/media/filer/uvm/udd/folke/pdf14/okt/141010-endelig-aftaletekst-7-6-2013.pdf

Danish Ministry of Education. (2014). *Improving the Public School – overview of reform of standards in the Danish public school (primary and lower secondary education)*. https://www.uvm.dk/-/media/filer/uvm/publikationer/engelskprogede/2014-improving-the-public-schools.pdf

Day, C. (2002). School reform and transitions in teacher professionalism and identity. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *37*(8), 677–692.

Dean, M. (2005). Policy. In T. Bennett, L. Grossberg, & M. Morris (Eds.), *New keywords: A revised vocabulary of culture and society* (pp. 258–260). Blackwell.

Department for Education (DfE). (2013). *Teachers' standards: Guidance for school leaders, school staff and governing bodies*. HMSO.

Department for Education (DfE). (2016). *Educational excellence everywhere*. HMSO.

Department for Education (DfE). (2022a). *Levelling up the United Kingdom*. HMSO.

Department for Education (DfE). (2022b). *Opportunity for all: Strong schools with great teachers for your child*. HMSO.

Easton, C. (2022). Teaching Liberal values: The case of promoting 'British values' in schools. In J. Culp, J. Drerup, I. de Groot, A. Schinkel, & D. Yacek (Eds.), *Liberal democratic education: A paradigm in crisis* (pp. 47–66). Brill mentis.

Elton-Chalcraft, S., Lander, V., Revell, L., Warner, D., & Whitworth, L. (2017). To promote, or not to promote fundamental British values? Teachers' standards, diversity and teacher education. *British Educational Research Journal*, *43*(1), 29–48.

14653435, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ejed.12577 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [04/10/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Eraut, M. (1994). *Developing professional knowledge and competence*. Routledge.
Esposito, R. (2011). *Immunitas. The Protection and Negation of Life*. Polity.
Fendler, L. (2018). Educationalization. In P. Smeyers (Ed.), *International handbook of philosophy of education* (pp. 1169–1183). Springer.
Foucault, M. (2008). *The birth of biopolitics lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, Trans. Graham Burchell: Palgrave Macmillian.
Fricker, M. (2007). *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford University Press.
Gros, F. (2014). The fourth age of security. In V. Lemm & M. Vatter (Eds.), *The government of life: Foucault, biopolitics and neoliberalism* (pp. 17–28). Fordham University Press.
Hamilton, M. (2009). Putting words in their mouths: The alignment of identities with system goals through the use of individual learning plans. *British Educational Research Journal*, *35*(2), 221–242.
Hammersley, M. (2013). *The myth of research-based policy and practice*. Sage.
Hargreaves, A., & Goodson, I. (1996). *Teachers' professional lives*. Falmer Press.
Holloway, J. (2021). *Metrics, standards and alignment in teacher policy: Critiquing fundamentalism and imagining pluralism*. Springer.
Honig, B. (2001). *Democracy and the foreigner*. Princeton University Press.
Hoyle, E. (1982). The professionalization of teachers: A paradox. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *30*(2), 161–171.
Kapoor, I., & Zalloua, Z. (2022). *Universal politics*. Oxford University Press.
Lemm, V. (2014). The embodiment of truth and the politics of community: Foucault and the cynics. In V. Lemm & M. Vatter (Eds.), *The government of life: Foucault, biopolitics, and neoliberalism* (pp. 208–223). Fordham University Press.
Liew, W. M. (2012). Perform or else: The performative enhancement of teacher professionalism. *Pacific Journal of Education Asia*, *32*(323), 285–303.
Mamdani, M. (2002). Good Muslim, bad Muslim: A political perspective on culture and terrorism. *American Anthropologist*, *104*(3), 766–775.
Mamdani, M. (2004). *Good Muslim, bad Muslim: America, the cold war, and the roots of terror*. Doubleday.
Mayer, D., & Mills, M. (2021). Professionalism and teacher education in Australia and England. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *44*(1), 45–61.
McGowan, T. (2013). *Enjoying what we Don't have: The political project of psychoanalysis*. University of Nebraska Press.
Mulcahy, D., & Perillo, S. (2011). Thinking management and leadership within colleges and schools somewhat differently: A practice-based, actor–network theory perspective. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, *39*(1), 122–145.
Nespor, J. (1987). The role of beliefs in the practice of teaching. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *19*(4), 317–328.
Oancea, A. (2014). Teachers' professional knowledge and state-funded teacher education: A (hi)story of critiques and silences. *Oxford Review of Education*, *40*(4), 497–519.
Pinar, W. F. (2008). *What is curriculum theory?* Routledge.
Pinar, W. F. (2015). *Educational experience as lived: Knowledge, history, alterity*. Routledge.
Priestley, M., Biesta, G., & Robinson, S. (2015). *Teacher agency: An ecological approach*. Bloomsbury.
Reder, T. J., & Ydesen, C. (2022). Policy borrowing and evidence in Danish education policy preparation: The case of the public school reform of 2013. In B. Karseth, et al. (Eds.), *Evidence and expertise in the Nordic education policy: A comparative network analysis* (pp. 77–114). Palgrave Macmillan.
Rorty, R. (2021). *Pragmatism as anti-authoritarianism*. Harvard University Press.
Rosa, H. (2020). *The uncontrollability of the world*. Polity Press.
Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge University Press.
Rüsselbæk Hansen, D., & Phelan, A. M. (2019). Taste for democracy: A critique of the mechanical paradigm in education. *Research in Education*, *103*(1), 34–48.
Ruti, M. (2018). *Penis envy and other bad feelings: The emotional costs of everyday life*. Columbia University Press.
Santner, E. (2001). *On the psychotheology of everyday life*. Chicago University Press.
Struthers, A. E. C. (2017). Teaching British values in our schools: But why not human rights values? *Social and Legal Studies*, *26*(1), 89–110.
Taubman, P. (2009). *Teaching by numbers: Deconstructing the discourse of standards and accountability in education*. Routledge.
Taylor, M. W. (2013). Replacing the 'teacher-proof' curriculum with the 'curriculum-proof' teacher: Toward more effective interactions with mathematics textbooks. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *45*(3), 295–321.
Tomlinson, S. (2019). *Education and race from empire to Brexit*. Policy Press.
Unsworth, R., & Tummons, J. (2021). Reassembling teachers' professional practice: An ethnography of intertextual hierarchies in primary mathematics. *Ethnography and Education*, *16*(1), 109–126.

14653435, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ejed.12577 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [04/10/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Valenzuela, A. (2005). Subtractive schooling, caring relations, and social capital in the schooling of US-Mexican youth. In *Beyond silenced voices: Class, race, and gender in United States schools*. State University of New York Press.
Vincent, C. (2019). *Tea and the queen? Fundamental British values, schools and citizenship*. Policy Press.
Wenman, M. (2013). *Agonistic democracy: Constituent power in the era of globalisation*. Cambridge University Press.
Žižek, S. (2009). *The parallax view*. The MIT Press.
Zuboff, S. (2019). *The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power*. Public Affairs.

How to cite this article: Unsworth, R., Clarke, M., & Hansen, D. R. (2023). Immunitas and (un)desirable teacher knowledge in teacher education. *European Journal of Education*, *00*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12577

14653435, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ejed.12577 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [04/10/2023]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License