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Uniting Teachers Through Critical Language Awareness: a Role for the Early Career Framework?

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ABSTRACT: *In this paper, we make initial advances towards building an argument for the inclusion of Critical Literacy Awareness within the new Early Career Framework in England. Using illustrative examples from recent research projects, we argue that post-2010 education policy has discursively divided practitioners, structuring relationships between different groups of teachers in schools as hierarchical and competitive, rather than collegial and supportive. We argue that such hierarchies may be a contributing factor to the teacher retention crisis, given that research indicates teachers working in schools with a collegial culture are more likely to remain committed and motivated. We propose that engagement with CLA may enable early career teachers to critique and resist dominant discourses which differentiate and hierarchically divide them from their colleagues, and therefore, the utility of CLA should be explored within future iterations of the Early Career Framework.*

Keywords: early career teachers, critical language awareness, education policy, England

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to set out the proposal that Critical Language Awareness (CLA) should be included in the newly-developed Early Career Framework (ECF) – an initiative in England which is intended to improve the retention of early career teachers (ECTs). This paper is focused on the situation in England, which has one of the highest rates of teacher attrition amongst OECD countries (OECD, 2021, p. 424). Approximately 30% of teachers in England choose to leave the profession within their first five years (Department for Education (DfE), 2023a). Despite repeated attempts by policymakers to improve the attractiveness of teaching over the past decade (DfE, 2019; EPI, 2021; Worth and Faulkner-

Ellis, 2022), the number of teachers across England has failed to keep pace with increasing pupil numbers (Long and Danechi, 2022). Problems with retaining teachers are also shared by many countries in the Global North; a 2012 OECD publication stated that 'teacher shortage is a significant problem in many of the summit countries' (Schleicher, 2012, p. 58).

We do not claim to be presenting a systematic analysis of empirical data in this paper; these have been presented elsewhere (Spicksley, 2022; Spicksley *et al.*, 2021). Instead, this paper is intended as a first step towards opening up discussion around the possibilities offered by CLA to enhance the professional development of ECTs. We begin by providing some context and background on the ECF and on CLA. We then share and discuss examples from two previous research projects, which together illustrate why we feel that CLA has the potential to enrich the ECF. We conclude by emphasising that further research is needed to explore how developing a critical approach to language could support new teachers in developing positive professional relationships with teaching peers.

Discussions around the content and delivery of the ECF are timely, given a recent government evaluation of the framework which has indicated – alongside successes – some key issues which require resolution. These include findings that ECTs' satisfaction with their induction through the ECF diminishes over time, and concerns that for many ECTs, the ECF involves repetition of content from initial teacher training, without further development or enhancement (IES & BMG Research, 2023). It is our belief that the introduction of the ECF has the potential to counter problems within the previous system of support for 'newly qualified teachers', which had been undermined by austerity-era cuts to local authorities and concomitant fragmentation of the English education system through the expansion of Multi-Academy Trusts (Spencer *et al.*, 2018). However, the potential of the ECF can only be realised if ECTs are provided with professional development which will enable them to thrive in the profession long-term. Consequently, wider discussions around the nature and content of the ECF are justified at this point, in order to enhance the ECF for future entrants to the teaching profession.

2. The Early Career Framework

The ECF is a two-year programme of support for new teachers in England, which was rolled out nationally in September 2021 (DfE, 2019; Inglehart, 2022), and forms a key part of the policy response addressing a high teacher attrition rate. Schools have a statutory duty to enrol ECTs on an ECF programme; schools can deliver the programme themselves, or use one of six delivery providers (Ambition Institute; Teach First; Education Development Trust; Capita, in partnership with the University of Birmingham; UCL Institute of Education; Best Practice Network).[1]

Of these six delivery providers, four are committed to Instructional Coaching, indicating the current dominance of this approach in education policy and practice.[2] Instructional Coaching (at least as deployed in the current English

context) appears to rest on a model of 'monological' mentoring, defined by Jones *et al*. (2021, p. 182) as a model in which 'the mentor is positioned as an expert who uses predetermined criteria to assess progress and provide feedback as they direct a novice towards a clearly defined goal'. For those ECTs enrolled on an ECF programme which deploys Instructional Coaching, the mentoring they experience through the ECF therefore risks positioning them as a novice rather than a colleague, and will focus primarily on 'what works' in the class-room. This positioning is suggested in marketing literature published by Ambition Institute, one of the four providers using Instructional Coaching:

> Ambition's early roll-out of the Early Career Teachers programme offered Manor Croft [Academy] a carefully sequenced curriculum with a strong focus on instructional coaching. This puts mentors […] into the role of expert, working alongside a junior colleague and helping them to identify points for improvement […] The teacher can improve their practice straight away because their mentor provides feedback that is specific and action-based. (Darwin, 2023)

Information provided to schools by Teach First – which also employs Instructional Coaching as part of its ECF offer – appears to construct a similar expert/novice relationship between the mentor and ECT:

> Mentors are experts in instructional coaching: an approach to mentoring which ensures early career teachers have concrete and actionable steps to improve. Mentors model specific techniques and approaches to teaching, and help early career teachers practice these to develop their own expertise. (Craster, 2021)

Monologic mentoring approaches are problematic as they can prevent ECTs from participating in authentic, value-driven conversations with their mentors, which are thought to 'strengthen relationships, stimulate thinking and extend understanding' (Jones *et al*., 2021, p. 184). Furthermore, as is evident from the statements of ECF providers above, Instructional Coaching is not primarily intended to facilitate the engagement of the ECT (or the mentor) in processes of critically evaluating the myriad and conflicting political, cultural, and contextual expectations placed upon teachers. The focus instead appears to be on the deliberate and repeated practise of discrete teaching skills to improve teacher efficacy (Spicksley, 2023), as recommended in Allen and Sims's influential policy-oriented polemic, *The Teacher Gap* (2018). Initial evaluations of the ECF suggest that while some ECTs and mentors have found Instructional Coaching helpful, this framework may not be appropriate for all, and some can find the structure limiting or deprofessionalising (Daly *et al*., 2022; Platt, 2022).

By focusing primarily on the classroom skills of the ECT, rather than the wider relational and discursive environment in which they are working, Instructional Coaching frameworks also risk backgrounding the importance of collegiality to teachers' working lives and careers. In general terms, collegiality is defined by Kelchtermans as 'the quality of the relationships among staff members in school', who goes on to state that 'collegial relations constitute an

important working condition for teachers and that they influence the professional development of teachers and schools' (2006, p. 221). More recently, Harris (2017) also suggests that collegiality is a crucial factor within a school setting, combining engagement of staff, a common purpose, and a shared ownership of activities. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) posit that collegiality has a fundamental effect on the morale and job satisfaction of teachers. It is accepted that teachers' professional relationships are crucial to job success and the prevention of teacher burnout (Van Maele *et al.*, 2015) and that the presence or absence of positive social relationships within schools plays an important role in teachers' decisions to leave the profession (Kelchtermans, 2017). Support from colleagues and recognition from peers as a committed practitioner can provide a necessary source of motivation and self-efficacy for teachers (e.g., Vangrieken *et al.*, 2015), as well as enabling individuals to flourish (Feeney and Collins, 2014) during challenging times. This is particularly the case with ECTs; those who report positive relationships with colleagues appear more likely to remain committed to their schools (Spicksley and Watkins, 2020).

As illustrated above, a broad literature on teachers' working lives strongly supports the notion that teacher collegiality plays a significant role in maintaining teacher commitment and motivation. It is therefore a concern that this aspect of teachers' working lives does not appear to have been adequately addressed by policymakers in response to the teacher retention crisis. Indeed – as we will go on to illustrate – political discourse post-2010 has instead deployed damaging hierarchical distinctions between teachers, engendering competition and animosity rather than collegiality. Encouraging new teachers to engage in CLA could, however, provide tools for new teachers to identify, interrogate and resist such harmful discursive practices.

3. Critical Language Awareness

In this section, we provide an overview of CLA, and make explicit our theoretical foundations. A critical approach to language, informed by poststructuralist theories on discourse, underpins our argument on the potential value of CLA as a teacher education tool. Poststructuralist theories hold that discourse both *makes available* and *limits* the social identities available to individuals (Foucault, 1982; Henriques *et al.*, 1998), and emphasise the *performative* function of language. Language is understood to impact on the beliefs, behaviours and identities of individuals, and the relationships they are able to construct with others (Butler, 2006). As such, any analysis of text should not simply attend to whether the text can be identified as true or false, but should instead map out the different knowledges and social identities which are made available to individuals through discourse (Foucault, 1981). Identity is therefore understood as being 'constructed in discourse, as

negotiated among speaking subjects in social contexts, and as emerging in the form of subjectivity and a sense of self' (Bamberg *et al.*, 2011, p. 178). The process of mapping out these discourse phenomena inevitably reveals the multiple, complex and often conflicting nature of discourse, which individuals are required to navigate when constructing their social identities (Foucault, 1982; Henriques *et al.*, 1998).

CLA is historically rooted in and associated with methods of Critical Discourse Analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis is an approach to text analysis rooted in systemic functional linguistics (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2013), which provides a linguistic approach to analysing the social impact of language. To engage in Critical Discourse Analysis is to focus primarily, and critically, on the power structures which are being constructed and reinscribed through text, and to explore the possible impact of these texts on social identities and social relationships (Fairclough, 1992). Critical Discourse Analysis is achieved through an exploration of linguistic choice, identifying how particular grammatical forms or lexical combinations imbue texts with power and political ideologies. Critical Discourse Analysis therefore refers to a process or methodology for approaching texts, which can be adopted by researchers working in the critical tradition.

CLA refers to a form of language education which is specifically focused on raising individuals' awareness of the relationship between language and power, in order to 'foster self-consciousness about how people are positioned in discourse' (Clark *et al.*, 1991, p. 46). In many applications of CLA, Critical Discourse Analysis is taught to students as the primary means by which they are enabled to increase their awareness of the ideological nature of text (Achugar, 2009; Carpenter *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, when we talk about Critical Discourse Analysis, we are talking about the analytical methods used to engage in texts using a critical linguistic approach. When we talk about CLA, we are instead discussing the pedagogies employed to make Critical Discourse Analysis methods available to students without a prior background in critical linguistics.

CLA has previously been used within teacher training courses (Bruna, 2007; Godley *et al.*, 2006, 2015; Granville, 1997; Piper, 1988) and also used as a form of Continuing Professional Development for experienced practitioners who wish to further develop their practice (Achugar, 2009; Carpenter *et al.*, 2015). Research has shown the value of CLA for practitioners working in multi-lingual classrooms, with CLA used to raise awareness of racism and colonial narratives, and to provide tools to both students and teachers to aid resistance to such discourses (Godley and Minnici, 2008; Samy Alim, 2010; Wallace, 1999). The outcomes of these projects are aligned with the aims of emancipatory pedagogies and the principles of critical educationalists such as Paulo Friere and Henry Giroux (Clark *et al.*, 1991; Minott, 2011; Pennycook, 2001; Wallace, 1999).

Research projects exploring the value of CLA in education settings are often developed with the intention of bringing about a positive impact on the social world (Kubota, 2022; Pennycook, 2022). Previous research projects offer tried and tested models which could be used to extend and enhance the current provision on offer to ECTs through exposure to CLA (Chisholm and Godley, 2011; Clark, 1992; Janks, 1999). Outcomes include observable changes in language used by individuals following engagement with CLA courses (Carpenter *et al.*, 2015; Clark, 1992), which indicates that exposure to CLA can impact on how people use language to build social relationships.

4. DISCURSIVELY DIVIDING TEACHERS

So far, we have highlighted prior research which indicates that collegial cultures and peer support amongst teachers are important factors in maintaining commitment and preventing attrition. We have also introduced CLA and discussed its potential impact on language and subjectivity. Through a Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992) of policy texts and data collected during two previous research projects conducted by the authors, in this section we seek to illustrate how the subject positionalities of ECTs have been constructed in a specific way.[3] As stated previously, the aim here is not to provide a systematic appraisal of the data, but instead to use a number of illustrative examples as a way in to discussing the potential of CLA as a tool for supporting the professional development of ECTs.

The first research project we revisit for this paper (Study A) was conducted between 2017 and 2021, and focused on the professional identities of ECTs working in Multi-Academy Trust primary schools.[4] As fieldwork for Study A commenced prior to the roll-out of the DfE's Early Career Framework in 2019, it is worth noting that ECTs in this study were defined as having up to five years of classroom experience. Study A involved two phases of data collection. The first phase involved an analysis of 363 speeches delivered by government ministers working in the DfE between May 2010 and March 2018. In the second phase, focus groups and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 ECTs and six school leaders across four primary academy schools, with a focus on the professional identities of ECTs. Of the 12 'ECTs' who took part in Study A, seven were in their first two years of teaching. The remaining five participants had between three and five years of classroom experience.

The second research project (Study B) was a qualitative study conducted in rapid response to the developing COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, between March and April 2020. In Study B, we conducted online semi-structured interviews to provide detail of individual experiences of emergency remote teaching, alongside an exploration of the accumulative, contextual issues affecting teachers' working lives. Given the rapid nature of the study, convenience sampling was employed to recruit 30 secondary and primary school teachers to the study.

The sample for Study B was intentionally heterogeneous; snowball sampling was used to recruit teachers working in a variety of roles, school types and geographical locations, and at different career stages.

In arguing that post-2010 political discourse has deployed hierarchical divides between different teacher 'types', we also lean on political analysis previously undertaken by Stanfield and Cremin (2013) and Craske (2020). These studies support our argument that rhetoric deployed by Conservative politicians post-2010 has involved distinguishing between different types of teachers, both in terms of their inherent quality and value to the education system. We intend to build on these established findings, through our argument that CLA could present an opportunity to minimise the damage caused by such distinctions to teachers' professional identities.

5. POST-2010 POLITICAL DISCOURSE AROUND INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

One of the most notable discursive distinctions employed by policymakers during the 2010–2018 period was between the quality of teachers trained through different teacher training routes. Since the 1980s, successive governments in England have legislated for the diversification of teacher training, which primarily involved shifting responsibility for recruiting and training teachers away from universities and into schools (Furlong, 2002; Robinson, 2006). Since 2010, a range of specialist teacher training schemes have been developed, with the specific intention of attracting people with certain skillsets or qualifications into teaching. These schemes have built on the success of Teach First, which was originally introduced in 2002 as part of Labour efforts to diversify teacher training (Furlong, 2013; Wigdortz, 2012). Within the policy literature, such schemes are currently distinguished from other teacher training routes as 'high-potential' teacher training routes (DfE, 2023b, 2023c). Examples include Researchers in Schools, a programme to attract PhD students into teaching at the end of their studies, which ran from 2014 to 2021 (The Brilliant Club, 2023). The number of trainees recruited through these high-potential teacher training routes remains low in relative terms. In the academic years 2021/22 and 2022/23, trainees on high-potential initial teacher training routes accounted for just 3% of the total recruits. In contrast, the more 'traditional', postgraduate routes located within Higher Education Institutions accounted for 44% of recruits (DfE, 2023b).

The wider impact of such schemes, however, should not be overlooked; their development presumes that the problem which needs addressing in teaching is the low quality of recruits entering the profession.[5] Political support for such schemes is therefore 'symbolically significant' (Furlong, 2013, p. 43). Stanfield and Cremin (2013) argue that recruits to such schemes represented three 'ideal types' of teachers: elite graduates, high flyers, and ex-soldiers. In their speeches,

Conservative education ministers repeatedly pointed to 'pioneers' working in England's state sector (Craske, 2020), crediting these individuals for disrupting established educational thinking and driving improvement across the sector, and constructing discursive distinctions between these high-quality graduates and 'ordinary teachers' (Craske, 2020, p. 289). The individuals deployed in ministerial speeches to exemplify the ideal new teacher were often young, and frequently drawn from the ranks of Teach First alumni; examples include Daisy Christodoulou and Max Haimendorf. Admittedly, such assumptions around the quality of teacher entrants were evident in the discourse of policy-makers in the previous Labour government (see Adonis, 2012; Hyman, 2005; Wigdortz, 2012), but the issue of teaching quality was arguably presented as being more complex and as requiring wider range of policy interventions between 1997 and 2010. The radical aspect of post-2010 education policy resided in its drive for 'simple solutions' to educational underperformance (Bates, 2012, p. 90), the simple solution to underperforming teachers being to recruit newer, better ones.

Arguably the most high-profile of the high-potential routes into teaching has remained Teach First, which markets itself as offering 'world-class leadership development' as part of its offer to trainees (Teach First, 2023, n.p.). Nicky Morgan described Teach First in the following terms:

> Teach First has led to a sea change in how the whole of the teaching profession is regarded and driven up standards across the education sector. Perhaps most importantly Teach First isn't just a 2-year programme, it's a way of life. I know that over half of trainees are still in the classroom after 5 years, some like Max Haimendorf and Carly Mitchell have gone on to become inspirational heads, many more are in middle leadership positions or leading new free schools. But even those of you who leave after 2 or 3 years will always remain connected to our education system - perhaps to become the academy sponsors of the future or set up a free school, perhaps to work with education charities, perhaps to return to the classroom at another point. (Morgan, 2015)

Morgan was speaking here at a Teach First event, so matters of discursive practice should be taken into account: the production of this speech will have been informed by its immediate consumers, the majority of whom were associated with the Teach First programme. However, the position calls offered to Teach First teachers in Morgan's speech remain worthy of analysis. Teach First teachers are primarily positioned as leaders within the field of education, investing teachers trained through the Teach First route with a sense that they should rapidly rise to leadership positions on account of their elite status.

It is noticeable that Morgan positions the Teach First programme itself – rather than individuals training through the scheme – as responsible for both an increase in cultural respect towards the teaching profession, and better standards 'across the education sector'. In doing so, Morgan claims that Teach First has changed common perceptions about teaching and teachers, and that the

programme has offered new social identities to teachers entering the profession. The use of such transitivity serves to construct a structural justification for the Teach First scheme, protecting it from criticisms which were emerging during this period regarding attrition amongst teachers trained on the Teach First route (Savage, 2013).

Morgan's comments should not be understood to exist in a vacuum; such constructions of Teach First have been pervasive in the language of policymakers since 2010. Speaking at a Teach First event himself, Michael Gove argued that:

> I believe we have the best generation of teachers ever in our schools, and one of the most dynamic factors behind that has been the phenomenal impact of Teach First. (Gove, 2010)

Teach First teachers have been described by post-2010 education ministers as 'making a huge difference' (Greening, 2017), as 'ensur[ing] that the calibre of teachers keeps on improving' (Gibb, 2016), and as a way to 'bring the best graduates into early years' (Truss, 2014). Despite being responsible for a small proportion of trainee teachers each year, Teach First has consistently been positioned by policymakers as playing a pivotal role in raising educational standards across England. Such language constructs a hierarchical discursive divide between ordinary teachers, and those trained through high-potential initial teacher training routes. However, to date, there has been minimal research on the reception and enactment of these discursive divisions in school settings.

6. THE PERFORMATIVE IMPACT OF 'HIGH-POTENTIAL' TEACHER TRAINING

In Study A, one of the questions posed to senior leaders was whether they had a preference over training routes when hiring ECTs. One reply to this question, from given by a CEO of a national Multi-Academy Trust, appeared to confirm that the particular discursive practices that are associated with 'high-potential' teacher training can have an impact on the professional identities that these ECTs are able to construct, and these identities can have a wider impact on staff relations:

> Teach First is a brilliant scheme [...] Teach First's scheme, when it was conceived, was all about attracting people into the education sector who previously wouldn't have ever considered it [...] the problem that it had was that it, the way it went about doing that left it open to, you know, in a lot of schools Teach First candidates piss off their colleagues because of their slightly holier than though approach. Um and their belief because it is inculcated in them that they are special [...] If you have all Teach First, teaching force, they get a bit mad, get a little bit dangerous. Just a little bit, you know. It gets a bit culty [...] it's an awful lot of contribution from the school to the professional development of that Teach First member. And when they leave, as a lot of them do, the school gets nothing for it. So they're very very high maintenance. (Multi-Academy Trust CEO, Study A)

Teach First was introduced into the research conversation by the CEO, who took advantage of the question around training routes to take interactional control of the interview and direct discussion towards Teach First specifically. This is interesting in itself, as it suggests the significant position that Teach First maintains in the discursive landscape surrounding initial teacher training, despite the relatively low numbers of trainees recruited through this route. It is notable that the CEO uses a disclaimer to introduce the topic of Teach First, by starting with the positive statement 'Teach First is a brilliant scheme'. Disclaimers are linguistic strategies which indicate accepted discursive positions, and then allow the discourse producer to take an alternative stance while maintaining legitimacy; the most famous example being 'I'm not racist but … ' (Van Dijk, 1992). In this case, the CEO foregrounds the positive, before taking a more critical stance about the impact of the programme on staff relationships in schools.

The CEO interviewed here constructs Teach First teachers as a possible destabilizing force within schools. The evaluative terms used to describe Teach First teachers include 'mad' and 'dangerous'. The language chosen by the CEO to describe Teach First trainees is repeatedly associated with religion – 'holier than thou', 'their belief' and 'a bit culty' – positioning Teach First teachers as zealots. However, blame for the negative impact of Teach First teachers on school settings is not placed upon Teach First trainees themselves, but other sources, who are not explicitly named – note the CEO's statement on 'their belief *because it is inculcated in them* that they are special', a grammatical choice which avoids specifying exactly who does the inculcating. Furthermore, the force of the evaluative terms used to position Teach First teachers is consistently lessened by the repeated use of the hedging devices 'a bit' and 'a little bit', which have an impact on the certainty of these claims. The CEO is therefore careful not to blame Teach First teachers as *individuals* for their negative impact on schools, but rather tacitly suggests their professional identities and behaviours are constructed in conversation with wider discourses around the Teach First project, an example of which would be Morgan's previously discussed speech (2015).

Research discussions with this CEO therefore revealed concerns about the impact of Teach First teachers on peer relationships within school settings. The interview suggested that, although dominant discourses in education privilege teachers recruited and trained through 'high-potential' teacher training routes, the impact of such discursive positionings has a potentially negative impact on social relationships between teachers and on the developing professional identities of ECTs trained through these routes.

7. Discourse Concerning 'Young' Teachers

Speeches made by DfE ministers in the post-2010 period repeatedly associated young teachers with character traits such as talent, energy, idealism, and school

improvement. The subject-position of the dynamic young teacher became a dominant identity positioning offered to young teachers, particularly during Michael Gove's tenure as Education Secretary. The following extracts, taken from three of Gove's early speeches as Education Secretary, highlight the privileged positioning granted to young teachers and indicate the construction of a hierarchical distinction between young teachers and experienced members of the profession:

> [Durand Academy is] already outstanding school doing a wonderful job for children in one of London's most challenging neighbourhoods has, in the last twelve months, made even more amazing strides forward [...] A new cohort of brilliant young teachers trained here – in the classroom – and transforming children's lives [...] Children enjoy brilliant teaching from gifted young professionals. We are uniquely fortunate to have the best generation of teachers ever working in England's schools today. (Gove, 2011b, n.p.)

> In America, the Charter School movement was started by idealistic young teachers who were sick and tired of the entrenched practices that were persistently failing the most vulnerable. (Gove, 2011c, n.p.)

> [A]s I've always said, I believe that the young teachers who are now entering the profession are better than any generation of teachers ever before. (Gove, 2011a, n.p.)

As discussed elsewhere (Spicksley, 2022) policymakers in the post-2010 period repeatedly asserted a distinction between young and experienced (tacitly, older) teachers. As the excerpts above show, young teachers were actively foregrounded in Gove's political speeches, described positively using evaluative adjectives including 'brilliant', 'gifted' and 'idealistic'. The use of the superlative adjective 'better' is also a clear indication of the hierarchical distinctions being constructed between different generations of teachers. In contrast, older or experienced teachers are absent, their contribution to education and school life only made identifiable in contrast to the brilliance of their younger colleagues. The distinction between young and old teachers is tacit, but presupposed because such antonyms have 'an implicitly comparative meaning' (Cruse, 2006, p. 15). These speeches offer an attractive subject-positionality to the young teacher, but as we will discuss in the next section, one which can have a negative impact on collegiality in school settings.

8. INTERGENERATIONAL TENSIONS

Study B, conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, provided clear examples of intergenerational tension in schools. An experienced secondary teacher constructed a divide between older and younger staff in their setting:

> We have two colleagues who are fairly new to teaching, I think they might be in their third year or something like that, and they're trying to amaze people with

how great they are with technology. I don't think anyone's buying it [...] I know some of [the students] have had extra sessions with the new teacher – it was naughty of him really. He's trying to impress the management by offering to go above and beyond, give extra tuition, one-to-one, take on extra responsibility, but the rest of us are fed up with it. It's going to be very hard to get over that kind of betrayal [...] We needed support and leadership and we haven't had it. What we do have are young upstarts who think they know everything about being a teacher after doing it for a few minutes! (Experienced Teacher, Study B)

By describing the new teachers as 'young upstarts', this experienced teacher constructs a clear division between young and older teachers in the school. Young teachers are described as overturning tacitly understood rules of behaviour, in order to position themselves as more valuable and hard-working than their more experienced colleagues in the eyes of school leadership and management. Such behaviour is described as 'naughty', a word which is often associated with young children and therefore emphasizes the youth and inexperience of the colleagues being spoken about. By explicitly describing these teachers as being 'new', 'young' and 'naughty', a discursive division is constructed between older and more experienced teachers at the school (who are presumed to respect professional boundaries), and a new group of younger teachers (whose ambition is positioned as a source of conflict within the school).

Such intergenerational divisions were also felt by new teachers:

The Year 3 teachers are sharing planning, preparation and activities, but I don't really like the way they do things so I'm trying to do it on my own. My mentor did say that he thought I would be better joining them but they have quite old-fashioned ideas and have been at the school for like, 10–15 years or something like that [...] There has been a reluctance to accept that I might have some good ideas and that has had a negative impact on me as a teacher [...] I haven't been supported by my peers, in fact they've tried to cut me out of year planning by ignoring my suggestions. It's all the old stuff that's rolled out year by year. Nothing new and exciting for children. (ECT, Study B)

Here, we experience this intergenerational conflict from the opposite perspective, that of an inexperienced teacher, enacting the dominant subject-position offered to him by contemporary political discourse of a dynamic young teacher driven by school improvement. However, by taking up this subject-position in their school, the teacher experiences conflict with more experienced staff.

These illustrative examples are indicative of a wider discursive theme identified during the analysis of Study B data, which centered on a perceived dissonance between different generations of teachers within school settings. In some settings, intergenerational tensions appeared to have developed into more explicit conflict between ECTs and their more experienced peers, partly as a result of pressures caused by the Covid-19 crisis. Data collected in Study B also supports wider, international research on intergenerational conflict amongst teachers (Lassila and Uitto, 2016; Rosson-Niess, 2012) and in other workplace settings (Hillman, 2014; Ho and Yeung, 2020). In England, we argue

that dominant political constructions of young teachers as being particularly valuable are a likely contributing factor to negative affect amongst both novice and experienced teachers, and consequent intergenerational tensions between staff. Discursive patterns which hierarchically divide teachers, rather than promoting collegiality amongst staff, have the potential to damage working relationships in schools; such discursive practices are a factor in the production of professional identities which minimise, rather than strengthen, collegiality amongst school staff.

9. UNITING TEACHERS AND RESISTING POLICY DISCOURSE

There is evidence that peer relationships and collegiality are considered a positive force in the daily lives of teachers. But this strength needs to be harnessed as a protective factor against the potentially negative implications of policy discourse. In addition to the technical skills, pedagogical knowledge and curriculum content delivered to developing teachers, ECTs also need to be taught how to identify, evaluate and – when necessary – *resist* problematic positionalities offered to them by and through policy discourse. When teachers uncritically accept and enact discourses which are politically expedient, but which are not grounded in the complex realities of teachers' lives and worlds, the result is division and conflict between staff in schools. This can lead to attrition by teaching staff who have not been supported to develop strong, collegial bonds with their colleagues, rooted in mutual respect and understanding (Kelchtermans, 2017; Spicksley and Watkins, 2020).

The roll-out of the ECF offers an opportunity to reappraise the place of CLA in teacher professional development. As Fairclough has argued, engaging in critical analysis of texts 'can contribute to the social imaginary, to the stock of feasible Utopias which can inform choices which people make individually and collectively' (Fairclough, 2010, p. 543). For ECTs, engaging critically with policy texts could provide an opportunity to think about the sorts of relationships which they hope to develop with their colleagues in schools, and some of the discursive barriers which might prevent these relationships from flourishing. Through the critical analysis of policy texts, ECTs can also be taught to evaluate how repeated exposure to performative discourse has an impact on their developing identities as professionals and relationships with others. Furthermore, engagement in CLA enables language users to develop awareness about the linguistic choices *they* make, as well as enhancing their awareness of the linguistic choices of others.

Efforts to improve teacher commitment should be welcomed given England's current crisis in teacher retention. However, technical aspects of classroom management are foregrounded when Instructional Coaching is positioned as the primary route to professional development. Within monological mentoring models, ECTs are not encouraged to develop skills of critical

analysis, which may facilitate their capacity to cope with the realities of becoming a teacher and the negative ways in which the profession is portrayed in the public space. This paper has provided just one example, focusing on collegiality within schools. However, including CLA into the ECF may offer further opportunities for enriching the knowledge and development of ECTs. For example, using CLA to discuss issues around inclusivity and diversity could draw from the initial uses of CLA in multi-cultural education during the 1980s and 1990s.

We hope that this paper provides a justification for further research into CLA, and more specifically its uses in teacher education and development. Without such furtherance of this issue, it is difficult to envisage how teachers at the beginning of their careers will learn to navigate the complex and varying discourses which are inherently linked to their social relationships and identities. Given the many priorities of teachers, especially those new to the profession, there is a likelihood that this crucial aspect of professional development will be overlooked in order to cope with the daily pressures of the job. It is therefore the responsibility of leaders, Governors and policy-makers to ensure that opportunities are available for new teachers to engage in CLA. We argue that it is through supporting teachers in developing a strong sense of professional self – and understanding how professional identities are produced in conversation with wider cultural discourse around teaching and teachers – that teachers can form supportive, collegial relationships which enable them to remain committed to the profession.

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13. NOTES

1   An evaluation of the ECF indicated that 95% of ECTs are enrolled on one of the six
    provider-led programmes (IES & BMG Research, 2023). This is perhaps unsurprising
    given this route is less costly and time-consuming for schools than delivering the ECF
    'in house', with or without the use of DfE-accredited materials (Ovenden-Hope, 2022).
2   UCL Institute of Education use ONSIDE mentoring and Educative mentoring
    approaches; Best Practice Network draw from ONSIDE and CEDAR mentoring
    frameworks.
3   Ethical approval for both studies was granted by the University of Worcester's College
    of Arts, Humanities and Education Research Ethics Panel (Study A approval reference
    HCA17180022(A); Study B approval reference CAHE19200028).
4   Multi-Academy Trusts are umbrella organisations responsible for the management of
    a group of schools. The move to a Multi-Academy Trust-led system in England has
    been a policy priority for successive governments since 2010 (Long and Bolton, 2016).
5   This argument was perhaps most clearly set out in Nick Gibb's infamous comment,
    reportedly directed to his colleagues in the Department of Education following his
    appointment as Schools Minister, that he 'would rather have a physics graduate from
    Oxbridge without a PGCE teaching in a school than a physics graduate from one of
    the rubbish universities with a PGCE' (Williams, 2010, n.p.).

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