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Making Sense of Teacher Education in a Globalizing World: The Distinctive Contribution of a Sociocultural Approach

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This article examines the potential of sociocultural approaches for making sense of the way in which globalization shapes teacher education policy and practice in particular contexts. It argues that the value of such approaches lies in their reframing of many conventional dualities that tend to characterize analyses of the process of globalization: dichotomies drawn, for example, between the global and the local, the micro and the macro, the material and the immaterial. It draws first on a tightly focused study of a single teacher education program to outline central tenets of sociocultural theory, before discussing aspects of a second, more wide-ranging, comparative study of the experience of learning to teach in different institutional and national contexts. The study has been chosen to illustrate how such theories illuminate the nested, interacting relationships between individuals' social situations of development and the wider institutional, national, and global contexts within which they are located.

Introduction

This article examines the potential of sociocultural approaches for making sense of the way in which globalization shapes policy and practice in particular contexts. The bases of the sociocultural perspective were established in the work of Lev Vygotsky in the Soviet Union at the beginning of the twentieth century. His ground-breaking work analyzed the links between thought and language, or more generally between "mind and society." We argue here that the distinctive contribution of sociocultural theory lies in its reframing of many conventional dualities that tend to characterize analyses of the process of

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globalization: dichotomies drawn, for example, between the global and the local, the micro and the macro, the material and the immaterial.

The central question that it addresses was stimulated by the scoping review of peer-reviewed anglophone literature on teachers, teaching, and globalization published in this journal by Sorensen and Dumay (2021). Two findings in particular provoke questions for teacher education researchers: the fact that most of the studies predominantly concerned with teacher education and learning fail to theorize the processes of globalization in any way, combined with the authors' observation that the small collection of studies that bucks this trend tend to make use of sociocultural approaches in their attempt to explain the processes of globalization actually operate to transform teacher policy and practice. Of particular interest is the fact that these studies stand out for their theoretical pluralism in terms of their explanation of globalization, perhaps precisely because of their focus on making connections between policy (as it operates at different levels) and the lived experience of individuals in specific settings.

Our article begins by acknowledging and briefly illustrating the general neglect of theories of globalization in teacher education research. We then proceed to offer our own theoretical definition of globalization, as it affects education, before setting out what we mean by a sociocultural approach. In doing so, we draw on the example of a detailed study of the impacts of globalization on a fast-track teacher education program for teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Vietnam (Dang et al. 2013). This article was chosen specifically because of its small scale and tightly focused approach—dealing with a single program in one institution—in relation to an aspect of teaching in which the forces of globalization are readily apparent: the use of English as the medium of instruction. We then seek to explain and illustrate the potential (and some of the challenges) of adopting sociocultural approaches in the context of our own comparative study of learning to teach in England and the United States (Tatto et al. 2018). Our conclusion seeks to demonstrates how a sociocultural approach lends itself to theoretical pluralism in explaining the processes of globalization: recognizing the influence of cultural context but noting the coexistence of different departmental, institutional, and national cultures nested within and interacting in diverse ways with one another; and acknowledging the critical importance of established and changing power structures, while simultaneously highlighting the transformative role of individual agents, especially when tensions and contradictions arise.

General Neglect of Theories of Globalization in Initial Teacher Education Research

Sorensen and Dumay's review analyzed 279 reports of research concerned with teachers and teaching in comparative and international contexts that were published between 1990 and 2018. At the heart of this analysis was the development of a tripartite framework, distinguishing between:

- Culture-centered approaches giving primacy to ideational factors in globalizing processes;
- Political economy–centered approaches focused on discursive and material power relations in globalizing capitalist economies; and
- Flows and systems–centered approaches, focused on policy borrowing and lending, expanding networks and connectivity. (Sorensen and Dumay 2021)

While this framework allowed them to trace the relative influence of different theories over time, their most surprising insight was the fact that 45 percent of the studies fell outside the framework, in that they did not theorize globalization at all, essentially treating it as a contextual factor that required no further explanation. This tendency was particularly marked in relation to the subset of 126 studies (67 percent of those reviewed) that dealt with "teachers' education, learning, and knowledge bases" (Sorensen and Dumay 2021).

A prominent example of the many evaluative studies that referred to globalization within a normative discourse, drawing little distinction between prescription and explanation, is the wide-ranging comparative work led by Darling-Hammond. Its recurring emphases on the "international lessons" to be drawn by teacher educators illustrates a common concern in such comparative studies with problem solving and determining policy impacts. For example, Darling-Hammond and Lieberman's (2012) intention in examining the experience of three high-performing systems in comparison with three lower-performing systems, one of which was the United States, was to provide lessons from jurisdictions elsewhere on how to achieve their own high-performing, equitable system. A similar focus is evident in the choice of Ontario and Singapore as case studies precisely because they were "most like states in the US in their size and student demographics" (Darling-Hammond et al. 2018, 227). Although the authors acknowledge that practice within any province should be understood as "nested" within the larger context of the relevant country, there is little consideration of how practice develops or moves from one national context to another. While such work does draw out important similarities and differences for consideration (and thus may be very useful to policy makers and practitioners), it tends not to expose the underlying processes of knowledge transfer and influence in a theorized manner. This is why we would describe it as being set within a normative discourse.

Yet, following Sorensen and Dumay, we would argue that being oblivious to the multiple implications of globalizing processes effectively undercuts any meaningful attempt to evaluate how problems in one system might be solved by comparing it with other systems. The capacity to make sense of policy outcomes—and so to learn from them—depends on analysis of the dynamics of the complex whole, which implies extending the analysis beyond national systems. Therefore, our aim in this article is to demonstrate how sociocultural

theory can support integrated analysis of those dynamics, within and beyond institutions and nations. It specifically examines the potential of sociocultural approaches to make sense of teacher education policy and practice within a globalizing world, with particular reference to its application in undertaking comparative study.

Theorizing Globalization within Teacher Education

Marginson and Dang (2017) define globalization simply as a term to describe "the processes of world convergence and partial integration" but then go on to note both the persistence of the nation state and its continued—and substantial—influence on education policy. This apparent paradox also lies at the heart of how Rizvi and Lingard (2010) approach the topic of globalization, building on the work of Appadurai (1996), to refer to the idea of "vernacular globalization" in education. This term—which is just one part of their wider analysis—captures the way in which national histories and cultures interact with global pressures toward convergence, resulting in idiosyncratic combinations that perpetuate diversity in educational provision. It also serves to remind us of the enduring significance of "context sensitivity" in comparative studies of education (Crossley and Watson 2013). The particular approach taken to teacher education in different nations is a very powerful illustration of these interactive processes. As education policy makers have become increasingly sensitive to the economic significance of schooling, so they have been led to understand that one key determinant of educational success is the quality of teaching (Barber and Mourshed 2007; see also Coffield 2012). Thus, in the words of Cochran-Smith (2016), teacher education has become a "policy problem," which governments around the world have felt compelled to address very directly. But the specific nature and effects of their interventions have varied considerably, shaped both by existing systems and cultural values. This has made teacher education systems key indicators of what is seen to be important in education policy: the ways in which they are constructed, defined, governed and managed have become highly symbolic features of contemporary societies. In seeking to explain how change happens through the relationship between individuals and their social situations of development, a sociocultural approach requires researchers to pay attention both to the power of the symbolic tools that mediate this relationship and to influence of past experience on both the individual and the global, national and institutional contexts in which they are embedded. It is therefore unsurprising to find that explanations of globalization within a sociocultural framework exhibit theoretical pluralism, bringing the ideational factors that feature in culture-centered approaches together with the emphases on power relations that feature in political economy–centered approaches, while identifying the specific points of connection creating the networks through which specific ideas and practices travel and are transformed.

Application of Sociocultural Theory to Globalization in Teacher Education

Marginson and Dang (2017), who have led pioneering work in the application and adaptation of sociocultural theory to examine the impact of globalization in education, highlight the power of two key concepts that originate in the work of Vygotsky: his recognition of the role of mediating artefacts in thought and its development; and his insistence that current ways of thinking and acting, at an individual and at a societal level, can only be fully explained with reference to the past—that is, by considering their genesis over time.

The idea of mediation challenges deterministic theories of human behavior as an inevitable response to particular external stimuli while also acknowledging that behavior is not entirely governed from within. Just as physical tools can be used to bring about changes in the natural world, so psychological tools, which Vygotsky referred to as "signs," can be used to influence both the mind and behavior of others, and of oneself. The most important of those psychological tools is language, but their range is vast and encompasses all those artefacts dependent on language or visual symbols that have been generated to "prompt or modulate action" (Bakhurst 2009, 199). As Marginson and Dang explain, "a Vygotskyan inquiry into global effects is distinctive in that it focuses on the identity of global artefacts. It focuses on the manner in which artefacts feed imagining, regulate social behaviors, and transform social environments; and it lodges the inquiry in a reflexive historical-cultural setting. If, as Vygotsky argued, artefacts and our use of them, shape human evolution, an inquiry into the distinctive artefacts associated with globalization has much to tell us about our trajectory" (2017, 127).

The framing of teacher education as a "policy problem" (alluded to above) serves as an example of one such psychological tool operating at a global level, as do the outcomes of international surveys conducted by the OECD, such as TALIS and PISA, which feed into this narrative. Another such tool, widely invoked to galvanize action in response to the problem, is the concept of partnership (between schools and universities), although attempts to unpack its shifting meaning quickly demonstrate the importance of attending to its genesis over time.

The "genetic method" as originally elaborated by Vygotsky encompassed four domains (Wertsch 1985, 27). Since the first of these was concerned with change over time at the level of the human species (i.e., natural evolution), only three are relevant to an explanation of the processes of globalization: change experienced within the social settings of human activity (the cultural historical domain), change within the lifespan of individuals (the ontogenetic domain) and changes at the level of immediate, everyday events (the microgenetic domain).

A sociocultural approach seeks to make sense of teaching and learning practices by locating them within their particular social and cultural contexts, acknowledging the histories within each of the different domains that shape their development (Alexander 2000). It also recognizes reciprocal influences,

arguing not merely that globalizing processes interact with national and institutional cultures to shape individuals' experience; but that individuals, shaped by their personal histories, respond in particular ways to the cultures they encounter and thereby also contribute to shaping those cultures. To demonstrate how such an approach overcomes the duality between the global and the local we first examine a study of globalization processes conducted in a single national context, focused on the training of EFL teachers in Vietnam (Dang et al. 2013).

A Single Case Study Illustrating the Theoretical Pluralism Generated by a Sociocultural Approach

Extensive use of English as a medium of instruction in Vietnam and the establishment of an elite, fast-track EFL teacher education program, taught by lecturers mainly trained overseas, constitute powerful evidence of the extent to which the context chosen by Dang and colleagues had been shaped by the forces of globalization. Like Darling-Hammond, the research team was keen to provide insights that could "inform programs for preservice teachers"—specifically, in this case, producing qualified teachers able to act as "active agents in implementing the national language education plan" (Dang et al. 2013, 66). However, their approach was more closely aligned with the premise that improvement depends on first establishing a deep-rooted understanding of how globalization is impacting on practice.

To achieve that understanding, Dang et al. (2013) drew explicitly on the dialectic between the individual and society that lies at the heart of sociocultural theory. According to Vygotsky (1978), the process of using tools, such as language, to shape our environment changes not only that environment but also the individuals who engage in that process. In order to examine how English was used as a pedagogical tool within the EFL teacher education program and how it was adopted by the preservice teachers as they engaged in the program—a process of appropriation that always involves localization, adaptations, and modifications (Newell and Connors 2011)—Dang and colleagues drew explicitly on Vygotsky's "genetic method" (1981, 156), which, as discussed above, highlights the historical influences on practice. They examined not only the "cultural historical" context of the program's development but also the ontogenetic domain—that of the individual's life over time—including the course participants' previous experiences of English language learning and teaching, as well as the "microgenetic" domain of the participants' day-to-day practices within their 15-week professional placement.

In examining the interplay between context and individual, each shaped by their particular histories, Dang et al. (2013) also recognized that context needs to be understood as operating simultaneously in—and interacting with—different spatial dimensions: local, national, and global. This insight was derived from Marginson and Rhoades' (2002) concept of the "glonacal heuristic": the understanding that each context is not simply nested within

another, with influences passed, for example, from the global to the national or from the national to the local but rather that each interacts simultaneously with the others: "The genetic method has explanatory power by focusing on the historical dimensions and creating links between different domains of development. The glonacal agency heuristic provides an analytical tool to identify different layers, local, national and global, that intertwine the genetic domains" (Dang et al. 2013, 144).

Use of this combined framework required a research design that took a historical approach to policy analysis and institutional development, as well as to the experiences of individual preservice teachers and their lecturers, most of whom had previously studied and/or taught abroad. National policy documents and institutional program documentation needed to be examined in conjunction with semistructured interview data that explored participants' personal histories. In turn, these two dimensions each had to be related to participants' professional decision making, which was examined through a spaced sequence of five more semistructured interviews with each of the 20 preservice teachers, related on every occasion to an observed lesson.

Analysis revealed traces of the global in both the local and national dimensions of activity, illuminating the fact that while language policy might be determined at the *macro* level by national and political agendas, what happens at the *micro* level is not an automatic translation of that top-down policy into practice. The active agendas of the actors themselves have an important influence. With easy access to technology within the university and a dearth of local high-quality resources, the preservice teachers tended, for example, to look for authentic audio and video material in English to use in their classrooms. Direct exposure to globalization through internet access and their own previous travel abroad meant that a commitment to developing effective communication came to assume a higher priority than examination success, thus appearing to override the local influence of Vietnam's exam-oriented culture.

It is apparent from this study how a sociocultural framework results in what Sorensen and Dumay (2021) categorized as a "pluralist" approach to the explanation of globalization. It seeks to consider the main tenets of each of the theoretical clusters identified in their tripartite framework. While competitive pressures within the international economic and political arenas can be seen to have driven the national language policy and the introduction of fast-track EFL teacher education programs, profound cultural influences, such as respect for teaching as a noble profession, exert an important influence in attracting qualified graduates. Flows of various kinds, including those of people, of knowledge and communications, and of technology—identified respectively by Appadurai (1996) as "ethnoscapes," "mediascapes," and "technoscapes"—are also evident, operating at institutional and individual levels to shape the aspiring teachers' objectives and classroom practices.

Refining Sociocultural Methodology for a Two-Nation Study of Initial Teacher Education

So far we have used the detailed case study constructed by Dang et al. (2013) to illustrate the explanatory power of the application of sociocultural theory to a single contextualized study of globalization in teacher education. Dang and colleagues encapsulated the historical and diverse experiential dimensions by combining Vygotsky's genetic domains with Marginson and Rhoades's (2002) glonacal heuristic to yield rich insights into how globalization was happening across the local, national, and global contexts within which a particular teacher education program was situated. The depth and rigor of their analysis was facilitated by the focus on a single program and becomes more challenging to achieve within a comparative study of different institutional and national contexts. The more recent comparative study to which we now turn—an examination of learning to teach in England and the United States (Tatto et al. 2018)—illustrates the complexities of examining each genetic domain in relation to the others in two different countries. Although our study was not specifically focused on explaining the processes of globalization, our intention here in elaborating the research design and the theoretical framework that underpinned it is to demonstrate the potential of a sociocultural approach in providing such an explanation. Our discussion of the process of analysis also makes it clear why, in our reporting of the study, we dealt predominantly with the personal, institutional and national dimensions rather than deliberately focusing on the processes of globalization. This research was conducted at a point (2014–15) when teacher education in both England and the United States had been subject to high levels of diversification and marketization, driven partly by economic imperatives to combat teacher shortages and partly by ideological hostility to university involvement in the professional education of teachers (Menter et al. 2019; Tatto and Clark 2019). In addition to seeking to encompass the range of new partnership models generated by the diversification of training routes, we were also attempting to look beyond the narrow focus of many comparative studies on learning to teach "STEM" subjects, by focusing on beginning teachers of history/social studies, English, and modern foreign languages, each learning in the context of different subject departments.

Acknowledging the Nested and Interacting Structure of Practices at Different Levels

As in the work by Dang et al. (2013), our adoption of a sociocultural approach, reflected our interest in the constant dialectical interplay between the macro, meso, and micro levels of teacher education:

- The macro element of the national policies and practices of teacher education in England and the United States;
- the meso element of historically and culturally defined practices within specific institutions (e.g., universities and schools);

- and the micro element of individual motives and activities (university staff, schoolteachers, and preservice teachers).

Such an approach requires more than adopting a nested structure, although that was our first step. We began with analysis of the global trends most evident in the teacher education policies of England and the United States and an examination of those national contexts in order to locate the institutional members of particular teacher education partnerships within them. This then enabled us to begin to understand the specific institutional decisions made by particular universities and schools working in partnership before seeking to make sense of the way in which individuals, each with their own histories, negotiated those diverse contexts. The next step was to develop a way of analyzing individuals' experience that retained an effective focus on the multiple contexts in which that experience was embedded and the multiple lenses through which it was refracted, allowing us to identify how individuals' decisions and subsequent actions served, in turn, to shape those environments.

Two conceptual tools were important in this process. First, we gave consideration to student teachers' "social situations of development" (specifically within a partnership program involving collaboration between a university and local schools), using an adapted version of Hedegaard's (2004, 2012) framework of "planes of analysis," what she refers to as entities, processes, and dynamics. This approach had been developed within the traditions of the particular strand of sociocultural theory known as cultural historical activity theory to analyze the dynamic relations in child learning and development but was subsequently applied by Edwards (2010) to professional learning. Second, a distinctive element was our concern to go beyond a focus on the psychological forces within institutional practices that shape the process of learning and to examine the particular forms of pedagogic discourse that operate within educational institutions. In order to do this, we created a framework that integrated Hedegaard's planes of analysis with Bernstein's sociological analysis of knowledge production. We now demonstrate how we developed this framework.

Student Teachers' Social Situations of Development

The Vygotskyan concept of the individual learner's "social situation of development" is used in sociocultural theory to acknowledge the way in which the mechanisms of individual psychological development (behavior and consciousness)—the ontogenetic domain—are rooted in the societies and cultures in which they are embedded. Vygotsky (1998) argued that development involves periods of crisis as the learner encounters contradictions between their own psychological development and the demands of the learning situation. When there is a clash between the personal and the social, a person, through interaction with others, can begin to envisage things in a new way. As

beginning teachers seek to translate their domain-specific expertise into the subject pedagogy required to teach young people, the transition they undertake—described by Crafter and Maunder (2012) as a negotiation between the individual and the social contexts they inhabit—is complicated by the fact that they face at least two social situations of development: their positions as learners within the academic environment of a university and as aspiring practitioners within the professional context of their placement schools. This negotiation is dynamic: while learners develop within particular social contexts, with their learning mediated by the social relations they encounter, they are also part of that context and bring their prior experiences and understandings to their learning.

Planes of Analysis

Working within the tradition of cultural historical activity theory which takes historically changing collective activity systems as its prime unit of analysis, Hedegaard (2012) developed a framework (table 1) involving the three inter-related planes of entity, process, and dynamic as a means of exploring the interplay between the object motives of individuals and the societal and cultural demands of the setting.

In drawing on this framework, we acknowledged Daniels' (2008) argument that, in itself, it lacks the capacity to explain both institutional practices and the particular forms of pedagogic discourse that operate within educational institutions. We therefore turned, for a language of description, to sociological work on knowledge structures and societal practice. Bernstein (1990) argued that institutional pedagogic discourse is produced through three hierarchically related fields concerned respectively with (i) the production of specialized knowledge (the province of universities and research institutes); (ii) the recontextualization of specialized knowledge (the responsibility of departments of education, teacher education and education journals); and (iii) reproduction—the teaching of knowledge (undertaken by schools, colleges, and universities). Bernstein believed that in the case of schools: "Pedagogic discourse is a principle for appropriating other discourses and bringing them into a special relationship with each other for the purposes of their selective transmission and acquisition" (Bernstein 1990, 183–84). He also established

TABLE 1
HEDEGAARD'S PLANES OF ANALYSIS

Entity	Process	Dynamic
Society	Tradition	Societal needs/conditions
Institution	Practice	Value motive/objectives
Activity setting	Situation	Motivation/demand
Person	Activity	Motive/intentions
Human biology	Neurophysiological process	Primary needs

SOURCE.—Hedegaard (2012, 19).

that pedagogic discourse is made up of regulative discourse—the dominant values of a society that regulate how knowledge is transmitted—and instructional discourse, or the way that knowledge is transmitted. In turning to Bernstein, we thus sought to acknowledge the importance of power relationships, operating within, as well as between, Hedegaard's planes of analysis.

Bernstein (2000) distinguished between "horizontal discourse," mundane or everyday knowledge that is context specific, and esoteric or "vertical" discourse—the "unthinkable" or "yet to be thought" (30). Here knowledge becomes potentially transformational and can "become (not always) a site for alternative possibilities, for alternative realizations between the material and immaterial" and can "change the relations between the material and immaterial" (Bernstein 2000, 31). To capture this distinction and its transformational possibilities, we therefore refined Hedegaard's planes of analysis to incorporate Bernstein's sociological analysis of pedagogical discourse, allowing us to analyze the contradictions and alignments in student teachers' teaching practices and their reflections on subject pedagogy and learning. The framework we developed, set out in table 2, directed attention to the macro, meso, and micro elements of learning to teach through a combined focus on: the cultural and historical demands on the student teacher; their motives and engagement within the particular activity setting; and their pedagogic practice and discourse. At the macro level, the level of national policy, the cultural and historical demands are societal and focus on the performance of teachers and pupils, the standards that regulate teachers, and the production of knowledge. It is at this level that the influence of globalization is most apparent, with performativity, network governance and related neoliberal features being readily detectable (Ball and Junemann 2012). At the meso level, these demands are reinterpreted and recontextualized at institutional levels, within the activity settings of schools and universities. At the micro level they are concerned with

TABLE 2
Social Situations of Development in Initial Teacher Education

Cultural and Historical Demands	Motives/ Engagement	Pedagogic Practice	Pedagogic Discourse
Societal	Student/teacher performance	Teacher standards	Knowledge production: theory, research
Institutional/activity setting	Values	Contextual rules and practices	Recontextualization of knowledge
	Context	Structures and support	
	History		
Individual transitions	Beliefs	Planning	Recontextualization of knowledge
	Context	Classroom teaching	
	History	Reflection	

Source.—Developed with reference to Bernstein (1990, 183–84) and Hedegaard (2012, 19).

the individual transitions involved in the recontextualization of knowledge in learning to teach.

Sampling Decisions: The Impossibility of Examining Every Level in Detail

In terms of the capacity of a sociocultural approach to deal with the processes by which globalization occurs, its commitment to understanding learners' social situations of development alerts researchers to all the forces that shape the contexts in which individuals' learning occurs. These include the influences that learners themselves exert upon those contexts, since the relational processes operate in two directions. Within each social situation of development, relationships change as novices "take in what is culturally valued, consequently interpret their social worlds differently and therefore act in and on them in newly informed ways, which in turn impact on the social situations" (Edwards 2010, 64). In this sense, learners are active participants in their own learning, being both changed by social situations and renegotiating them.

Our sampling decisions illustrate how acknowledgement of this interplay requires researchers to adopt a selective focus. Just as Dang et al. (2013) chose to focus on the analysis of a single program, so we opted to begin our international comparison with just one university in each country (University of Oxford and Michigan State University) both of which had been working within long-standing university-school partnerships. Our interest in the micro-level of individual experience, alongside the meso level of each institutional context, then prompted us to examine practice in just four schools in the case of Michigan and two in the case of Oxford. The smaller sample at Oxford reflected the fact that both of these partner schools were simultaneously operating three distinct forms of teacher education program, reflecting the recent diversification of training routes. For reasons of space, it is on these English cases that the ensuing discussion focuses, although many similar processes were also apparent in the US cases.

Two dominant characteristics of initial teacher education in England at the time were apparent: (i) a rapid diversification of routes into teaching, to facilitate what the policy makers saw as "consumer" choice (for prospective teachers and their subsequent employers) and to stimulate competition intended to drive up standards; and (ii) a profound antipathy toward university involvement in "training" for a profession represented within government policy either as a "craft" (Gove 2010) most effectively learned through an apprenticeship model, or as a straightforward form of technical expertise, to be routinized and fine-tuned with practice (Menter et al. 2019). Within these conceptions, the only place for academic expertise was assumed to be in teachers' mastery of subject knowledge—an assumption that explains the simultaneous emphasis within national policy on the quality of graduate recruits to teaching, an emphasis that had found expression in the rapid expansion of a third

kind of partnership: Teach First, inspired by Teach for America (see Rauschenberger 2021). The national significance of this employment-based program, run by a charitable organization drawing on private sector sponsorship, prompted the inclusion in our study of one additional school (located in London) and the two universities that provided support for its "participants."

Our final sample in England consisted of 26 participants, selected across five curriculum areas, allowing us to compare individual and institutional assumptions about the nature of particular subjects and the implications of those assumptions for the recontextualization of subject knowledge and the development of subject-specific pedagogy. The inclusion of these particular individuals at the micro-level followed our institutional choices at the meso level, which in turn reflected and permitted contextualized examination of specific policies in two national contexts. Within those national contexts a dominant neoliberal political economy was readily apparent, alongside specific kinds of policy borrowing, complete with distinctive and deliberate local adaptations, informed in large part by neoconservative assumptions that challenge easy assumptions of isomorphism. Our decisions about the range of data needed thus acknowledge the competing reform debates that Anderson-Levitt (2003) identified as calling into question, or at least complicating, assumptions about a world culture of schooling.

The Range of Data Required

The forms of data that we collected reflect a similar range to that found in the work of Dang et al. (2013), combining interest in the interaction between different levels (the spatial dimension) with an appreciation of the way in which each has been shaped by their past histories (the genetic or historical dimension, in Vygotskyan terms). We drew first on documentary analysis of national and institutional teacher education policies and on secondary analysis of their historical development before examining program handbooks to map out, at societal and institutional levels, the cultural and historical demands and motives for engagement as well the pedagogic practices and discourse within which all the individual transitions took place. We then used videos of observed lessons and associated interview and questionnaire data to create summary accounts of the ways in which each student teacher, in that specific instance, recontextualized subject knowledge for their pupils, through the processes of planning, teaching, and evaluation and of how those processes were related to the particular context in which they were placed; to their declared beliefs about teaching and learning; and to previous teaching or learning experiences that they cited as influential. By bringing all these data together in a single table we were able to examine the extent of alignment between each cell, vertically and horizontally, identifying the tensions or contradictions that arose for each individual in light of the prior experiences and assumptions that they brought into the process of learning to teach within a unique, culturally and

historically determined, institutional context. These contexts could in turn be related to the national (macro) and global influences as we discuss below, facilitating analysis of both the temporal and spatial dimensions.

Our interest in the extent of alignment derives from Vygotsky's dialectical conception of potential development, in which opportunities for learning arise within a social situation specifically created by the experience of tension or contradiction that occurs when there is a lack of alignment between the ideal and the reality. Such a lack of alignment may reflect contradictions between ideas and practices espoused by the individual and those promoted by one or more of the institutions within which they are seeking to learn; or between those of the two institutions; or they may arise from internal contradictions such as the ambition to improve despite the constraints of the social situation. While contradictions may create an opportunity for development, whether change—or learning—actually happens (and the nature of that learning) depends on individuals' recognition of the limitations of their current situation and their ability to imagine a different role for themselves as teachers. Whether such development occurs depends on the tools available to the individuals concerned; both those tools derived from their previous experience and those made available to them through the institutions in which they seeking to learn: their placement school and its university partner.

Constraints of space preclude discussion of the different patterns of alignment observed and of how the opportunities for development that they created were, or were not, effectively exploited. But analysis of where contradictions occurred and of the extent to which they were acknowledged and addressed allowed us to identify the critical mediating role played by certain actors, most obviously the school-based mentors, and the importance of the mentoring tools that they used. The main implications that we drew related to the nature of the relationship between schools and universities and the extent to which it was conceived as a pedagogical partnership. The specific findings on which we focus here, all taken from the English context, have been chosen to illustrate how a sociocultural focus on the beginning teachers' distinctive social situations of development illuminated the way in which global trends were experienced within specific institutional contexts.

Global Influences as Reflected in School Cultures

Our first illustration relates specifically to those trainees whose observed practices and assumptions (revealed explicitly and implicitly in their reflections on lessons) were all closely aligned with those of their placement schools but diverged from particular emphases in their universities' curriculum programs. In most of these cases the observed lessons were essentially dominated by activities related to assessment—either giving feedback on previous practice of examination questions or preparing students to tackle particular kinds of questions. The dominance of a performative culture (in which pupil and

teacher success is judged by public examination performance) was evident in all the school contexts, encouraging deliberate "teaching to the test." Other common characteristics included tendencies for trainees to: follow "scripted" activities in lessons, overlooking potential opportunities for pupil learning generated by questions or difficulties; categorise pupils in terms of their perceived "ability levels"; discuss the teaching and learning in generic terms, with limited reference to aspects of subject pedagogy. The emphasis within the institutional culture of schools on the global currency of performance as defined in relation to specific standards (in this case public examination results) made regular rehearsals of that performance a routine practice that went essentially unchallenged in some contexts, and was rarely resisted in others.

Yet, the particular kinds of performance valued within the assessment regime were not always those that might be expected within the apparently prevailing neoliberal ethos. Paradoxically, as Robertson (2016) has explained, the pedagogical assumptions of international actors such as the OECD have tended to emphasize constructivist approaches, consistent with emphases on the role of individuals as active, entrepreneurial agents, and to recognize the value of "social knowledge" as opposed to "disciplinary or scientific knowledge" (Rata 2012) as appropriate preparation for the globally competitive knowledge economy. In many cases these assumptions were entirely at odds with the practices promoted in relation to the public examinations being introduced in England at the time of the study. Not only were the content demands, as they related to substantive knowledge, being intensified through government definition of new assessment criteria, they were also being more narrowly defined, as exemplified in the range of "set texts" to be studied in English. In this respect, the promotion of particular kinds of performance is best described as "neoconservative" in its pursuit of a form of cultural restorationism (Ball 2008). Policy borrowing was clearly evident, for example, in explicit government references to the work of E. D. Hirsh, credited within the United States as key influence behind the Common Core State Standards Initiative (see Gibb 2015) and certainly tied to the standards agenda, but it was of a rather different kind to that promoted by global bodies such as the OECD.

Examining the extent of alignment revealed another important way in which the neoliberal principles of a competitive market, as expressed through diversification of training routes, shaped practices in schools and the decisions that trainees made when faced with contradictions between the advice offered by school mentors and university-based tutors. Within the new partnership models recently introduced to promote "school-led" models of partnership, the fact that the trainees had applied to the school (rather than the university) for their place on the teacher training program and had spent their first week in school, before the university term began, meant that their sense of allegiance to the school and acceptance of its practices as "the norm" tended to be stronger than that of their peers who had applied through the traditional

route. As Vygotsky's acknowledgement of the ontogenetic domain would suggest, the trainees' prior engagement with a specific school exerted an important influence on their interpretation of subsequent experiences.

Global Influences as Reflected in University Cultures

Given that similar global policy discourses must be presumed to have influenced the practices of universities, the question arises as to why they played out in ways that often contributed to a lack of alignment with the schools' perspectives, reflecting competing object motives. One answer lies in the fact that universities too were subject to a performance agenda, in which quality was measured against defined standards. While one of those systems of measurement—the Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) inspection regime—was the same as that applied to schools, its emphasis (at that time) on the quality of trainees' teaching as the outcome measure, meant that it was not the course programs that were subject to scrutiny, merely the trainees' practice. There was thus no obligation to be seen to promote particular kinds of pedagogy; university tutors were free to explore alternative ways of thinking about the recontextualization of subject knowledge. Another answer lies in the fact that the other standard against which research-intensive universities were judged was the Research Excellence Framework (REF), in which research activity and its impact are most highly prized (Menter et al. 2012). This created a major incentive for university-based tutors to engage assiduously in, and with, educational research and to promote its use in evaluating suggestions for practice, including those advanced by policy makers and modelled by practitioners in school. In its emphasis on the quality of the "research environment" within each university, and the impact (in any geographical context) of the research produced, the REF also encouraged academics to build their own international networks, directly engaging with policies and practice promoted and enacted elsewhere.

The influences of diversification and the nature of the market introduced within teacher education could not, however, be ignored, although it is important to note that this was not a "free" market in which trainee teachers as "consumers" could genuinely choose their preferred route. It had been engineered to restrict the number of places allocated to long established "university-led" programs, with the explicit intention of ensuring that at least half of all new teachers in a given year were trained through the new "school-led" routes. Thus, despite the fact that traditional partnerships filled the available places more effectively than did school-based routes, they were obliged to collaborate with local school-centered schemes in order to ensure the survival of their programs.

In these examples, we again see evidence of the "cross-currents" to which Anderson-Levitt (2003) referred in showing how classroom-based ethnographic studies call into question claims by world culture theorists of trends toward a

common model of schooling. An emphasis on standardization, for example, which was reflected most obviously in intense testing regimes in schools, coexisted with decentralizing tendencies such as the neoliberal market-based approach to teacher supply. Moreover, even the same reform agendas could result in very different outcomes: the emphasis on accountability and performance-based management, when applied to the two different kinds of institution promoted different frames of reference for determining the most appropriate kinds of pedagogy.

Conclusion

Our main objective within this article has been to demonstrate the potential of sociocultural approaches to make sense of teacher education policy and practice within a globalizing world. It is precisely because it focuses attention on the nested entities that constitute the social situations of development shaping and shaped by the individuals learning to teach within them, and because it acknowledges how those individuals are influenced by their own particular histories, that sociocultural theory provides a powerful framework for examining interaction between the individual, the institutional, the national and the global. As Marginson and Dang argue, Vygotsky's thought "applied in the context of global spatiality" provides a "useful framework for drawing macrohistorical changes and world relations together with changes at the level of individuals in society: in their modes of thought, imagined possibilities and agency freedoms" (2017, 127).

Our discussion of two examples of the theory in use—one with a very deliberate focus on how the processes of globalization play out (within a single teacher education program) and another with a more general interest in the experience of learning to teach in different institutional and national contexts—also reveals that sociocultural approaches will, inevitably, tend to display the theoretical pluralism that Sorensen and Dumay (2021) found researchers using to account for globalization. Precisely because sociocultural approaches promote the collection of different kinds of data relevant to each spatial dimension, they lead to acknowledgement not only of the economic and political forces operating at national and institutional levels, but also of the ideational or cultural forces that shape particular institutional responses. Crucially, they also recognize the life histories and agency of individuals that shape the microgenetic transitions that happen in the processes of learning to teach. As Dang et al. (2013) demonstrated, influential ideas about effective teaching may derive not only from economic policy imperatives in a competitive international market but from the lived experiences of individual university lecturers who have traveled and studied abroad. Where that personal experience is supported by online networks and direct internet access to appropriate materials, it can carry sufficient weight to challenge even a

deep-rooted, local culture. As our own study demonstrated, questions of alignment and nonalignment across the different levels of experience show how tensions and contradictions can influence behaviors and responses within teacher education settings. These influences include some that clearly emanate from a global level, such as the neoliberal emphasis on accountability systems, and some that reflect narrower forms of policy borrowing, such as the UK government's interest in particular forms of cultural restorationism promoted within the United States. But these wider policy influences are moderated and transformed by particular institutional priorities, shaped in turn by their histories and their relative power and status, in relation both to national governments and to one another. An understanding of power relationships remains fundamental to policy analysis, but sociocultural theory specifically alerts us to the points of contradiction experienced in practice. It focuses our attention on how those tensions are mediated, thus reminding us of the agency of diverse local actors and the different horizons of action within which they operate. We are reminded of the significance of tools and artefacts—most notably the languages of policy, pedagogy, and practice—in the processes of communication that connect the different spatial and temporal dynamics of teacher education and the ways in which these shape the lives and experiences of these actors, whether they be policy makers, researchers, or practitioners.

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