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# **Mrs Thatcher's first flourish: organic change and the fate of the colleges of education**

## **Abstract**

This paper revisits the abolition of the colleges of education in England and Wales, specialist providers of teacher training which were effectively eradicated in the years after Margaret Thatcher's 1972 White Paper *Education: A Framework for Expansion*. Its central argument is that the way in which change was enacted thereafter represented a significant break with the model of policymaking which had held sway since the end of World War Two. Whilst more far-reaching change would come after Mrs Thatcher's 'conversion' to neoliberalism later in the decade, the fate of the colleges of education was, I argue, an important if largely overlooked episode in the history of education – especially in terms of violating the collaborative relationship between central government and local authorities which had, until that point, dominated education policy in post-war Britain.

**Key words:** colleges of education; Mrs Thatcher; organic change

## **Introduction**

In England a complex range of organisations provide education and training for adults and young people over the minimum school-leaving age. These include school sixth forms, sixth-form colleges, further education (FE) colleges and specialist institutions catering for subjects such art and design or land-based studies, or those serving certain groups of students, for example, adult learners or those with special educational needs. There are, in addition, thousands of voluntary and private sector providers which mainly specialise in particular forms of work-related learning (Simmons, 2009). There are also 130 'public sector' universities and university colleges, and over 200 FE colleges offering some form of higher education (HE). There are moreover currently 122 'alternative' HE providers in England, which vary significantly in terms of size and remit (HEFCE,

2015). Many of these organisations may soon be able to call themselves universities, and the intention is to encourage further diversity through drawing more profit-making and charitable bodies into the fold (DBIS, 2016). The English system of post-compulsory education (if indeed system is the correct term) is complicated and difficult to understand – both for the population in general and many of those studying or working in further and higher education. It is, however, often forgotten that a whole set of HE institutions was once abolished by the state: the colleges of education.

The fate of the colleges of education – specialist providers of teacher training once some 160 strong, serving over 116, 000 students across Britain (Adelman and Gibbs, 1980, p. 97) – was, I argue, an important, though nowadays largely overlooked, juncture in the history of education. Though obviously momentous for those directly affected, the central thesis of this paper is that the events which led to the destruction of the colleges actually represented a significant break with the model of policymaking which had held sway since the end of World War Two. For thirty years before the colleges of education were dismantled education policy was basically ‘architectural’ in nature inasmuch as bureaucratic planning and collaborative, corporate decision-making was the accepted norm - such methods being closely associated with the so-called post-war settlement and the spirit of social partnership which characterised that time. In contrast, the colleges of education were in the years after the somewhat ironically entitled 1972 White Paper *Education: A Framework for Expansion* (DES, 1972) forced into an ‘organic’ fight for survival, a Darwinian struggle quite unlike previous approaches to policymaking, at least in the UK (Pratt, 1997, p. 20). It is perhaps no coincidence then that the Secretary of State responsible for the fate of the colleges of education was one Margaret Thatcher - although before she became imbued with neoliberal ideology later in the 1970s and the injection of market forces into the public services which would take place thereafter. The way teacher training colleges were treated does, however, provide an insight into some of Margaret Thatcher’s attitudes, values and beliefs before she became prime minister,

including a disdain for civil servants and local authorities, and a disregard for established forms of bureaucratic decision-making which dominated educational policy in post-war Britain.

The first section of the paper provides an overview of some of the key events in the history of teacher training and sketches the institutional landscape which Mrs Thatcher inherited when she took charge at the Department of Education and Science (DES). Section two provides the backdrop to the 'reform' of the colleges of education. It deals with the shift from the broadly architectural model of policymaking which dominated the post-war years, and the role local authorities played within such arrangements, to the much more organic approach which characterised the way the colleges of education were dealt with after Mrs Thatcher's White Paper. The third section focuses on the plight of the colleges as they were plunged into crisis following *A Framework for Expansion* and critically examines the outcomes of the 'policy chaos' into which they were swept thereafter (Hencke, 1978, p. 56). The paper concludes by reflecting on the motives which underpinned the way the restructuring of colleges of education was carried out. Whilst it is recognised that Mrs Thatcher would only become infused with neoliberal ideology after she left the DES, her actions, it is argued, were motivated, at least in part, by latent sentiments which would later be revived under the sign of neoliberalism.

### **Teacher training in England: a brief history**

A full and detailed account of the history of teacher training exceeds the scope of this paper so those interested in such matters should see, for example, Gosden (1972) and Dent (1977). It is nevertheless useful to sketch some of its key characteristics in order to understand the nature, purpose and 'condition' of the colleges of education when Mrs Thatcher took charge at the DES. First, it is important to recognise that England and Wales has never had a unified system of teacher training and that this reflects the history of English education more generally, which has always been characterised by division and inequality (Robinson, 2006, pp. 19-20). Whilst the ruling classes have attended exclusive fee-paying schools since the Middle Ages, for most of the

population, schooling, where it has existed, has been provided mainly by religious and voluntary organisations. Traditionally the state preferred not to involve itself in matters of education and few elementary school teachers possessed formal qualifications, most passing from being pupil, to pupil-teacher, to teacher without recourse to external study (Curtis and Boulton 1966 pp. 78-79).

The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, formed in 1699, was the first English organisation to promote teacher training programmes, although this was essentially localised work-based learning rather than off-the-job preparation for work. The country's first teacher training college was established in 1789 by Quaker philanthropist, Joseph Lancaster, and a handful of colleges, also run by voluntary and religious bodies, opened in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century – a trend which was encouraged when grants for this purpose were made available following the 1832 Reform Act. Although the Anglicans initially opposed the idea of teacher training colleges, the Church of England established its first such institution, St Mark's, in 1840, and over twenty Anglican teacher training colleges had been opened by the end of the decade. The Catholics and Methodists soon followed suit, as did the Church in Wales and philanthropic bodies such as the British and Foreign Schools Society, and the Froebel Society (Hencke, 1978, pp. 13-17). There was then, in 1846, the introduction of a national scheme whereby pupil-teachers, could, after completing a five-year school-based apprenticeship (often beginning at thirteen-years-old), sit the Queen's Scholarship examination. Those who were successful were eligible for a bursary to attend a residential teacher training college, although this was not a route pursued by all who qualified – especially those unable or unwilling to forego paid employment, although some were also precluded from attending college due to the denominational nature of most such institutions. Many therefore continued to work as unqualified 'assistant-teachers'. Either way, teacher training courses were usually quite short – half lasting less than a year; most concentrated simply on discipline and religious instruction, and academic standards were often low despite the faux Oxbridge image of many teacher training colleges (Dent, 1977).

By the early-19<sup>th</sup> Century England was established as the world's foremost economic and military power. It was the first country to undergo industrialisation, Britain's overseas empire expanded rapidly under Queen Victoria, and culturally the English ruling classes looked down not only on their fellow countrymen but their European neighbours, and those further afield (Barnett, 1972). England's greatness was, however, achieved without a national system of schooling and the liberal state, whilst it was prepared to encourage at least some forms of education, preferred to leave such matters to private and voluntary endeavour. By mid-Century, however, the threat posed by nations with more advanced systems of education and training was apparent, the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the 1867 Paris International Exposition in particular illustrating the inadequacy of laissez-faire in producing an education system able to fight growing overseas competition. Consequently the late-19<sup>th</sup> Century saw a burst of state activity that had been absent hitherto (Musgrave, 1970, p. 144). Introducing the 1870 Elementary Education Act, W.E. Forster stated that:

Upon the speedy provision of elementary education depends our industrial prosperity ... if we leave our workfolk any longer unskilled they will become overmatched in the competition of the world (Forster, 1870)

Education, at least for the working classes, has, however, always been about social control as much as emancipation or economic need (Lawton, 1975), and the rise of Chartism and other working-class movements contributed to a growing belief among the liberal elite that:

An instructed and intelligent people besides are always more decent and orderly than an ignorant one ... less apt to be misled into any wanton or unnecessary opposition to the measures of the government (Smith, 1785, p. 305)

The decade after the 1870 Act saw the number of certificated teachers almost treble (rising from 12, 467 to 31, 422), although there was also a disproportionate growth in unqualified teachers (from 1, 262 to 7, 652). Moreover, by 1880, still half the school workforce consisted of pupil-teachers, a practice driven, at least in part, by the desire to employ teachers as cheaply as possible (Hencke 1978, pp.42-43). It nevertheless soon became apparent that the voluntary bodies were not equal to meeting the growing demand for teacher training, and so the 1888 Cross Commission recommended the increasing involvement of the universities. This, it was argued, would not only help increase the supply of training places but make provision more academically rigorous and 'broaden' the experience of aspiring teachers through closer integration with other students.

The attempt to bolster academic status and content of teacher training has been a recurring theme in its history, although provision began to be recast along much more instrumental lines in the late-20<sup>th</sup> Century - a movement which started in earnest following the introduction of a national curriculum in the late-1980s and then accelerated thereafter. More recently, this has been accompanied by an attempt to force teacher training out of universities and relocate it in schools – an initiative driven by the belief that teaching is essentially a practical skill best learnt 'on the job' and a desire to deliver training more cheaply than hitherto (see, for example, Gove, 2010). Trainee teachers in England are therefore increasingly likely to learn by 'at the 'chalk face' with teacher training increasingly dominated by work-based learning programmes such as School-Centred Initial Teacher Training, Teach First and other programmes stripped of much of the underpinning theory and conceptual knowledge which traditionally characterised university-led provision (Bell, 2015; Education State, 2013). It is therefore difficult not to begin drawing comparisons with the pupil-teacher apprenticeship model which held sway some 200 years ago. Either way, the University of London had in fact begun offering a postgraduate diploma in education in 1883, and Oxford and Cambridge soon followed suit, although university participation increased significantly after the Cross Commission formally invited them into the fold, and sixteen universities or

university colleges were involved in teacher training by the end of the 1890s. University courses were, unlike existing provision, often non-residential and this, at least potentially, opened up opportunities for those unwilling or unable to reside at a teacher training college (Curtis and Boulwood, 1966, pp. 169). Still, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century two-thirds of all certificated teachers attended a voluntary college, and many secondary school heads continued to employ graduates without teaching qualifications, despite the increasing involvement of the universities (Hencke, 1988, pp. 18-19; Matterson, 1981, p. 45).

### **From an Architectural Approach to Organic Change**

If the voluntary bodies dominated teacher training in Victorian England, local government did so for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The 1902 Education Act established local education authorities (LEAs) as legal entities and empowered them to supply or aid the supply of education across the country. Thereafter, the first municipal teacher training colleges were established, a movement which was subsequently encouraged when grants to cover up to 75 per cent of building costs were made available to local authorities shortly after their establishment. By 1938, there were 28 LEA teacher training colleges and municipal involvement increased substantially after World War Two when various developments, including the introduction of compulsory secondary schooling, the raising of the school leaving age, and the post-war 'baby bulge' created an urgent need for more teachers (Curtis and Boulwood, p. 1966, 78-79). By 1948, the Ministry of Education had, on recommendation of the McNair Report (Board of Education, 1944), set up nineteen emergency training colleges, most of which were then taken over by LEAs. Some 113 such institutions were under local authority control by the end of the 1960s and municipal power was further strengthened when five of the new polytechnics then opened departments of education (Hencke, 1978, pp. 27-31). Although notions of a 'golden age' have been challenged (see, for example, Jones, 1990), it would still be fair to say that the LEA star was in the ascendancy, at least until the 1970s (Sharp, 2002, p. 200).



Although there were differences in style and emphasis, the three decades after World War Two saw a substantial degree of consent over key policy questions between the Labour and Conservative Parties: the establishment of the welfare state, the creation of a National Health Service and the expansion of other state-run services being broadly supported by both main Parties. There was also a general commitment to a 'mixed economy' with state planning, the nationalisation of key industries and the expansion of public sector employment. This was accompanied by an attempt to create a tripartite consensus between government, industry and the unions; an aspiration to tackle the worst excesses of poverty and inequality through taxation and redistribution; and a commitment to full employment. Local government played a key role in all this, both in terms of providing a range of expanded public services and as important employers in their own right. LEAs for their part were given a range of new and increased duties following the 1944 Education Act, not only in relation to schools, but also in providing further education, youth work, special needs education and numerous other services. Their involvement in teacher training also grew substantially and, although the voluntary bodies retained their involvement both in teacher training and schooling more generally, the majority of the colleges of education were, as we have established, under municipal control by the 1960s.

Nowadays local authorities are largely responsible for commissioning a range of voluntary and private sector organisations to deliver policy initiatives devised at Westminster and Whitehall, but the relationship between central and local government was rather different in post-war Britain. Not only were they direct providers of a far greater range of services than is the case today, local authorities also had significantly more power and influence vis-à-vis central government and the civil service (Audit Commission, 1989). This was underpinned by a belief that power should not be over centralised and that it should be possible for national priorities to be adapted and re-interpreted at the local level – principles which were no doubt shaped, at least in part, by a reaction to the rise of totalitarianism in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Europe (Kogan, 2002, pp. 331-332). There was alongside this also the notion that local service providers should be accountable via the democratic process, although Gravatt and Silver (2000) have argued that some LEAs were in fact dominated

by cosy, closed relationships between municipal bureaucrats, trade union officials and local councillors, often at the expense of service users and the electorate more broadly (see also Audit Commission, 1985). Either way, LEA chief officers had substantial influence at the Ministry of Education, and local authorities, in turn, had considerable discretion over the way national policies were implemented across the country (Brighouse, 2002; Sharp, 2002). Undoubtedly some LEAs were more proactive than others but certain authorities were highly innovative, leading the way in terms of curriculum design and innovation, teacher development and raising standards more generally (Lowe, 2002).

The way education was organised and arranged at this time has often then been described as 'a national system, locally administered' (Ainley, 2001) and, although relations were not always easy or straightforward, extensive consultative machinery helped to promote collaboration between the Ministry of Education, teachers associations, voluntary bodies, and especially the local authorities (Smith, 1957). Policymakers generally worked within what Pratt (1997) has described as an 'architectural' approach. Or, in other words, policy development was the result of a teleological, collaborative process whereby state bureaucrats would, following extensive consultation with representatives of various interest groups, first decide what sorts of institutions were required to meet social and economic need. Then appropriate structures would be built at the local or regional level, often within the framework of LEA governance, and future developments would then be obliged to be constructed within the structures set. Such principles, to varying degrees, underpinned the expansion of the FE sector following the end of the War, the creation of the Colleges of Advanced Technology in the late-1950s, and the establishment of a new tranche of universities following the 1963 Robbins Report. The 'polytechnic experiment' which took place from the end of the 1960s onwards was, however, perhaps the most vivid example of architectural planning and collaboration between central and local government in order to deliver the specified priorities of the state (Pratt, 1997). It is nevertheless often forgotten that the Robbins Committee also proposed substantial changes in the form and function of teacher training. This included the re-designation of teacher training colleges as colleges of education (a title already used in

Scotland), the introduction of bachelor of education degrees for trainee teachers within such institutions, and the development of closer working relations with the universities (Committee on Higher Education, 1963, pp. 117-120). Yet less than ten years later the colleges of education were presented with a rather different scenario.

The number of trainee teachers grew considerably during the 1960s – increasing from approximately 50,000 in 1963 to more than 80,000 by 1968/69 (Gedge, 1981, p. 36). This expansion was driven by a combination of factors, including the increasing number of training places available, substantial growth in the number of young people gaining the necessary entry qualifications, and an increase in the length of training courses from two to three years at the beginning of the decade, also recommended by the McNair Report. But, whilst teacher training has seldom received good press, the pressures of expansion and the changing demands of schooling led to a growing feeling that reform was needed, and the Conservatives pledged to undertake a comprehensive review of teacher training in the run-up to the 1970 General Election (Taylor, 2008, p. 292).

Mrs Thatcher therefore faced various conundrums when she became Secretary of State for Education. On one hand, the falling birth rate meant a reduced demand for teachers; whilst, on the other hand, the quality of teacher training was undisputedly variable (Bibby, 1975, p. 19). In many cases, qualifications for entry were low and undoubtedly some colleges were somewhat complacent, inward-looking organisations, a situation reinforced, at least in some cases, by the small scale and geographic isolation of many teacher training colleges. Institutional arrangements were, as we have seen, also complex – despite (or perhaps because of) increasing intervention by the state, and the mixture of under-graduate, post-graduate and certificated routes into teaching lacked both consistency and coherence. There was moreover a mismatch between the general over-supply of teachers and ongoing shortages certain subject areas (Hencke, 1978, p. 123-124). The case for reorganisation was therefore relatively uncontroversial – although the way in which reform took place certainly was.

## **A Framework for Expansion: a recipe for confusion**

Its remit was later widened to include in-service teacher training and the training of FE teachers, but a committee chaired by Lord James of Rusholme was established in early 1971 with an initial brief to review:

- The content of the teacher training curriculum
- The integration of teacher training and teacher training students with other parts of the education system
- The role of the maintaining authorities – the LEAs, voluntary bodies, and universities

The James Report (1972) therefore aimed to create a more coherent system of teacher training and end the perceived long-standing friction between academic education and vocational training by creating three distinct phases of preparation for teaching. One of its most important proposals was that all aspiring teachers should initially pursue a new two-year Diploma of Higher Education (Dip. HE) or a three-year degree. The Dip. HE would, it was argued, create more flexibility inasmuch as it would allow students to leave after two years, transfer to a humanities, arts or social science degree, or pursue alternative vocational training such as youth work or social work qualifications. For those who decided to pursue teaching as a career, a second stage would involve two years of professional training entailing one year at a college, university or polytechnic, and a further year under the supervision of a teacher-tutor in a school or FE college. Students would become 'licensed teachers' at the end of their first stage of professional training and 'recognised teachers' with a BA (Education) at the end of the second. A third phase would entail a programme of in-service training, refresher courses and planned periods of sabbatical leave. An MA (Education) degree for in-service teachers undertaking further development was also proposed (Hencke 1978, p. 35-36). The Report moreover suggested the creation of a new National Council for Teacher Education and Training (NCTET) empowered to award the Dip HE, BA (Ed) and MA (Ed) qualifications, although the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) and the universities would, it was envisaged, also be able to accredit such qualifications. The government's response to the James Report, the White Paper *Education: A Framework for Expansion* (DES,

1972) accepted a number of its recommendations, including the introduction of a more consistent system of in-service teacher development and the aspiration to make teaching an all-graduate profession. The Dip HE was also introduced (in 1974-75), although take-up was never as significant as envisaged (Taylor, 2008, p. 303). The proposal for a NCTET was, however, rejected largely due to opposition from the universities and teaching unions (Pratt 1997, p. 131). The other area covered by *A Framework for Expansion* – creating a wider range of opportunities in higher education – would, however, have profound consequences for the colleges of education: most would in fact disappear as autonomous institutions shortly thereafter (Locke, et al. 1985, p. 23).

The abolition of a particular set of organisations is not necessarily inconsistent with an architectural approach and *A Framework for Expansion* suggested a number of possible futures for the colleges of education. These included:

- Continuing as an independent college concentrating on teacher training
- A broadening of role and remit, either singly or through amalgamation with another college of education, to become a more generalist institution of HE
- Merger with a university, polytechnic or FE college
- Re-designation as a professional development centre for in-service teacher training
- Closure

This all sounds quite rational but we must not underestimate the turmoil into which the colleges were thrust following the White Paper (Hencke, 1978). On one level, continually shifting targets presented significant operational difficulties, both for individual institutions and the LEAs which were made responsible for dealing with reorganisation - although the term reorganisation implies a degree of cogent thought and planning which, as we shall see, was largely absent.

Circular 7/73 *Development of Higher Education in the Non-University Sector* (DES, 1973) announced that the number of teacher training places outside the universities would be slashed by

a third by 1980. This obviously represented a substantial cut but figures were then reduced on four further occasions between 1974 and 1977, effectively reducing the pre-White Paper total by two-thirds (Brewer, 1984, p. 139). The difficulties caused by this were profound but, whilst such an approach was undoubtedly inconsiderate and high-handed, such practices should not be viewed in isolation. The necessary arrangements were in place to organise and administer the restructuring process in a coherent architectural fashion; via, for example, the Department of Education and Science, the civil service and the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Training of Teachers – a national body including representatives from local authorities, trade unions and the CNA. Yet established systems were bypassed: the DES would instead simply retain control of the purse strings and leave the colleges to fight each other for survival. LEAs, for their part, were basically required to deal with the ensuing local dramas and confrontations (Hencke, 1978, p.114).

Local authorities were not only obliged to work in isolation but with great haste. Circular 7/73 instructed LEAs to submit interim plans for reorganisation by November 1973 and to provide final proposals by April 1974, or as soon as possible thereafter. Moreover, whilst LEAs were made responsible for reorganisation, there was no coherent overall plan, and no regional machinery for co-ordination was established. There was consequently an unseemly race to submit proposals, many of which LEAs were forced to formulate without full or accurate information or strategic oversight of developments in neighbouring authorities. Matters were further complicated by the fact that local authorities were themselves in a state of flux - the redrawing of municipal map by the 1972 Local Government Act meaning that plans drawn up by one LEA were often required to be implemented by another. Meanwhile, the little guidance with which local government was provided was rather contradictory. Local authorities were, for example, obliged to achieve economies of scale and create institutions of between 1,000 and 2,000 students, so small colleges in semi-rural locations such as Retford, Saffron Walden and Alnwick almost inevitably became unviable. At the same time though, LEAs were also asked to avoid further concentration of provision in locations with large existing student populations (Hencke, 1978, pp. 52-53). Either way, what this meant was that local authorities were required to implement decisions made elsewhere, often with little regard

for the ensuing consequences either for those organisations, individuals and stakeholders affected by change, or the educational consequences of such actions (Bibby, 1975). The one thing that soon became clear was that individual colleges would have to fight for their existence, to adapt and change, or perish (Locke, et al., 1985).

It is, however, possible to discern an institutional pattern which emerged from the 'creative destruction' of *A Framework for Expansion*. Ultimately, just twenty colleges survived as independent teacher training institutions, though eventually, these would either be taken over by universities (for example, North Riding College annexed by Hull University in the 1990s and St. Martin's College, Lancaster, incorporated into the University of Cumbria in the early-21<sup>st</sup> Century) or ultimately close altogether (Bretton Hall College, for instance, finally shut in 2007 after being run by various other organisations for some years beforehand). Many colleges of education were, however, effectively taken over by neighbouring institutions in the years after Mrs Thatcher's White Paper. But, whilst mergers between teacher training colleges and universities were permitted, the DES generally did not favour such arrangements (Hencke 1978, 85). So, although a few colleges were taken over by universities – for example, St. Luke's, Coventry and Keswick Hall Colleges of Education merged into Exeter, Warwick and the University of East Anglia respectively - 23 polytechnics absorbed some 37 colleges of education during the 1970s (Pratt, 1997, p. 131). On the other hand, some twenty teacher training institutions merged with FE colleges, effectively creating 'mixed-economy' FE/HE institutions, some of which, for example, Bedford College, Bradford College and New College Durham, still exist today. Meanwhile, a handful of former colleges of education were used by LEAs, at least for a time, as in-service teacher training centres although such arrangements were quite short-lived as the comprehensive programme of professional development suggested by the James Report never came to fruition. Still a few colleges of education found alternative futures - Wentworth Castle College of Education, for example, was recreated as Northern College in the late-1970s – a residential college operating along similar lines to Ruskin College, Oxford. Meanwhile some 25 colleges of education shut altogether in the years immediately after Circular 7/73 (Locke et al., 1985).

The stress and trauma associated with such machinations was considerable. Decisions about the future of individual institutions were often messy and protracted, and sometimes influenced as much by expediency as educational rationale. Hencke (1978, p. 84) argues that colleges which attempted to defend their position with reference to their achievements, potential and other objective criteria were in fact less likely to survive than those who were prepared to sabotage their rival institutions. In many cases, the vicissitudes of local politics played a significant role. Brighton College of Education was, for example, the subject of difficult and lengthy negotiations between the LEA, the University of Sussex, Brighton Polytechnic, and the DES. A long-standing relationship whereby the University validated the College's qualifications and the geographic proximity of the two institutions meant that both parties favoured merger. Despite this though, the LEA's desire to build up its own provision meant the College eventually merged with the Polytechnic after some two years of debate. Somewhat ironically, Brighton College of Education, a large and generally well-regarded college, could probably have expanded to become a successful institution in its own right had it been situated somewhere without a university or a polytechnic (Hencke 1978, pp. 85-86).

A particularly significant development arising from *A Framework for Expansion* was the emergence of some 59 colleges or institutes of higher education (CIHEs), a new type of HE provider usually formed from the merger of two or more colleges of education. Although the White Paper had legislated for such arrangements, it would be safe to say that nowhere near as many CIHEs were envisaged, as effectively a new sub-sector of higher education arose from the debris of the colleges of education (Locke et al. 1985, pp. 51-52). In a few cases a single college managed to become a CIHE by expanding to offer a broader range of courses but most were the result of mergers between colleges with similar histories and traditions - the Anglican teacher training colleges at Ripon and York, for example, becoming the College of Ripon and York St. John. It was, however, sometimes necessary to bring together institutions of varying origins. Roehampton Institute was, for instance, created by the amalgamation of four colleges of education with different origins – Whitelands College (Anglican), Southlands College (Methodist), Digby Stuart College



(Catholic) and Froebel College (non-denominational). Similarly, on Merseyside, St. Katharine's (Anglican) and two Catholic institutions, Notre Dame and Christ's College combined to create Liverpool Hope. Either way, those CIHEs with religious roots usually remained as voluntary-aided institutions funded largely by central government whereas others continued to be run by local authorities, at least until the 1988 Education Reform Act which removed polytechnics and colleges of higher education from municipal control. Most, however, specialised in social sciences, arts and humanities courses, up to and including first degree level – although those under LEA control tended, like the polytechnics, to provide qualifications validated by the Council for National Academic Awards, whereas other CIHEs usually offered university-accredited courses. Generally though the CIHEs served a more mature clientele and attracted a higher proportion of women students than most universities or polytechnics and, although larger than the colleges of education from which they evolved, the CIHEs continued to stress pastoral matters and to provide a more personal, supportive experience than the 'polys' (Locke et al. 1985, pp. 48-50). There is, however, no getting away from the fact that the CIHEs soon became something of a *pis-aller* for those unable to access a degree elsewhere, as was in fact sometimes the case with the colleges of education. Effectively the CIHEs came to constitute a 'third division' of higher education institutions – arguably akin to secondary moderns in a new tripartite of HE underneath the university 'grammars' and polytechnic 'technical schools' (Pratt, 1997, p. 323; Bibby, 1975).

## **Conclusion**

Much of the current way in which the English education system is run is rooted in various assumptions about the efficiency and effectiveness of market competition which gained popularity during Mrs Thatcher's time as prime minister, and such notions now shape virtually all forms of education in England from pre-school provision through to university-level learning. The complex market-state of semi-privatised, state-subsidised, largely unaccountable public service providers we see today – including an increasing number of Academies and Free Schools, as well as the complex mish-mash of post-compulsory education and training described at the beginning of the

paper can, in many ways, be traced back to neoliberal discourses which took root in the UK and elsewhere during the 1980s (Ainley, 2016, pp. 69-70). Before that time, Mrs Thatcher's thinking was less well formed and it would be difficult to claim that the fate of the colleges of education was either a strategic exercise or an ideologically-motivated project. Teacher training has, in any case, never been a matter of high priority, especially in England, and Secretaries of State have multiple demands on their time and energy.

It is generally accepted that Mrs Thatcher only became imbued with neoliberal ideas after she fell under the influence of Keith Joseph - who, in turn, was only won over to the doctrine of free markets and individual liberty following the fall of Edward Heath's Conservative Government in 1974 (Crockatt, 1994). It is therefore unlikely that neoliberal philosophy bulked large for Mrs Thatcher at the time of *A Framework for Expansion*, at least in any coherent or developed form. We should remember that her time at the Department for Education and Science saw more comprehensive schools created than any other, and that half of all polytechnics – higher education under LEA control – were opened during her tenure as Secretary of State. It can, however, be argued that Mrs Thatcher did display certain nascent instincts in way she handled reform of the colleges of education which indicated her susceptibility to neoliberal doctrine thereafter. A disdain for bureaucratic methods and procedures is, after all, part and parcel of the neoliberal *modus operandi*, and Mrs Thatcher basically saw education policy as dominated by closed, cosy relations between civil servants, local authorities and trade unions when she took the reins at the DES. The Department itself she regarded as 'self-righteously socialist' (Taylor, 2008, pp. 294-295). **But the way the colleges of education were treated was perhaps also a sign that the architectural approach to policymaking was, like consensus politics more generally, beginning to run out of steam. Britain's relative economic decline was already apparent by the end of the 1960s, and the established customs and practices of public administration were increasingly regarded as inefficient and cumbersome by the Right (see, for example, Collard, 1968). Whilst the education system would not be reshaped by the discipline of the market until the**

**1980s, it would be fair to say that the traditional architectural approach to educational policymaking was under some strain by the time of *A Framework for Expansion*.** The plight of the colleges of education therefore represented a significant change in direction, especially in terms of the relationship between central and local government, and the disempowerment of LEAs - which would later be reduced to bit-part players on the margins of the education system before being abolished altogether during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The CIHEs, for their part, most of which as we have seen, came about more by accident than design would themselves eventually disappear. Two of the largest such institutions, Derbyshire College of Higher Education and Luton College of Higher Education became universities after the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act allowed polytechnics and certain other institutions to use the title of university. Others were eventually taken over by neighbouring universities; Bulmershe College, for example, became part of the University of Reading in the late-1980s, and Crewe & Alsager College was consumed by Manchester Metropolitan University in the early-1990s. Others 'fell back' into FE – Doncaster Metropolitan Institute of Higher Education for example ultimately amalgamated with Doncaster College. Some CIHEs, on the other hand, became universities in their own right during the early-21<sup>st</sup> Century, generally after operating as a university college for some time beforehand. Bishop Grosseteste University, Newman University and the Universities of Chester and Worcester, for example, all began as either Anglican or Roman Catholic teacher training colleges and eventually became universities after going through various stages of development, including spending a period of time as a CIHE. Both the Church of England and the Catholics were somewhat more effective in defending their colleges than were the LEAs basically by demanding their historic stake in the nation's education be protected (Hencke, 1978, pp. 117-118). Notably, Liverpool Hope, Roehampton and various other CIHEs established by voluntary bodies also, in time, became universities. Meanwhile, a handful of mainly LEA-controlled CIHEs eventually closed altogether.

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