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## Teaching other people's children, elsewhere, for a while: the rhetoric of a travelling educational reform

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### ABSTRACT

Teach for All is a good example of a globally travelling educational reform policy. In this article, we examine the rhetoric of the reform through an analysis of its public discourse, specifically the websites for the umbrella organization, 3 of its 35 constituent projects (Teach for America, Teach First and Teach for China) and one associated project (Teach First Norway). The analysis focuses on the rhetorical production of teaching as something done to other people's children, in places apart from and outside the communities and schools of dominant populations, and for a while only – as a short-term mission rather than what is usually understood as a professional career. We argue that the principal motive underlying Teach for All's rhetoric is the cultivation of a cadre of leaders and a form of neoliberal social entrepreneurship that it claims will solve the problem of 'broken' societies, public services and, specifically, schools.

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## 1. Introduction

Teach for All is an umbrella organization of 35 teacher education projects around the world funded by a mixture of private philanthropic and public sources. Established in 2007 by Wendy Kopp, the founder of Teach for America (TFA), and with a board drawn from the worlds of finance, consulting and logistics as well as education, Teach for All describes itself as a network of 'social enterprises' that claims to tackle gaps in educational attainment by 'enlisting the most promising future leaders' (<http://www.teachforall.org/network.html>). The core premise of Teach for All seems to be that social inequality and 'gaps' in outcomes can be eliminated through educational interventions alone. Teach for All is advanced as a solution to the problem of educational inequality through its focus on groups of economically disadvantaged young people who would otherwise be taught in schools and school systems – and by teachers – who are presented as failing or 'broken'. Through its connection of educational inequality with a perceived but ill-defined need for broader social transformation, Teach for All advocates a new cadre of leaders and a form of neoliberal social entrepreneurship (Labaree 2010) as solutions to broken public services such as schooling.

The assumptions underpinning these claims by Teach for All seem contentious to us. First, the assumption that educational interventions alone can eliminate inequitable educational outcomes conflicts with the substantial evidence base that out-of-school factors account for most of the variation in student test scores (e.g. Berliner 2014; Duncan and Murnane 2012; Rothstein 2004). Second, Teach for All's use of student (standardized) test scores as the single most important measure of the quality of education denies the broader aspects of a high-quality education (e.g. engagement with the arts, community service) that are valued by middle-class and affluent parents for their own children (e.g. Goodlad 2004; Kozol 2005). Further, the assumption that the 'mastery' of specific instructional practices will immediately and always produce highly effective teachers is contrary to the robust evidence that time and deliberative practice (into the eighth year of teaching and beyond) leads to a sustainable, highly effective teaching workforce (e.g. Day et al. 2007; Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). Indeed, the only current review of research into the effectiveness of Teach for All projects as a whole (McConney, Price, and Woods-McConney 2012) presents, at best, a 'mixed picture' of its success based on a 'few well-designed studies' (vii; see also Hellig and Jez (2010) for a study of TFA and Allen and Allnut (2013) on Teach First (TF) in England).

In this article, however, rather than rebutting claims or presenting counter-arguments, we seek to examine Teach for All in terms of the rhetoric of a travelling idea. We are interested in pursuing a rhetorical analysis of Teach for All as a global teacher education reform policy as well as exploring the distinctive ways in which the policy has been appropriated and re-worked in specific, local situations. Like a recent article in this journal (Schneider 2014), our focus is on the rhetoric of the Teach for All project; unlike that article, our intention here is not to compare this rhetoric with specific aspects of Teach for All's training programme. Rather, we focus on the rhetorical production of *teaching* in Teach for All's public discourse, specifically the websites of four constituent or related Teach for All projects: TFA, TF, Teach for China (TFC) and Teach First Norway (TFN). These four projects have been selected as they represent quite distinctive localizations of the global Teach for All reform and are, we suggest, explicitly intended to disturb established national cultures of education and teacher professionalization. As the main Teach for All website says, the intention is to 'make up for weaknesses in schools and systems' (<http://www.teachforall.org/our-approach/our-model-leadership-development>).

In our examination of these four projects' websites, we show how teaching in Teach for All is produced rhetorically as something done to *other people's children* (for children from non-dominant social classes, cultures or ethnicities), *elsewhere* and in other kinds of schools (apart from the communities and schools, for example, populated by the advocates and funders of Teach for All) and *for a while* only (as a short-term mission and step on the way, for its participants, to membership of an elite leadership network). The data we analyse are the large, complex and constantly evolving Teach for All website (teachforall.org) and the individual project websites.

## 2. Background

One of the most persistent foci for policy reforms in education has been the role of teachers and how best to prepare them for the work they do. Currently, in many parts of the world, teacher education is going through a period of profound restructuring and reorientation (Ellis and McNicholl 2015; Zeichner 2014). These processes are characterized by a number of similar international policy trends stemming from claims about low standards in teaching and poor-learning outcomes and the consequent need for radical reform of teacher education programmes and organizations. One response has been reflected in various attempts to centrally control the curriculum of teacher education to make it more effective; another has been the erosion of the allegedly less effective role of higher education in teacher preparation; and moves towards valorizing practical 'experience' over more critical, scholarly or reflective concerns (Ellis and Orchard 2014; Furlong, Cochran-Smith, and Brennan 2009; Kumashiro 2010; Tatto 2007). The outcomes of these reforms can be seen in many of the contemporary moves surrounding the alternative certification of teachers that is underway in many nation states (Friedrich 2014; Labaree 2010).

Some time ago, Hawley (1992) argued that a variety of factors were involved in the push towards alternative forms of teacher education. He argued that the traditional colleges and universities were under-producing teachers, particularly in shortage subjects such as science and mathematics. He also claimed that urban schools in challenging circumstances were finding it harder to staff their schools (see also Popkewitz 1998). For these sorts of reasons, many of the US states, and many other national states, were compelled to develop alternative forms of teacher certification to ensure that they were able to staff their schools. Hawley describes how these perceptions of alternative certification as a policy process of ‘last resort’ were gradually undermined and these routes became regarded more as solutions to different sorts of endemic problems that the conventional training routes were failing to address. These problems were often to do with concerns about the quality of some of the university pathways and their alleged overemphasis on theory at the expense of classroom management (Fraser 2007; Murray and Wishart 2011). In terms of the Teach for All agenda, what we see is a strong claim to solving some of the most intractable social problems in education through an alternative certification process that explicitly attends to long-standing problems of social exclusion.

Indeed, the Teach for All website claims that the barrier to young people’s social mobility is ‘educational need’ – a construct separate from but related to ‘forces’ such as poverty and discriminatory social structures ([http://www.teachforall.org/network\\_mission.html](http://www.teachforall.org/network_mission.html)). The website claims that socio-economic challenges can be ‘minimized’ by ‘building capacity’ in school systems through the actions of selected young people they identify as ‘leaders’ ([http://www.teachforall.org/network\\_mission.html](http://www.teachforall.org/network_mission.html)). The Teach for All website claims that the impact of its projects can be measured (and, indeed, should be measured), in the short term, simply through gains in student test scores but in the longer term by the impact on Teach for All alumni development as leaders capable of wider social transformation. One of the goals of Teach for All, as detailed on their website, is to ‘accelerate’ the leadership development of alumni and to create an extended network of reform-minded entrepreneurs.

In consequence, we argue that, as a form of innovative ‘educational boundary work’ (Seddon, Ozga, and Levin 2013, 3), Teach for All is founded on something of a contradiction. Leaders with inspiring personalities are identified and cultivated as ‘agents of change’ but they are then given a fairly limited skill set as teachers with limited agency and limited time to succeed in schools. Their immediate aim is improving student test scores and, so the argument goes, the social mobility of young people from economically disadvantaged communities. The longer term aim of leadership development among the alumni network, as stated on the website, further compounds the contradiction in that the leader/teacher’s own social mobility and career development can appear to be as equally important as the raising of children’s test scores. As Labaree (2010) put it, participants join a ‘very exclusive club’ (48). Smart et al. (2009) also noted the reproduction of ‘middle class values’ and ‘privilege’ in what they presented as mainly a ‘graduate employment scheme’.

Teach for All, in our view, is a paradigmatic example of a type of educational reform designed to push the boundaries of public/private cooperation and to disturb ‘the spatial, temporal, relational and knowledge boundaries that once secured specific national forms of teacher professionalism’ (Seddon, Ozga, and Levin 2013, 4). Simultaneously, Teach for All has become a significant, global travelling idea that “‘touch[es] down” within national territories and their systems of education’ (Seddon, Ozga, and Levin 2013). The 35 constituent projects of Teach for All, illustrated on the home page under the heading ‘The global network for expanding educational opportunity’, are vivid examples of what Sassen refers to as the ‘endogenization of global dynamics into the national’ (Sassen 2013, 34). In other words, globalizing travelling reforms such as Teach for All are not simply installed in deterministic ways through local policy enactments but are instead mediated by and ‘grown within’ local cultures producing particular localized formations. ‘Touch-downs’ of policy ideas such as Teach for All may be strategic and coordinated in their motives, their economic base and the ways in which they are produced rhetorically but they are inevitably both responsive to pre-existing local cultures and re-shaped by them.

However, as Seddon, Ozga, and Levin (2013, 16) point out, these localizations of globalizing reforms can ‘unleash unpredictable social innovations, movements and demands that step outside familiar

national codes and conventions’ – specifically with regard to Teach for All in relation to teachers and teaching, teacher education and understandings of professionalism. Some cultures are more receptive to the ‘touch down’ of reforms such as Teach for All than others and these ‘touch downs’ can be seen as ‘hotspots of change’ – ‘points where national institutional trajectories confront globalizing transitions that materialize in specific but uneven ways across national territories’ (14). In this article, we argue that the four localizations examined in terms of their rhetoric represent good examples of such distinctive yet uneven localizations and that our analysis provides useful insights into the process by which globally travelling ideas ‘touch down’ locally in uneven or surprising ways.

The specific project websites we will refer to are:

- (1) TFA (<http://www.teachforamerica.org/>).
- (2) TF (notionally UK, but actually in England and Wales only) (<http://www.teachfirst.org.uk>).
- (3) TFC (<http://www.tfchina.org>).
- (4) TFN (<http://www.teachfirstnorway.no>).

TFA, TF and TFC are constituent members of Teach for All, whereas TFN is not officially affiliated to the umbrella organization. TFN is not a member of Teach for All as it is not regarded as ‘an independent organization’ (one of the membership criteria) because it is owned by the city of Oslo public school system, in collaboration with the University of Oslo and the Norwegian national oil company, Statoil. In this analysis, we have selected TFN as an instance in which the globally travelling ideas have become endogenized in ways and in locations outside the boundaries of the formal project. As such, TFN presents an acute example of rhetorical work on the boundaries of educational reform ideas and allows us to explore some of the contradictions inherent in the localization and hybridization of globally travelling reform ideas.

### 3. A rhetorical approach

In constructing our argument, the data we analyse in this article consists of public discourse – the Teach for All website and the four individual project websites. Analysing websites has now become a part of the repertoire of educational researchers with one of the most powerful examples being Ball’s forensic examination of the networked links between philanthropy, business and government in the formation of global education policy (Ball 2013). Unlike Ball, however, we do not use social network analysis but instead deploy the tools of rhetorical analysis, as in the work of Edwards et al. (2004). Rhetorical analysis seeks to understand how social actors use established patterns of argumentation and frames of reference to accomplish different kinds of work in a specific field.

A rhetorical analysis therefore seeks to understand the reciprocal relation between the shaping of the speaker/writer’s social actions by established patterns of argumentation and frames of reference and the agency of the speaker/writer, in turn, to potentially shape these patterns and frames. In other words, the focus of a rhetorical analysis of a text is on the agentic making and unmaking of the social world through the appropriation of particular argumentative or persuasive structures and frames of reference (for example, how the rhetoric of Teach for All is both reproduced and made anew in each setting). There are many approaches to rhetorical analysis and our own is influenced by what is known as the ‘new rhetoric’ (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1991) with an emphasis on argumentation. However, we also recognize that argumentation (*logos*, or proof, in Aristotelian terms) is a social process in the public sphere and as such cannot be separated from the other Aristotelian aspects of persuasion – *ethos*, the moral basis of the speaker/writer’s appeal, their ‘good character’ and authority to speak; and *pathos*, the use of (or playing on of) the audience’s emotions in the act of persuasion (Lanham 1991).

Taking such a rhetorical approach to the analysis of some of the Teach for All websites and how they produce and reproduce a globalizing reform idea allows for the specifics of the localizations to be surfaced and examined. It can also make visible the apparent success of Teach for All in making a persuasive case for its interventions via the web as a powerful channel of public communication. Such an analysis involves following specific tropes (figurative uses of words such as ‘leader’ or ‘equity’,

for example) in the argumentation of the reform across the different social, cultural and historical contexts in which those tropes are mediated. Our analysis also considers the *ethos* or moral basis of the argument being constructed about social inequality by the Teach for All sites as well as the *pathos* of their appeal to prospective participants and the wider public in the use of emotionally charged narratives of child poverty and disadvantage, for example. By focusing on the playful and strategically motivated appropriations of Teach for All in the websites of the four national (local) projects, a rhetorical analysis also foregrounds the persuasive global challenge to national trajectories of teacher professionalization (Seddon, Ozga, and Levin 2013).

In this article, we are focusing on a critical comparison of websites that represent and reflect the rhetoric of Teach for All. We have chosen to explore websites as textual artefacts as they are powerful shapers of opinion and influential expressions of social and cultural conditions (Pauwels 2011). Great deliberation and great expenditure goes into their construction and thus we believe they are worthy of research in their own right as indicative of perspectives, assumptions and policy intentions of a highly influential umbrella organization. Indeed, we would argue that websites are the prime channels for the rhetoric that underpins these specific policy moves in teacher education and training. There are, of course, other texts circulating in this policy field (for example, Wigdortz 2012) but, in terms of possible recruits to Teach for All, potential leaders and even researchers, websites are frequently the first port of call. In relation to our interest in travelling policy ideas, the internet facilitates this policy flow (Ozga and Jones 2006).

In this paper, we draw on the work of a funded project – ‘The Pedagogies of Teacher Education for Urban Schools’ – in which we set out to explore some of the ways in which these concerns about teacher education are influencing policy and practice in their national settings: England, the USA, the People’s Republic of China and Norway. One dimension of our research explored the way that a reform idea such as Teach for All was being taken up and re-made in our four settings, indicative of a set of different localized forms of neoliberal approaches (Peck and Tickell 2002, 380) to the range of policy problems that we outlined earlier. We were able to compare and contrast some radical approaches towards teacher education in each setting through a critical reading of the websites that detail the rationales, practices and experiences of Teach for All and associated projects – all projects that recruit well-qualified graduates who are placed in ‘challenging’ settings in order to ameliorate social disadvantage. Our analysis of these projects suggested to us that the rhetoric of the globally travelling Teach for All idea merited particular scrutiny.

We are aware of the dangers that researchers may produce a reading of visual data and related texts that ‘depends upon cultural assumptions, personal knowledge and the context in which the (data) are presented’ (Ball and Smith 1992, 18). However, our intention in this paper is to offer an indicative and open reading of these websites, one that explores some of the dominant rhetoric that we see as making up these powerful artefactual formations. All the web pages we refer to below were accessed in January 2015 and URLs are provided for each link. One of the characteristics of the Teach for All project websites, however, is that they are very frequently updated and redesigned, constantly refreshing their look. For this reason, we cannot be certain that these URLs will be accurate and live at the point of publication.

#### 4. Four localizations of a travelling idea

Across the four sites of local materialization, we identified, coded and analysed some significant and recurring tropes in the rhetoric of Teach for All:

- (1) Teaching is assumed to be a short-term mission in situations of perceived societal challenge rather than as a traditionally understood career arising out of historically evolving cultures of professionalization in the different national settings.
- (2) This mission is presented as essentially one of leadership – ‘leading learning’ in challenging classrooms, leading students towards the ideal of an economically successful life, and then leading societal transformation as part of an elite network of alumni and social entrepreneurs.



- (3) Teachers in Teach for All therefore figure as ‘leaders’ and teacher education becomes reconfigured as ‘leadership development’ in the rhetoric of the reform with the consequential erasure not only of traditional educational concepts such as curriculum and pedagogy but of much of the professional basis of teachers’ work.
- (4) On the basis of cherry-picking the evidential bases for the argument, leadership and a form of neoliberal, philanthropically endowed social entrepreneurship are advanced as solutions to entrenched social and economic disadvantage and inequality and as answers to problems of ‘broken’ or undeveloped public services such as schooling.

#### **4.1. The United States: TFA**

##### **4.1.1. Background**

Despite a long history of multiple pathways to teaching in the USA, colleges and universities held a virtual monopoly in teacher education from about 1960 to 1990 (Fraser 2007). Beginning in the 1980s, both university-based and non-university alternative pathways to teaching increased, and today despite the great growth in alternative programmes, about two-thirds of teachers continue to be prepared in college and university programmes (National Research Council 2010). Teaching as an occupation in the USA continues to come under attack from advocates of the deregulation and privatization of public schooling and its already low status in comparison with other professional fields has declined even further since the advent of ‘No Child Left Behind’ in 2001 (Lasky 2012). Most teachers at all levels continue to be women and the proportion of teachers of colour in the workforce continues to be very low in comparison with the increasing number of students of colour in US public schools (Cochran-Smith et al. *in press*). There continues to be teacher shortages in certain areas of the country (e.g. remote rural areas and large urban districts) and in certain subject areas such as special education and teaching English learners (National Research Council 2010).

##### **4.1.2. Teaching other people’s children**

TFA, the first Teach for All project, was founded in 1990 in the USA by Wendy Kopp, a graduate of Princeton University. Against the background of teacher shortages and a recruitment crisis in ‘hard-to-staff’ schools, the intention was to attract graduates from some of the most prestigious US universities to teach in such schools for two years. The original goal of the programme was, therefore, to provide teachers for classrooms impacted by poverty that had been staffed by ‘emergency licensed’ teachers with little or no preparation, or by none at all. Thus, one powerful impetus for TFA came from the long-standing difficulty in staffing schools in areas of high social disadvantage, a problem that had been left unresolved by ‘traditional’ means of teacher preparation.

As a measure of its impact, in 2012–2013, 10,000 TFA teachers taught 250,000 students, and since 1990, nearly 54,000 corps members have trained, reaching over four million students. Over 90% of students taught by TFA teachers are Black or Latino and almost all of them live below the poverty line and qualify for government-subsidized school meals (Farr 2010). As a proportion of TFA participants, 61% are white (<http://www.teachforamerica.org/why-teach-for-america/the-corps/who-we-look-for/the-importance-of-diversity>), although TFA is making significant efforts to recruit more diverse cohorts (Beard 2014).

According to its website, TFA’s mission is supported by a strong emphasis on recruiting corps members from some of the nation’s flagship public universities (<http://www.teachforamerica.org/our-mission/enlisting-committed-individuals>).

TFA was founded on the assumption that highly qualified graduates from flagship public institutions can transform schools and empower students even though they may be unfamiliar with those students’ histories, cultures and funds of knowledge. Thus, we argue that teaching ‘other people’s children’ is positioned, albeit indirectly, as a core aspect of the reform idea and, in the rhetoric of TFA, becomes integral to the opportunities provided to a selected group of graduates to develop their leadership

potential. Insofar as graduates of many of these highly selective universities are unlikely to have come from the sort of high-poverty schools identified by TFA, according to the logic of their argument it is probable that TFA participants will be teaching ‘other’ people’s children.

#### 4.1.3 *Teaching elsewhere*

For decades, children’s race and economic backgrounds have determined their educational outcomes and therefore their prospects in life. Today in America, children who are born into poverty are half as likely to graduate high school as their peers in other communities. (<http://www.teachforamerica.org/our-mission/a-solvable-problem>)

The text on TFA’s website presents the scheme as preparing teachers who go into communities where poverty is pervasive in order to offer hope. The TFA website offers the example of Chandra Riggio, a sixth-year student who has experienced many economic hardships and who is living with her mother in a hotel on public assistance. Her TFA teacher Christina Perry believes that Chandra has great potential and is determined not to ‘Let her slip through the cracks’. The implication of the use of such student narratives is that children living in poverty have been destined to fail by the ‘traditional’ system – the ‘cracks’ are weaknesses in this system that can be overcome by TFA. Indeed, here it seems that there is an overt and persuasive rhetoric of ‘making a difference’ through the pathos of the student narrative but it could be argued that any persuasiveness rests on a set of unstated assumptions. For example, that teachers who were prepared by the existing system of college- and university-based teacher education have not done the job of educating students like Chandra, that TFA teachers will do so, and that these students will get high-paying jobs as a result (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LudeVAP7XF4&list=PLu9bhgTe3LY0Ugzmek61R8tPjv0jYMyQ>).

It could also be argued that, embedded in the rhetoric of the TFA website, is an ethos of social mobility and success that claims that children living outside and apart from the communities of dominant communities (whether urban or rural) can become socially as well as geographically mobile through the support of TFA leaders and that educational success (defined as improved test scores and a place in college) will inevitably lead to their incorporation in the dominant community on the basis of economic productivity. TFA participants’ interaction with kids from ‘elsewhere’, it is argued, will bring those young people into an economic ‘mainstream’.

#### 4.1.4. *Teaching for a while*

Being part of Teach For America is so much more than your corps’ experience. To realize our mission, we need our corps members to become lifelong leaders in the movement to make a great education available to all. (<http://www.teachforamerica.org/why-teach-for-america/building-a-movement/lifelong-leaders>; emphasis in original)

It seems that, while part of the rhetoric is about being a lifelong leader, TFA simultaneously encourages recruits to leave the classroom after their 2-year commitment through its Graduate School and Employer Partnership Program. This programme promotes TFA as a stepping-stone toward a career in a leading company or to entry to some of the most prestigious law, business and medical schools in the country. Rhetorically, the TFA website also appeals to the self-interest of its participants through its promotion of the TFA Graduate School and Employer Partnership program. This programme includes 16 corporations and businesses, 43 medical and Dentistry schools, 31 Graduate Schools of Policy, 31 Business Schools, 58 Law Schools and 35 Graduate Schools of Education. In some cases, like the doctoral programme in Educational Leadership in the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University, substantial financial support (full tuition and a stipend for living expenses) is included for TFA leaders (<http://www.teachforamerica.org/why-teach-for-america/compensation-and-benefits/graduate-school-and-employer-partnerships>). Some of the most well-known financial and corporate entities in the world are also included in the TFA partnership including General Electric, Goldman Sachs, J.P. Morgan and McKinsey & Co. In the case of Google, TFA graduates receive special treatment in the hiring process and are mentored by Google during their two years in TFA (<http://www.teachforamerica.org/why-teach-for-america/compensation-and-benefits/graduate-school-and-employer-partnerships>).



One national study of the retention of TFA teachers found that 60.5% of teachers taught in K-12 schools longer than two years and more than one-third (35.5%) taught for more than four years. After five years, 27.8% were still teaching, a retention rate markedly lower than an estimated 50% of new teachers across all types of schools (Donaldson and Johnson 2011). A more recent study in North Carolina found that 75% of TFA teachers leave before three years, while 80% of in-state prepared teachers remain in the classroom after three years (Henry, Bastian, and Smith 2012).

In sum, the TFA website simultaneously produces an appeal to 'make a difference' and address 'problems of teacher supply', while also offering participants access to one of the most well-funded and powerful graduate recruitment networks in the USA. Rhetorically, this seemingly paradoxical move offers a degree of 'status' and 'distinction' to the participants and offers them additional access to social capital after their work in schools. The appeal is obvious and, when couched in a rhetoric of 'making a difference' and offering highly desirable post-teaching opportunities to well-qualified graduates, could be seen as highly seductive. The way in which the TFA website seems to transcend this paradox of making a difference to others, while making a difference to oneself is a distinctive aspect of the success of TFA's rhetoric.

## 4.2. England: TF

### 4.2.1. Background

Since its inception in the early nineteenth century in small, specialist colleges, the professional training of teachers in England has been regularly criticized for alleged low standards, an irrelevant curriculum and for its so-called poor-quality recruits (Murray 2010). These critiques have helped to maintain a reduced status for teaching and for teacher education too. Unlike other professional groups in England, teaching has always been managed by the state and, as a state-mediated profession, it has been subjected to successive and sometimes contradictory reforms (Ellis and McNicholl 2015). These reforms have focused on issues such as the length of training, time spent in school, quality of recruits and the 'best' type of accreditation. At other times, pragmatic concerns related to more immediate problems over supply and demand have driven-specific reforms in the sector (Taylor 2013). Currently, even though England is experiencing an austerity drive and unemployment is high, there is a shortage of teachers, particularly in STEM subjects, and there are problems of inequality and underachievement in schools (Sutton Trust 2015).

### 4.2.2. Teaching other people's children

With TF in England, it is possible to trace both the common agendas and the complex mediations of the travelling idea. TF was originally set up in England in 2002 to recruit and train teachers who were placed in 'secondary schools in challenging circumstances in three urban conurbations (Greater Manchester, London and the West Midlands) in England to teach for at least two years' (Muijs et al. 2012, 29). 'Challenging circumstances' meant schools where at least 30% of the intake was eligible for free school meals and where attainment was low (schools where less than 25% of young people achieved the government benchmark of passes in at least five examinations taken at the age of 16). TF was set up by in 2002 by Brett Wigdortz who had previously been employed by McKinsey in the USA, one of the major companies in partnership with TFA. From our analysis of the TF website, like TFA, TF is effective at producing a powerful rhetoric of disadvantage, need and lack of opportunity for some children. There is a constant rehearsal of narratives of exclusion across all parts of their website. For example, Emma's story appears (at time of writing) on their home page:

Emma is ten. Because of where she's growing up, she is unlikely to do well at school, get a decent job and lead a healthy life. We can change this. And it can start with one amazing lesson from a great teacher. (<http://graduates.teachfirst.org.uk/about/>)

Thus, we argue that TF is predicated on the production and circulation of an educational 'crisis' – a 'crisis' of underachievement in some schools, a 'crisis' for poor children like Emma; and an unspoken

'crisis' surrounding the teachers who are currently working in the schools attended by these poor children in urban settings. TF as an idea is mobilized through a number of educational moves and specific rhetorical practices on the website. Not only does it deploy a 'poor kids' discourse, it also provides different sets of warrants that justify its intervention – that this is a problem that is backed by research and it is enormous, almost overwhelming:

It's a sad, almost unbelievable fact that one in six people leave school unable to read, write and add up properly (Leitch Review on Skills, 2008) The link between low family income and poor educational attainment is greater in the UK than in almost any other developed country. It's not right, it's not fair and it can't continue. But it doesn't have to be this way. (<http://graduates.teachfirst.org.uk/about/>)

TF's website is woven with testimony from Ofsted (the government's schools' inspectorate), head-teachers, teachers and even students as to its efficacy. As with TFA, 'externalising devices' (Potter 1996) like these help position and 'fix' a rhetoric of need for this particular intervention. In rhetorical terms, the ethos of TF's social enterprise is constructed as a crusade on behalf of the children of the poor being undertaken by the privileged and more powerful members of society; an individualized response to the children of those who are frequently 'othered', conducted by those with a 'passion for social change' (<http://www.teachfirst.org.uk/OurWork/>). It is easy to see the seductiveness that this rhetoric of doing good and making a real difference will have for some individuals who are contemplating becoming teachers. But, we would argue that it is a rhetoric directed towards other people's children – a rhetoric that is built on want, need and ultimately deficit. There is no detail of what these sorts of schools and students have to offer; they are positioned as a long-standing problem in need of 'high calibre, passionate individuals to support schools in delivering the best education for pupils' (<http://www.teachfirst.org.uk/OurWork/>). As with the US case, the underlying assumption seems to be that other teachers have failed this constituency of school students.

Smart et al. (2009, 35) argue that although TF is 'underpinned by some commitment to public welfare and the common good,' it also contains 'elements of self-interest' – as with the US case. It is left to one of the 'supporters' to point out the way in which TF provides scope for the accumulation of advantage:

'It is difficult for graduates to stand out from the crowd. After they finish their two years at Teach First these individuals are well placed to compete for even scarce fast-track positions.' George Iacobescu CBE, CEO Canary Wharf Group PLC, Founding Sponsor and Former Co-chair of Teach First. (<http://www.teachfirst.org.uk/AboutUs/supportersquotes.aspx>)

#### 4.2.3. *Teaching elsewhere*

TF works with communities and in schools that are (statistically) much less likely to match those experienced by and be familiar to the 'exceptional graduates,' the 'participants,' as the TF teachers are called:

Teach First harnesses the energy, enthusiasm and drive of exceptional graduates and experienced professionals to provide leadership, motivation and, above all, inspirational teaching in schools in challenging circumstances across England. (<http://graduates.teachfirst.org.uk/about/index.html>)

Stevenson (2003, 45) claims that in the UK there is a great deal of 'middle-class unease' about the presence of 'the poor and the marginal'. Certain spaces – urban spaces, the 'inner' city – become evacuated and avoided by the middle classes; housing is segregated by wealth and status; so are schools. Indeed, writing of the USA, Waquant (2007) talks of 'stigmatized neighbourhoods' and 'advanced marginality' – thus, working with schools and students in these locales can be a form of dealing with the 'exotic other', the demonized poor; part of an almost Victorian crusade of improvement and salvation. Again, our comments relate only to the sorts of rhetorical devices being deployed in the TF discourse and being deployed on the related websites; they are certainly not intended as a criticism of the motivations of participants or the schools that participate in TF. The schools that do participate are:

Primary and secondary schools where more than half of pupils come from the poorest 30% of families in the UK, according to the IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index). In some cases Teach First will use its discretion to explore working with schools who do not meet this criteria. (<http://www.teachfirst.org.uk/ForSchools/>)

As we have argued with the US case, if TFA's general argument is true, it is highly unlikely, although not impossible, that the participants will have been to schools like this themselves; hence, 'teaching elsewhere'. Rhetorically, situating the problem 'elsewhere' also deflects attention from the structural inequalities from which those 'here' continue to benefit.

#### **4.2.4. Teaching for a while**

In terms of our third analytic focus, 'teaching for a while', as with the American scheme, as Smart et al. (2009) explain, TF was set up as a 'prestigious graduate recruiting scheme' to attract 'excellent teachers into challenging schools for two years' (35). They also add that:

Teach First is targeted at new graduates who would not otherwise have become teachers, and it is anticipated and accepted that many of them will go on to careers in other sectors (hence the name, Teach First). (Smart et al. 2009)

From TF's own statistics, submitted to a House of Commons Committee (2010), it is evident that far more graduates from highly selective universities are applying to teach than used to be the case. As TF say, 'Teaching in a challenging school is now the ninth most prestigious job a graduate can do' and 'we have positioned teaching as a profession which can be a good platform for furthering ambitions in a variety of sectors, as well as providing accelerated paths to leadership positions'. Questions about the retention of teachers in challenging schools are complicated by the fact that some of the available data on teacher retention are not always disaggregated in relation to entry routes. Sam Freedman, head of research at TF, claims that: 'To date 54% of those who have completed Teach First are still teaching'. However, retention rates overall are a problem in England and the USA as approximately 50% of all teachers leave the classroom within five years in both cases.

Nonetheless, TF like Teach for All as a whole does raise questions about the ethics of deliberate recruitment for a short time that does seem to get participants into schools where teachers are needed but might add to the difficulties of the same school longer term by accelerating high staff turnover. Again, however, retention rates within the different Teach for All projects vary, illustrating our point that the ways in which the reform idea is localized in relation to existing cultures of teaching are not uniform in effect.

### **4.3. China: TFC**

#### **4.3.1. Background**

In China, teacher preparation is primarily undertaken by teachers' colleges and normal universities, a situation that has lasted for more than a century. China's teacher education system has experienced three stages of learning from other countries: first from Japan, then in imitation of America and finally copying the former Soviet Union before the modern Chinese system evolved in the late twentieth century (Gu and Tan 2004). It is well known that China has the tradition of honouring the figure of the teacher and respecting their teaching. With recent reforms and the opening-up policy, the Chinese government has put more emphasis on education and, to enhance teacher's social status, established 'Teachers' Day', passed new regulations known as the 'Teachers Law', and improved the systems of in-school promotion and reward (Bi and Yan 2011). High school students, regardless of gender, class and ethnicity, are admitted to teacher colleges and normal universities after passing the national College Entrance Examination and they also need to obtain a teacher's certificate before being employed by schools (Wang 2001). Some teacher-students, coming from the vast western regions of the country, are admitted to teacher education programmes with free tuition on condition that they will return to their hometown upon graduation and teach for 10 years (State Council 2007). But it is graduates from normal schools that have been the steady sources of schoolteachers for China's schools (Liu and Xie 2002). Shortages of schoolteachers do exist in poor, remote regions and relatively new measures such as the 'special post plan' and the 'regular flow system' have been adopted to train teachers locally (in relation to need) and to tackle the problem of teacher retention (Li 2009; Lin and Jin 2013).

### 4.3.2. *Teaching other people's children*

The situation in China in respect of this particular travelling policy idea is therefore different in some significant respects – although there are strong similarities in argumentation and ethos across the US, the UK and Chinese cases. Founded by Princeton graduate Andrea Pasinetti in 2009, TFC states its purpose is to ‘eliminat[e] educational inequity’ (<http://www.tfchina.org/>) between rich and poor as a result of the unbalanced development of China’s economy (Diao and Diao 2009). According to TFC’s 2010–2011 Annual Report, one in every fifteen children in the world lives in the countryside in China and only 1.7% of 60 million of these children end up in going to college ([http://www.tfchina.org/sites/default/files/Teach%20for%20China%202010-11%20Annual%20Report\\_English.pdf](http://www.tfchina.org/sites/default/files/Teach%20for%20China%202010-11%20Annual%20Report_English.pdf)).

According to the TFC website, it is a ‘lack of resources’ that produces educational inequality. In response, talented young leaders from China and the US are enlisted to teach, in pairs, in low-income schools, away from their own communities. Unlike themselves, their students are either children of migrant labourers in large cities or children who live in rural areas; both groups of children face the same pressure to leave school early for work (<http://www.tfchina.org/fellowship/where-we-work>). As with the programmes in the USA and England, these young graduates are exhorted to ‘profoundly change their students’ life prospects, and continue to impact educational equity as alumni’ (<http://www.tfchina.org/about/our-mission>).

The TFC website claims that graduates from ‘first-tier’ universities have the power and the ability to change poor children’s fate as they are intelligent, passionate, and determined to change others and make a success of themselves as future leaders. As Huang Songbin, a graduate from Zhongshan University, says:

I am as sure as the TFC that every child should have access to quality education. A teacher does not simply teach students the knowledge. What is more important is that we constantly improve our own ability of leadership through teaching, and meanwhile make progress together with the students. (<http://www.tfchina.org>)

The rhetoric here is that their devotion to teaching other people’s children seems to have a double effect: they change the students as well as changing themselves. In the words of Yu Liying, a graduate from Zhejiang University, ‘Through Teach For China I have experienced an internal growth in my life’ (<http://www.tfchina.org>). In the two-year period, TFC graduates are fully committed to teaching in poor, sometimes remote areas, withstanding various challenges and improving their leadership skills.

### 4.3.3. *Teaching elsewhere*

While some of the graduates work in urban areas, teaching in schools with high populations of children whose parents have moved to the cities in search of work, TFC mainly places its graduates in rural areas in the southwest of China, some closely bordering Myanmar. These places are home to various Chinese ethnic minority groups, including the Bai, Yi, Lisu, Miao, Wa and Hui peoples (<http://www.tfchina.org/fellowship/where-we-work>). The website suggests that TFC graduates are inspired by the belief that ‘a school without good teachers is a school without hope’ and that they can act as ‘saviours’. ‘Challenge’ is a frequently used word on the TFC website, as it is in the other Teach for All projects we are analysing. In their placement schools, it is evident that the Chinese and US teams of graduates may have to navigate not just socio-economic disparities but also cross-cultural friction, language barriers and ethnic discrimination. Zhang Qiang, a graduate from Tsinghua University recalls that, ‘I struggled to understand the local dialect . . . , and half of my students could barely speak Mandarin’ (<http://www.tfchina.org/fellowship/classroom/zhang>). ‘Elsewhere’, for TFC participants, often means remote areas of the country with which they are likely to be deeply unfamiliar, even in terms of a common language. Even within China, TFC is designed for ‘other’ places, outside of the dominant and still-evolving economic hotspots such as Beijing and Shanghai.

### 4.3.4. *Teaching for a while*

The website for TFC claims that the scheme will ‘meet the pressing need for exceptional educators’ (<http://www.tfchina.org/>) through the full-time, 2-year teaching commitments of young graduates at

under-resourced schools. The message seems to be that temporary training and teaching practices are sufficient for TFC to cultivate excellent educators. This assumption is in tension with a view of the nature of education as a long-term undertaking and teaching as a career, as it is more traditionally understood in China. Excellent though they are, one concern is that the young graduates from elite universities (from highly selective Chinese and US universities) might need a more systematic pedagogical training before starting work.

However, again like the other TFA projects, according to the website, the ultimate goal of TFC is to: help Fellows build leadership mindsets and skills through training sessions, reflections, and experience (e.g., extracurricular activities, teaching and working) and to motivate Fellows to extend their leadership beyond the classroom. (<http://www.tfchina.org/fellowship/alumni-leadership>)

Although there are references to the long-standing problems of staffing schools in rural China, TFC's website is not mainly about education but rather 'all about leadership' (<http://www.tfchina.org/fellowship/alumni-leadership>) and the leadership development of its participants. Unlike the other cases we have considered, however, TFC does not promote itself as 'solution' for hard-to-staff schools. TFC does not claim to offer anything other than a series of short-term interventions. On the one hand, the rhetoric is still that 'one day, all Chinese children will have access to a quality education' (<http://www.tfchina.org/>). But on the other hand, the site valorizes 'future leaders' who, like their colleagues in England and the US, through their participation in teaching will have their larger dreams of success realized. At heart, TFC is too small to seriously address the policy problem of a shortage of teachers in rural and some urban settings.

The website of TFC is bilingual. Its name in the original Chinese version meant 'Chinese Education Initiative' but it has now been changed to read 'Beautiful China.' 'Education' has been erased and an orientalist spectacle of China for external consumption has been prioritized. Rhetorically, 'Beautiful China' produces an alluring vision for its internal audience, especially those young graduates who are struggling in competitive job markets in contemporary China. The image of the young leaders teaching in the remote but beautiful southern areas of China evokes memories of the Christian missionaries who preached in the coastal areas of the country over 100 years ago. Time and place may vary, but mission it is and one with an echo of colonization, this time by a travelling reform idea entering a local culture of teacher professionalization.

#### **4.4. Norway: TFN**

##### **4.4.1. Background**

In Norway, historically, the public university colleges (*høgskolen*) have educated the majority of teachers for primary and lower secondary schools (Ministry of Education 2009). Public universities have certified teachers for work in upper secondary schools and colleges through a three-year bachelor and two-year master's education and then one-year Practical Pedagogical Education. During the last 20 years, public debate and key policy documents have emphasized the low status of the teaching profession as a problem in terms of recruiting academically able students. This status anxiety has been a key motivation behind recent teacher education reforms (Ministry of Education 2009, 2014) increasingly demanding higher academic qualifications and higher professional competences of students and student teachers, longer training and more specialization in disciplines. From 2017, all public university colleges will implement a five-year master's programme for certification as primary school teacher (Ministry of Education 2014).

Different statistical models on the future demands for teachers show a shortage of teachers at all levels. By 2035, the official Norwegian teacher workforce model that calculates supply and demand of educational personnel predicts a deficit of approximately 27,000 teachers (Roksvaag and Inger Texmon 2012). This prediction has resulted in a national cooperative venture between government, labour unions and employers' organizations promoting recruitment strategies and campaigns. A particular and long-lasting problem within recruitment of teachers has been a lack of mathematics and



natural sciences graduates (Ministry of Education 2005, 2010) who are seen as essential for Norwegian industries within oil and engineering – a problem TFN in cooperation with Statoil tries to address (Ovell 2014).

#### 4.4.2. *Teaching other people's children*

On its website, TFN candidates are spoken of as exceptional in terms of talent, academic achievement and virtue. Such capabilities will develop excellent leaders through TFN's programme; 'the heroes of tomorrow' (<http://www.morgendagenshelter.no/>). Participants are celebrated as both talented and as academic achievers. They are associated with other famous talents of their generation in music and the arts. They are given exceptional career development opportunities and mentoring within the state-controlled oil industry, the success of which funds the generous and stable Norwegian welfare state. They are seduced with idealistic visions of 'saving' children and contributing to Norwegian society but also of developing into great leaders.

As with TFC, TFN's website states explicitly that it is a targeted initiative to seek out and find challenging schools for its participants to work in order to develop them as leaders:

According to the Teach For All philosophy, you will be working in the most challenging schools. It is here that you will experience the greatest challenges for leadership and for getting results. That's why you will work here – to be put to the test to develop your own leadership skills. (<http://www.teachfirstnorway.no/no/Om-Teach-First/Partnere1/Osloskolen/Teach-First-skolene/>, authors' translation)

This Norwegian challenge is constructed in a racialized form. In Norway, according to the TFN website, the 'challenge' is for the candidates to work in multicultural schools in Oslo. The website does not elaborate on the particular challenge in Oslo nor why multicultural settings might be more challenging than less diverse settings. However, this 'challenge' is demonstrated and illustrated by photographs of 'other' pupils of colour. Thus, the rhetoric is visual rather than verbal. For example: <http://www.teachfirstnorway.no/no/Realfag-og-lederskap/For-elevene/>.

Multicultural schools in Norway have been perceived as challenging because of a general conception within Norway of itself as a small and homogeneous nation not used to dealing with diversity and minority languages in its welfare institutions (Osterud 2007). The pictures of children from different ethnicities potentially play on negative notions but do so modestly. Perhaps, the intention is rhetorically to signal an ethos of 'doing good to those less fortunate' as well as teaching other people's children.

Unlike the Teach for All projects we have discussed thus far, TFN is run by the local government – *Utdanningstaten* (the city of Oslo public schools). This organization is also responsible for all the other students and all the other public schools in Oslo. The crisis narrative used by the other Teach for All projects considered in this article is therefore presented at a low intensity, ambivalently balanced with *Utdanningstaten's* simultaneous need to present good results and outcomes for students in its own schools overall. It is something of a contradiction, perhaps, that the state presents a crisis narrative about schools it has responsibility for and that, on the face of it, seem to perform well (Skoleporten/Utdanningsdirektoratet 2014). Indeed, the TFN website reports that Oslo schools have the highest scores in the 2009 Norwegian national tests. What might be seen as a somewhat clumsy adaption of the crisis concept can be seen as a paradoxical localization of the Teach for All reform idea.

#### 4.4.3. *Teaching elsewhere*

In another localization of the reform idea – given that Oslo is one of the wealthiest capitals in the world, in a country run on successful post-war welfare state lines – TFN candidates are sent to teach other people's children in England. The Norwegian programme cooperates with the TF Summer Institute at English universities where Norwegian candidates meet up with around 600 English TF candidates for initial teacher training to prepare for 'going straight into the classroom as teacher and leader with full responsibility for teaching' (<http://www.teachfirstnorway.no/no/Om-Teach-First/>). In addition to training alongside English TF participants, the Norwegian participants then teach for a short period in 'challenging' English schools. This 'challenge' is presented to the candidates as follows:



The training in England means that you will try out as a teacher in a difficult English school. Your first experience in the classroom as a Teach First candidate will be with a bunch of challenging English pupils. (<http://www.teachfirstnorway.no/no/Programmet/Summer-Institute1/>, authors' translation)

So, as the website explains, the 'urban' challenge for TFN – the grit in the mix necessary to become a leader – takes place elsewhere, in England and in difficult English schools with a bunch of supposedly more unruly children.

#### **4.4.4. Teaching (science) for a while**

Unlike the other Teach for All websites that we are analysing in this article, TFN was initiated by and intertwined with the nationalized oil company, Statoil. Consequently, the educational policy problem being constructed in Norway is connected with the oil industry interests and their concerns about specific teacher shortages. In Norway, there has been a long-standing tendency for Norwegian students not to study natural sciences at university (Schreiner 2006; Sjøberg and Schreiner 2005, 2006) – a policy concerns that TFN addresses directly on its website.

Teach First Norway is a natural science commitment; the program addresses big challenges in the natural science field, challenges that are common in schools, Statoil and society in general. [...] There is wide agreement that one of the greatest challenges we face as a nation today is the future production of qualified workers with science competence who can solve the variety of tasks that are lined up before us. (<http://www.teachfirstnorway.no/no/Realfag-og-lederskap/For-samfunnet/>, authors' translation)

In another localized policy development, TFN has been set up as an exclusive programme for master's or PhD students in Mathematics and Science. These graduates are to be role models, encouraging more pupils to choose to study Mathematics and Science at University. Simultaneously, and like their peers in other TFA programmes, Norwegian graduates are constructed as potential leaders – specifically for a future job in Statoil. In their second year of the programme, they are enrolled in Statoil's own specially tailored course portfolios. Graduates are offered personalized job interviews with an eye on their potential for future career possibilities in Statoil. TFN is a response to a policy problem – the shortage of science teachers. However, it is wrapped up in a policy rhetoric that seems to have derived from TFA and TF, and has therefore complicated the Norwegian policy focus and the policy enactment to some degree. Particularly with TFN, it seems to us that what we are seeing here is a hybridized, localized version of a travelling policy idea that has morphed into meeting a local problem in a manner that channels policy rhetoric from elsewhere in the world.

## **5. Discussion**

In this section, we want to highlight some of the possible effects of the clearly powerful and persuasive rhetoric of Teach for All in its various contexts. In many ways, there is a common sense rhetoric of attracting the 'best' graduates for settings that experience teacher shortages and where there is real need. There is also a powerful rhetoric of 'making a difference' and deploying powers of leadership that may resonate with young graduates from often prestigious institutions who are aware of the advantages that they have received. Across each of the sites, teaching within Teach for All is generally presented as a time-limited commitment on the part of highly qualified graduates who will undertake this activity for a while before moving on to something else. Through being 'challenged' by working with children in conditions of poverty and disadvantage, they will transform themselves in turn into leaders capable of wider social transformation. From its inception in TFA, this view of teaching has been promoted by Teach for All across all its sites and has been presented as something like missionary work on the part of young graduates who mainly come from outside the communities in which they teach. To its potential participants, Teach for All does not lay out the prospect of a career as an educator nor propose a view of teaching as a domain of expertise requiring deliberate practice, necessarily developed over time, in order to be effective and successful. As such, Teach for All represents a challenge to the historically evolved cultures of teacher professionalism in each of the countries as well as challenging one of the key institutions in the process of professionalization – the university Education school.

In our view, it is possible that the leaders of – and advocates for – Teach for All would agree with our analysis of their rhetoric and argue that this reform idea has always been intended to disturb what is sometimes presented as the cosy *status quo* of teaching as a profession by disrupting the national trajectories of teacher professionalization. That, for Teach for All, is the point. It is only through such a reframing of teaching as leadership and by positioning leadership as a ‘shock to the system’ that the necessary urgent action is possible in order to ‘level the playing field’ or ‘narrow the gap’ between children from different socio-economic backgrounds, to use two of the more pervasive metaphors. Genuine change will not come from evolutions from within the system, Teach for All argues, but through revolutionary change from without. However, our purpose in this article is not, as we have already said, to rebut the evidentiary basis for these claims. Our purpose has been to analyse the rhetorical production of teaching within the discourse of the Teach for All websites selected and we continue to develop that analysis in this section.

From an analysis of the rhetoric of the four websites, it is evident that the short-term mission of participation in a Teach for All programme is generally presented as the first step in a longer term leadership career. From ‘leading oneself’ in the ‘challenging’ situation of a ‘problem’ classroom, a Teach for All participant in many national settings can then go on to benefit from the organizational support, coaching and social capital of the Teach for All alumni network. The longer term aim is for these leaders to contribute to a social transformation much wider than an educational reform. Indeed, leadership as a quality or skill or disposition is presented rhetorically not only as the solution to gaps in attainment and barriers to the mobility of economically and socially disadvantaged groups of children but also to the ‘unequal’ attainment of different nations in international league tables seen as proxies for the development of knowledge economies and economic growth. As Brett Wigdortz, the founder of TF, has put it: ‘A benevolent tsunami of leadership is about to wash away generations of educational inequity. It is the only thing that can’ (Wigdortz 2012, 242). For these reasons, leadership as a way of describing teaching is preferable to the use of the word profession, a word potentially tarnished because of its associations with traditional forms of collegiality and trust, a dynamic and historically accumulated knowledge base, and questions of practical judgement. Instead, supposedly scientifically validated and generalizable ‘practices’ and questions of fidelity to reform ideas are emphasized. This emphasis on – even *faith in* – leadership as the solution to societal problems is not new, however, with exceptional leaders having been seen historically as possessing exceptional powers.

### 5.1. ‘Solving’ the broken society through exceptional leaders

There is a strong tradition in public theory of constructing the publics in negative ways. Different versions have constructed the public variously as a ‘herd’ (Trotter 1916), controlled by group mechanisms (Le Bon 1896), by unconscious emotions (Freud 1922) or as humans governed by stereotypes and images not derived from reality (Lippmann 1922, 1927) but from media or entertainment. When the public is constructed in such a way – as a negative or destructive force – positive change and development cannot be explained or expected from the public itself. Forces outside the public and exceptional persons and exceptional leadership are needed to make such positive change and to effect social transformation. Constructing the public as a problem and constructing exceptional, virtuous or charismatic individual leadership as a solution is a typical response to the dilemma of a troubled or unruly public and, historically, has led to the cultivation of figures such as the great author or artist, the visionary or ‘the philosopher king’ (Popper 1945).

Teach for All represents the public sphere – most specifically the publicly funded school system and the teaching profession – as broken and failed. This failure of the school system is also represented as a failure of the state and a source of shame for the nation as a whole. This supposed failure and shame are particularly apparent on the TFA and TF websites. The solution to the development of the system (and the saving of the nation) cannot come from within, from this public sphere in itself, especially when they are represented as ‘vested interests’. Indeed, the system (including the historical trajectories of teaching as professional work) is presented as a barrier to reform and the policy problem is presented

as one of ‘producer capture’ (the reproduction of ideological perspectives within institutions such as teacher education). In the case of TF in England, its founder Wigdortz (2012) described this solution as ‘growing a long-term movement of leaders dedicated to overturning a national injustice’ (27). Teach for All presents itself as an idealistic and exceptional external force taking action on a broken state, failed relationships and the redundant knowledge of professionals. This idealistic force is a form of social entrepreneurship that values leaders (a more general disposition associated with an elite) above teachers (as professionals) in the work of reform on neoliberal lines.

However, as we have shown, it would be wrong to conclude that the arguments of Teach for All play out in the same way always and everywhere. In the opening section of this article, we referred to Teach for All as a particularly good example of a travelling educational reform idea, one that ‘touched down’ in different places in different ways, resulting in particular, local formations. In the next section, we consider the nature of the endogenization of the Teach for All reform idea in the four different national contexts and the challenges posed to the national trajectories of teacher education and teacher professionalization.

### **5.2. Global dynamics in national contexts: the different ‘challenges’ in Teach for All**

While Teach for All grew out of TFA and its rhetoric from patterns of argumentation in the context of public policy in the USA, what it means of course differs in the various national settings in which, as a reform, it has ‘touched down’. In some ways, these differences are anticipated in the origins of TFA. For example, TFA focused its attention on hard-to-staff urban *and* rural schools where the challenge was to raise the test scores and the rates of college entry for young people living in poverty. In England and Norway, the challenge was initially set as a specifically urban one: London and the major post-industrial cities of the Midlands and the North; in Norway, the challenge is, paradoxically, the English urban state school, the city of Oslo, where TFN is based, not having sufficiently ‘broken’ schools to challenge its participants. In China, the challenge is predominantly ‘the countryside’, a rural development problem of attracting highly qualified graduates to teach hundreds or even thousands of miles away from the highly selective universities in which they have studied. Cities, or mega-cities, in the Chinese context have become powerful engines of economic development creating an ever-larger middle class, better educated and with more spending power. While Chinese cities may have their own educational problems (such as the migrant workers whose children are not legally entitled to attend official city schools), the challenge set by TFC is one concerned with uneven economic development and rural isolation.

The relationship between these four projects and the state is also different in each setting, with consequential impact on the nature of the challenge each project is intended to address. TFA was set up as an independent organization, funded by what has come to be known as ‘venture philanthropy’ (Saltman 2010), and arising out of a particularly American tradition of not-for-profit organizations founded by graduates of Ivy league universities. In England, TF was set up by Brett Wigdortz, supported by Lord Andrew Adonis (Adonis 2012), a New Labour education minister, bringing some backing from financial service organizations but with mainstream funding from the taxpayer. This funding came from the centralized national system of ‘allocations’ of teacher training places to ‘providers’ such as universities and schools that were then diverted to TF. Although an independent organization in status, TF has in effect become part of the state-controlled and state-funded system of teacher education in England. As it has grown in size, it has contracted out some of its training to universities who have bid for this business through a competitive tendering process.

At the same time, in the USA, even though the federal government has no direct control over policy for schools in the individual states, it has nevertheless awarded significant grant funding to TFA and universities have also become involved in programme delivery. In both countries, while officially independent entities, TFA and TF have been appropriated as levers for reform of the national systems of pre-service teacher education on the basis of generous, politically bartered funding as well as philanthropic donations and with considerable (and, some might say, disproportionate) influence on

the direction of policy. As such, TFA and TF are good examples of private capital exerting a powerful influence on public policy through philanthropic channels.

TFC is a combination of overseas voluntary service for graduates of elite US universities and social work for graduates of elite Chinese universities focused on 'the countryside', presented simultaneously as beautiful and as economically under-developed. The strong, centralized Chinese state and its official system of teacher education in well-established and successful universities and its national system of teacher recruitment is entirely separate to and absent from the TFC rhetoric of teaching as an individualized, short-term mission on the way to membership of an elite leadership network in the business sector. Indeed, it is the kudos of participation in TFC for graduates in the highly competitive urban job market in China that seems to be the outcome of the challenge of teaching in the countryside for a while.

In the same way, TFN (not officially part of the Teach for All umbrella but acknowledged to be influenced by it) has to separate the challenge presented by teaching in 'problem' schools from the school system in Oslo that owns the project. It does so by sending its participants to England to experience the alleged failings of the English school system. Indeed, TFN pulls off quite a rhetorical feat by using an argument about the challenge of teaching in a broken school system (the English one) to build the Norwegian state through the cultivation of excellent leaders in Science and Technology Education who will both contribute to the nationalized oil company, Statoil, and encourage more young people to take science subjects at university. TFN, through its paradoxical localization of the Teach for All idea, nonetheless reveals the political importance of participation in its rhetoric for nations that are increasingly compared on the basis of children's test scores as proxies for economic success. Participation in the rhetoric of Teach for All seems to be important whether the nation in question is a highly economically successful country run on post-welfare state lines (Norway), a nominally communist state coping with uneven economic and social development (China), a capitalist economy with historical aspirations to small national government (the USA), or a mixed, market-based/post-welfare-state-centralized country such as England.

## 6. Conclusion

At the start of this article, we drew attention to the ways in which national trajectories of teacher professionalization are being challenged globally (Seddon, Ozga, and Levin 2013). We argued that alternative certification processes, once thought of as policies of 'last resort', have become reworked as innovatory and high status; indeed as Labaree (2010, 54) says, 'TFA has staked out a position for itself as the Harvard of teacher preparation programs' positioning other courses as second best options for the 'less talented and less ambitious' (49). In this paper, we set out our purpose as being a rhetorical exploration of an important travelling education policy idea, Teach for All, through considering the websites of four projects. Our aim was not to rebut these projects or to provide a systematic analysis of their outcomes in practice or to question the motives of those who genuinely want to make a difference. Indeed, many of the problems that are being addressed by Teach for All are also persistent concerns for other forms of teacher education. High levels of teacher turnover, and in some cases, a lack of teachers altogether in some schools, are an international problem. Additionally, questions about teaching other people's children for a short time could be equally raised with reference to more traditional university-affiliated programmes. However, what we set out to do was to chart some of the rhetorical strategies in play – to explore some of the ways in which Teach for All is being produced as a necessary way to combat some 'wicked' educational problems surrounding teacher supply as well as fix a 'broken society'. In part, the success of TFAs 'extraordinary rise as a major player in the world of education reform and education policy' (Labaree 2010, 48) resides in its tremendous power to convince and persuade policy makers, government officials and politicians of its capacity to solve intractable problems. Rhetoric is to do with persuasion and in this article we have highlighted and accounted for this new approach to the preparation of teachers that sets out to disturb national cultures of teacher education and reposition what is meant by 'success' in the schools of the poor and disenfranchised

as well as what is to count as teaching. Alongside this, we have documented a rhetoric of *pathos* – where narratives of ‘poor children’ who have been, or are being, saved are circulated in order to stir the emotions of participants and donors alike. There is also an *ethos* of salvation and redemption that attaches to all the narratives on these websites – and indeed, to the central argumentative premise or *logos* of each project.

Why does *teaching other people's children, elsewhere for a while* matter? It might be argued that the numbers involved are small and the in-school effects may be limited by the shortness of the time in post. However, in this travelling policy, there are challenges that go beyond the immediate classroom and these are the points we want to highlight. One challenge lies in how ‘public and civic purposes of public schooling are redescribed by venture philanthropy in distinctly private ways’ (Saltman 2009, 53). Another challenge lies in the way that Teach for All in its various manifestations and forms, with its focus on high-stakes testing and formal attainment does perhaps incorporate a view of teaching as largely to do with the production of consumers and a labour force to meet the exigencies of the global market. Another challenge still is that presented by the Teach for All view of leadership as the key to social transformation. The kind of leadership proposed by Teach for All is not one of fundamental social transformation, leadership that tackles the entrenched structures of social inequality that create poverty and, in turn, unequal educational outcomes. Rather, Teach for All proposes a form of social entrepreneurship mediated by an elite cadre of leaders that focuses on the exceptional individual child and their capacity to rise above their context and the social, economic and political forces that militate against their success. At the same time, it also taps into the ‘altruism of a generation that had been frequently dismissed as materialistic and self-centred’ (Labaree 2010, 49) and endows teaching with an explicit moral purpose.

Ultimately, though, Teach for All is less about teaching than it is about the contemporary importance attached to the particular kind of leadership public services are said to require in order to survive and the forms of capital necessary to fix a society that is said to be broken.

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