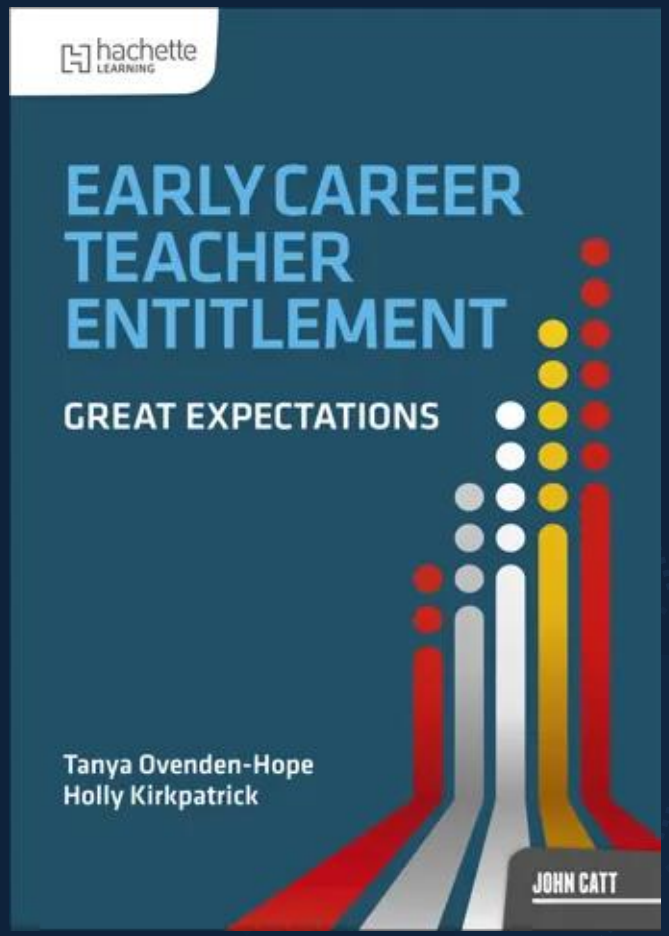
Early Career Teacher Entitlement: Great Expectations (2025)

Professor Tanya Ovenden-Hope (Plymouth Marjon University)

Holly Kirkpatrick (University of Buckingham)

A critical examination of the Early Career Framework and teacher development reforms



PLYMOUTH MARJON UNIVERSITY

Mentoring: A Critical Question



Chapter 1: Hard Times - The Recruitment Crisis

***"Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else."* (Dickens, 1854: 13)**

The International Crisis:

- Global issue: UNESCO calls for substantial increase in qualified teachers
- USA: 55% of educators ready to leave in 2022

England's Critical Statistics:

- 25.9% of teachers leave by year 3
- Teacher vacancies DOUBLED from 2020-2023
- Secondary recruitment reached only 50% of target
- England: 42.2% of teachers leave by year 10

Teacher Supply Statistics: The Current Reality

Early Career Teacher Attrition:

- 1.3% leave after year 1
- 25.9% leave by year 3
- Post-pandemic rates returned to 2018 levels

Subject-Specific Challenges:

- Physics: 83% below recruitment target
- Design Technology: 73% below target
- Modern Foreign Languages: 67% below target
- 1 in 3 GCSE science classes taught by non-specialists

The Status Problem: Why Teachers Leave

Low Status = Teacher Shortages

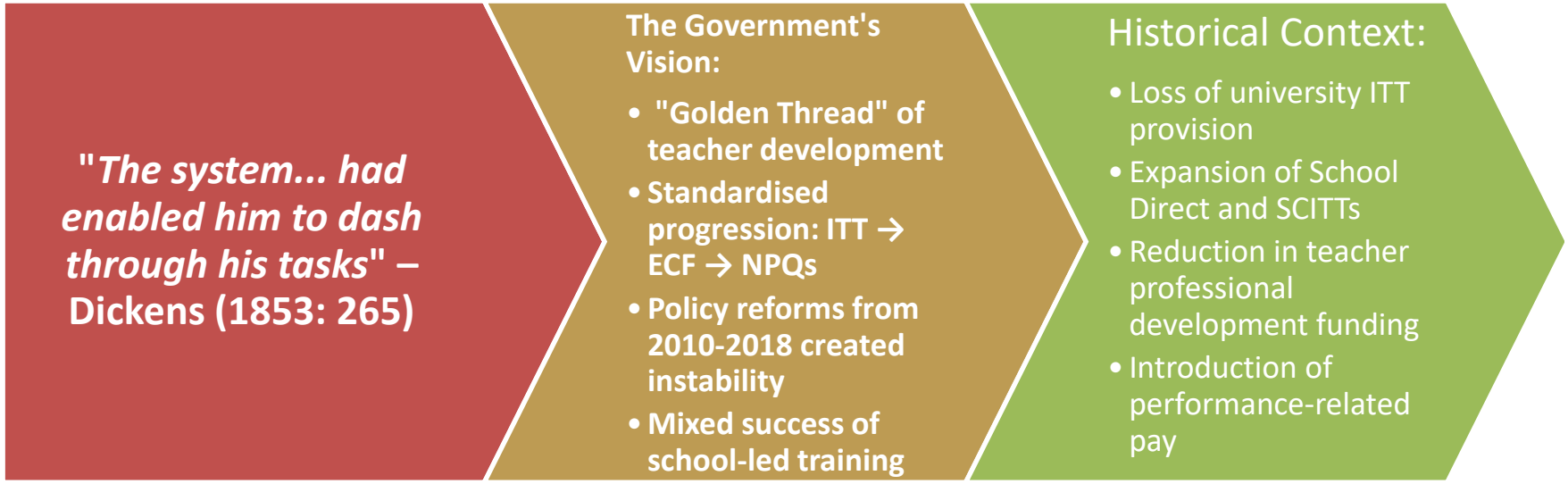
Global Teacher Status (2018):

- Teaching ranked 7th out of 14 professions
- No improvement in recent years
- Brief COVID-19 status boost quickly eroded

Contributing Factors:

- Government control undermining professional autonomy
- 25,000+ unqualified teachers in state schools (2019)
- Teaching treated as "commodity" rather than profession
- Semi-professional status versus other graduate careers

Chapter 2: Bleak House - The Golden Thread



Teacher Recruitment & Retention Strategy 2019

Four Key Commitments

1. Create Supportive School Cultures
 - Leadership development and support
 - Reducing bureaucracy and workload

2. Transform Early Career Teacher Support
 - Introduction of the Early Career Framework
 - Two-year structured induction period

3. Build Attractive Career Progression
- Reformed National Professional Qualifications
 - Clear pathway for advancement

4. Make It Easier to Become a Teacher
- Streamlined routes into teaching
- Improved training bursaries and support

The ECF Implementation: Promise vs Reality

The Enhanced Entitlement

What the ECF Promised:

- 2-year induction (vs previous 1-year)
- 10% timetable reduction in year 1
- 5% timetable reduction in year 2
- Dedicated mentoring support
- Structured professional development program

Early Implementation Challenges:

- Mandatory introduction during COVID-19 pandemic
- Generic content lacking school/subject context
- Increased workload for ECTs and mentors
- Mixed quality of lead provider delivery

Chapter 3: Great Expectations - What Makes Great Teaching?

"I have been bent and broken, but – I hope – into better shape."
(Dickens, 1861: 646)

The EEF's Six Elements of Great Teaching:

1. Pedagogical content knowledge
2. Quality of instruction
3. Classroom climate
4. Classroom management
5. Teacher beliefs
6. Professional behaviours

The Challenge of Definition:

- **"Great" and "quality" are contested concepts**
- **Risk of oversimplifying complex practice**
- **Context-dependent nature of effective teaching**

Frameworks for Great Teachers: CCF, ECF, NPQs

Core Content Framework (CCF) - 2019:

- 8 key areas for trainee teachers
- Evidence-based minimum entitlement
- Risk of narrowing ITT content

Early Career Framework (ECF) - 2021:

- 2-year structured support
- Mentoring and professional development
- Workload and flexibility concerns

National Professional Qualifications (NPQs):

- Leadership and specialisation pathways
- Practical application focus
- Risk of credentialism

ITTECF (2025):

- Combined 3-year framework
- Reduced repetition between phases
- Continued government control

The Challenge of Measuring Quality Teaching

Beyond Student Outcomes

The Problem with Current Measures:

- Student achievement = poor proxy for teacher quality
- Multiple variables affect pupil progress
- 1,500+ decisions teachers make daily
- Impossible to isolate single teacher impact

Alternative Approaches Needed:

- Classroom observation with context
- Teacher reflection and professional growth
- Stakeholder feedback and peer review
- Focus on teaching processes, not just outcomes

The Risk:

"*If teacher development is held to account by student achievement alone, it will not succeed*"

Chapter 4: The Old Curiosity Shop - Teacher Voices

"…new uncertainties and anxieties of their wild and wandering life." (Dickens, 32)

Our Research Approach:

- 50 teachers interviewed: 25 ECTs, 17 mentors, 8 induction tutors
- All lead providers represented
- Semi-structured interviews at end of first 2-year cohort (2023)
- Systems approach to understanding ECF implementation

What We Asked:

- Expectations vs reality of ECF experience
- What worked and what didn't
- Impact on professional development
- Suggestions for improvement

Research Findings: What Teachers Really Experienced

Benefits and Challenges Revealed

ECT Benefits:

✅ **Mentor support - "I have a brilliant relationship with my mentor"**

✅ **Confidence building - "Massive increase in confidence and knowledge"**

✅ **Learning from others - Face-to-face networking valued most**

ECT Challenges:

❌ **Workload overload - "Two hours a fortnight isn't enough"**

❌ **Repetitive content - "First year was repetitive of ITT"**

❌ **Generic delivery - "Death by PowerPoint"**

Key Finding:

SUCCESS DEPENDED ON MENTOR EXPERIENCE AND ABILITY TO ADAPT THE FRAMEWORK

ECF System: Benefits and Challenges

What the System Delivered

What Worked Well:

- Time for professional confidence building
- Structured mentoring relationships
- Regular teaching conversations
- Two-year development period
- Culture of learning in schools

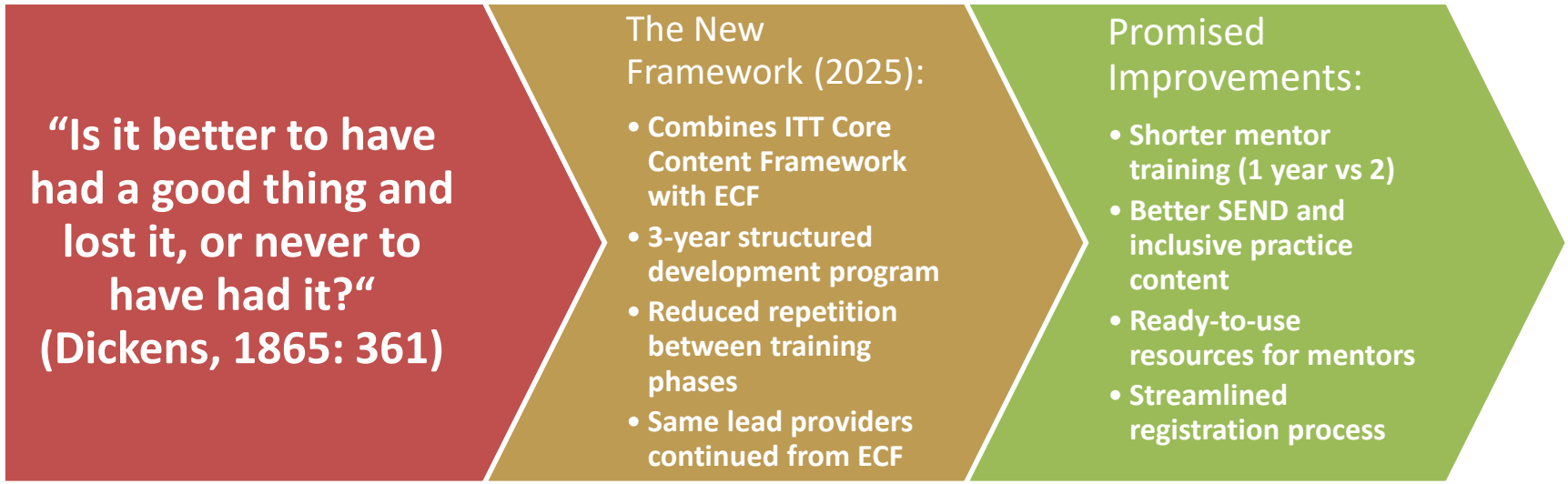
What Didn't Work:

- Insufficient time allocation for requirements
- Generic, context-free content
- Poor quality delivery by lead providers
- Tick-box mentality rather than genuine development
- •Mentor overload - actual time far exceeded allocation

Teacher:

"The ECF is effectively someone giving you a lesson plan and resources, and you modify it"

Chapter 5: Our Mutual Friend - The ITTECF Reform



International Comparisons: Learning from Singapore

A Different Model of Teacher Development

Singapore's Approach:

- 100 hours CPD per year for ALL teachers
- Professional Learning Communities in every school
- Career-long development emphasis
- Peer collaboration and reflection built-in

England's Approach (ITTECF):

- Front-loaded development in first 3 years
- Limited ongoing support after induction
- Government-prescribed content and delivery
- Individual rather than collaborative focus

The Contrast:

Singapore embeds development in school life; England treats it as additional burden

Government Control vs Professional Agency

"The Greed for Control"

Continued Government Control:

- EEF remains sole arbiter of "best evidence"
- Cognitive science dominance over other approaches
- Prescribed content and delivery methods
- Market-driven procurement of providers

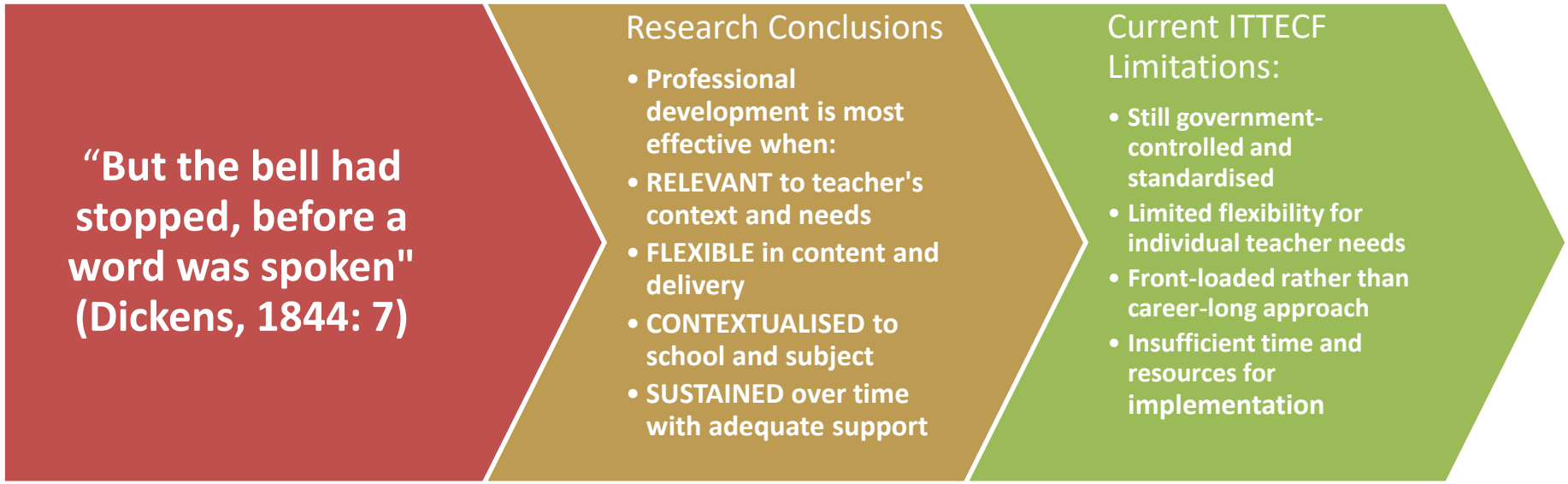
The Cost of Control:

- Reduces teacher professional agency
- Limits contextual adaptation
- Creates compliance mentality
- Undermines innovative practice

Critical Question:

"*Is a profession without autonomy a profession at all?*"

Conclusion: The Chimes - What Could Be



Components of Effective ECTE/TE

A Model for the Future	**Essential Elements**	1. Flexible, personalised development plans	- Based on individual teacher needs and context
2. Context-relevant content and delivery	- Adapted to school, phase, and subject	3. Quality mentoring with adequate time	- Experienced mentors with proper training and support
4. Networking and collaboration opportunities	- Peer learning communities and professional networks	5. Career-long entitlement	- Sustained development beyond early career phase

Vision for the Future: A Tale of Teacher Enrichment

New Kernow, 2035

In This Imagined Future...

- Teaching is a HIGH-STATUS graduate career of choice
- One full day per week professional development for 3 years
- Ongoing entitlement throughout career
- Teacher autonomy and agency restored
- Virtual reality learning tools
- Personalised development journeys not standardised frameworks

The Promise:

"*We stand at the dawn of a new era in education... where teachers are valued not just for what they know, but for their capacity to grow and adapt*"

What's the answer?



ARE MENTORS SIMPLY DELIVERING A FRAMEWORK, OR ARE THE DEVELOPING A TEACHER?



WHY?

COMPETITION

https://mosaic.penrose.education/tag/early-career-teacher-entitlement/

