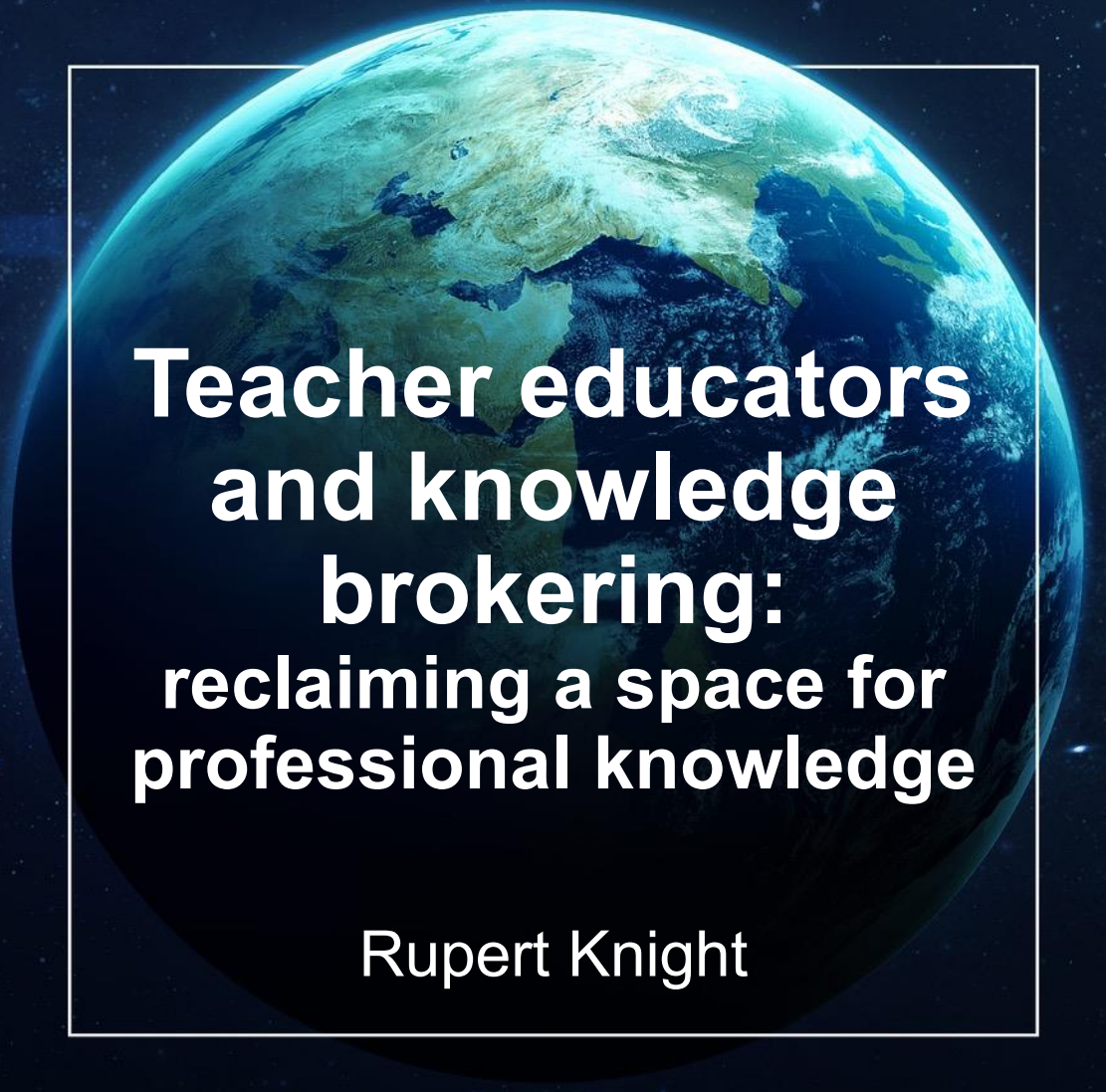
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Teacher educators and knowledge brokering:
reclaiming a space for professional knowledge

Rupert Knight

UCET November 2025

Three questions

1. How can we, and colleagues in school, reclaim some ownership of knowledge for teaching?

2. How can we make the most of the distinctive place that UBTEs occupy in the ‘in between' spaces of education?

3. Is there a way of drawing together and giving status to the knowledge building we do, beyond everyday ITE, in a more coherent way?

Interest groups

Curriculum development

Subject advisory groups





Communities of inquiry

Lesson study

Teachers as researchers

Interest groups

Curriculum development

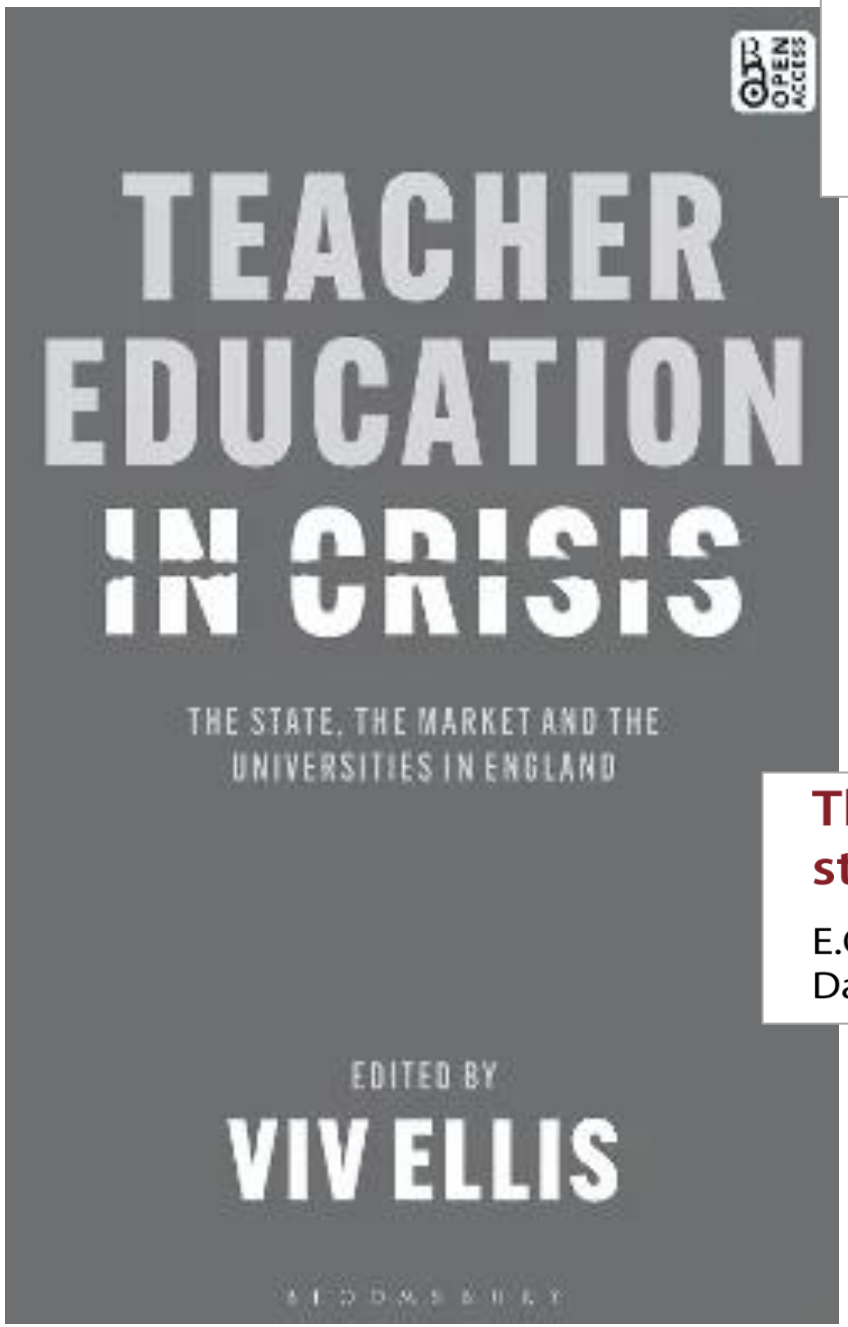
Subject advisory groups

- Bringing together people for new purposes
- Focusing on a defined object of inquiry
- Often beginning with the schools' or teachers' concerns and interests
- Learning in a reciprocal way
- Acknowledging context-related differences
- Involving professional judgment

Communities of inquiry

Lesson study

Teachers as researchers



Does initial teacher education (in England) have a future?

Trevor Mutton and Katharine Burn

Department of Education, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK of Great Britain and UK, Oxfordshire, UK

Towards Instrumental Trainability in England? The 'Official Pedagogy' Of The Core Content Framework

Jim Hordern & Clare Brooks

The Impact of the Initial Teacher Education Reaccreditation Process on Teacher Educator Identity

Karan Vickers-Hulse, Jane Carter & Sarah Whitehouse

The contribution of Teacher education to universities: a case study for international teacher educators

E.C Hoult [a], Judy Durrant [b], Richard Holme [c], Christine Lewis [d], David Littlefair [a], Matthew McCloskey-Martinez [a] and Lizana Oberholzer [e]

Reclaiming the narrative and re-professionalising the teacher

Responding to the homogenous and prescriptive policy in ITE in England

Lisa Murtagh, Elizabeth Gregory, Rosa Archer and Karen Beswick

‘The de-professionalism engendered by the ‘divorce of knowledge from the knower’ (Bernstein, 2000) that the CCF represents leaves teachers malleable, with little wherewithal symbolically or epistemologically to scrutinise proposed changes or to contribute meaningfully to cycles of policy reform.’

(Hordern & Brooks, 2023, p.813)

‘Teachers as intellectuals who take an enquiring stance to their work and make meaningful contributions to the professional knowledge base…

[Teachers as] epistemic agents, who act as independent thinkers, recognising that knowledge, policy and practice are contestable, provisional and contingent.’

(UCET, 2020)

‘Even in the face of tightly specified policies, teacher education is enacted in ways that are highly **local**…Many goals of teacher preparation are best met at the **intersection** of universities, schools and communities.’

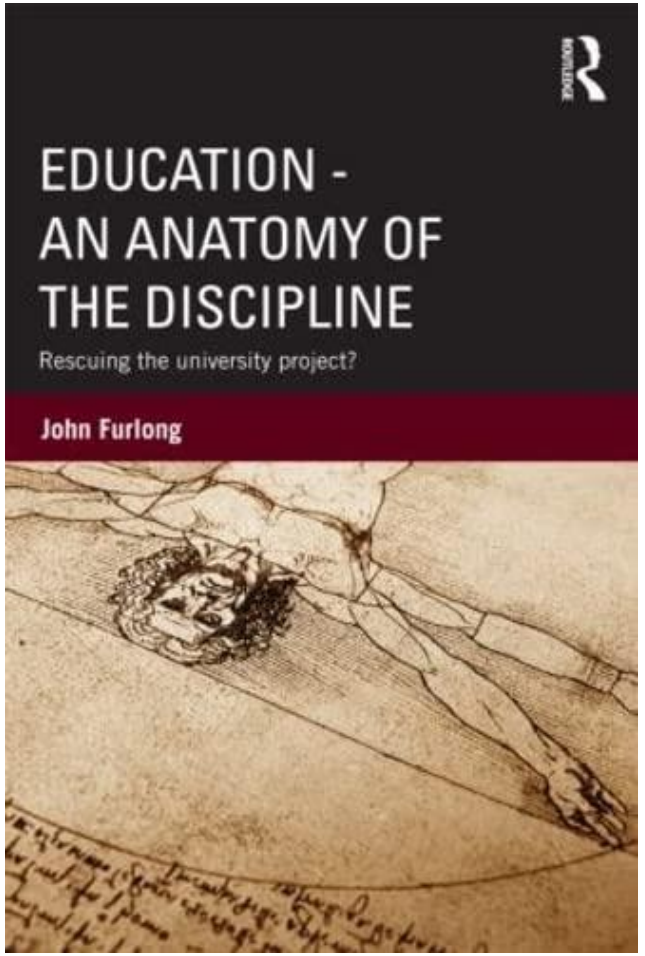
(Cochran-Smith, 2005, p.13).

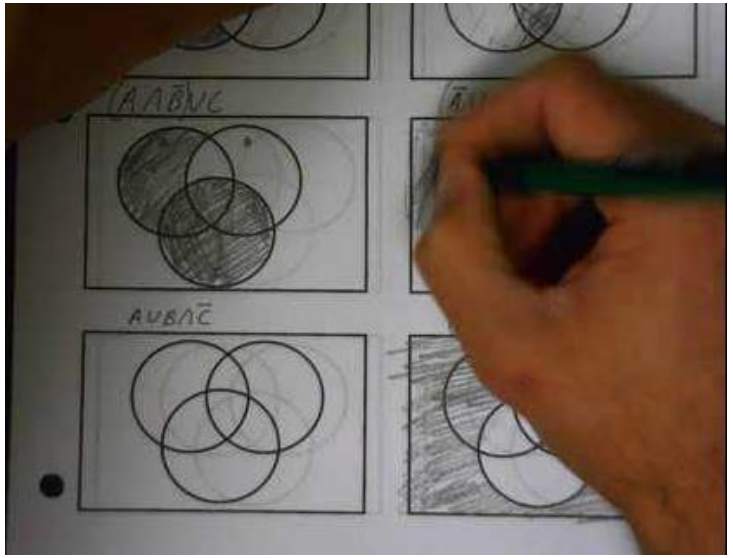


As ‘**specialists** in practical theory’, university-based teacher educators are…

‘**uniquely well placed** to work with practitioners to help them form a bridge for themselves between their own practical experience and other forms of professional knowledge.’

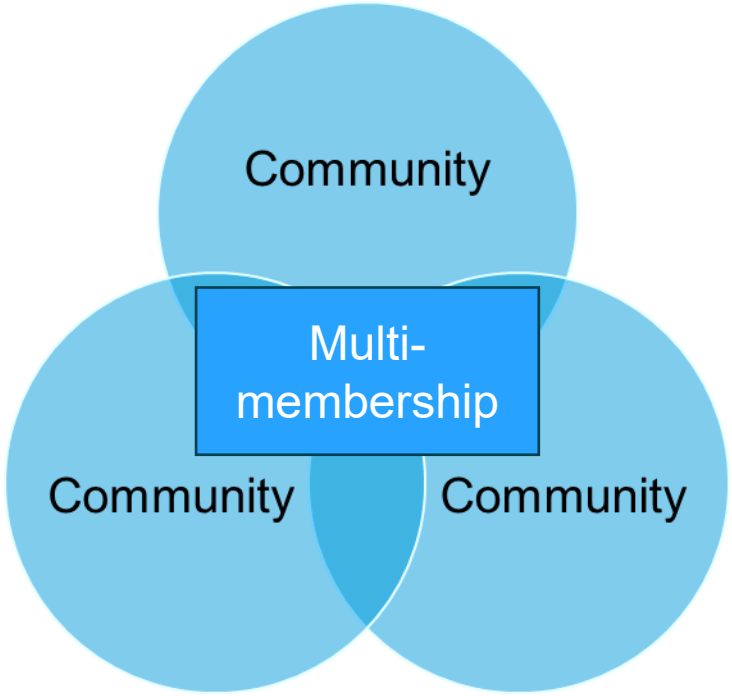
(Furlong, 2013 p. 186).



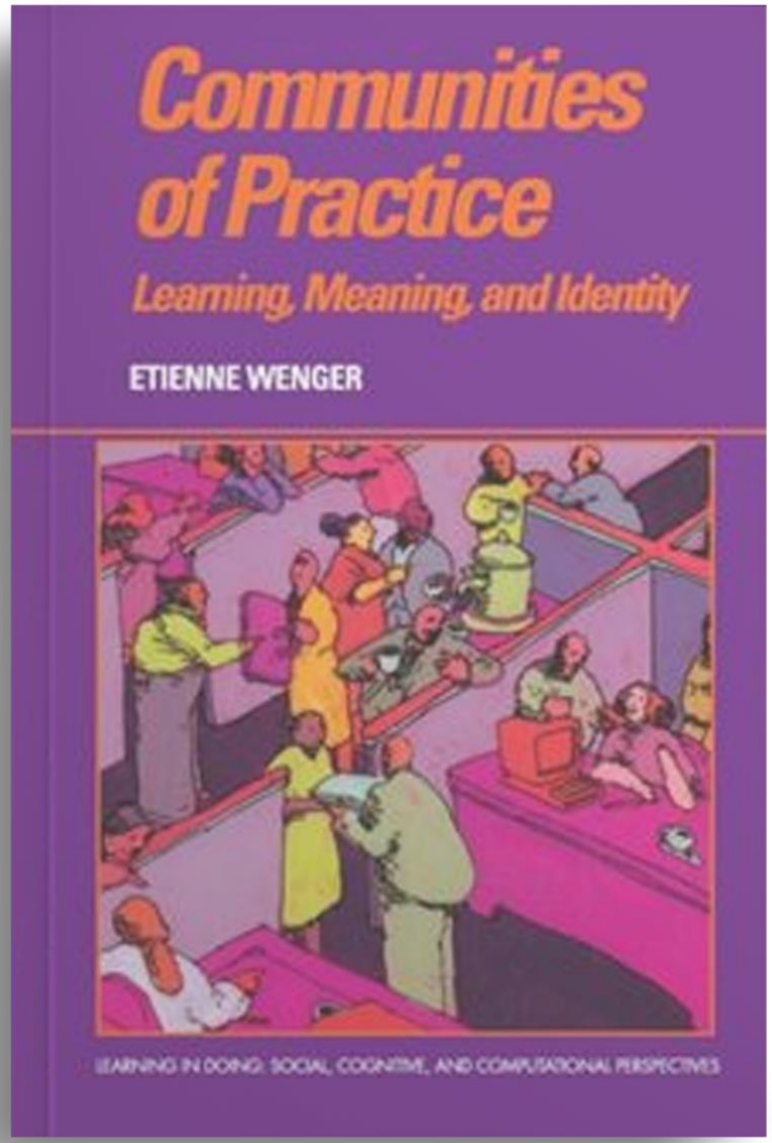

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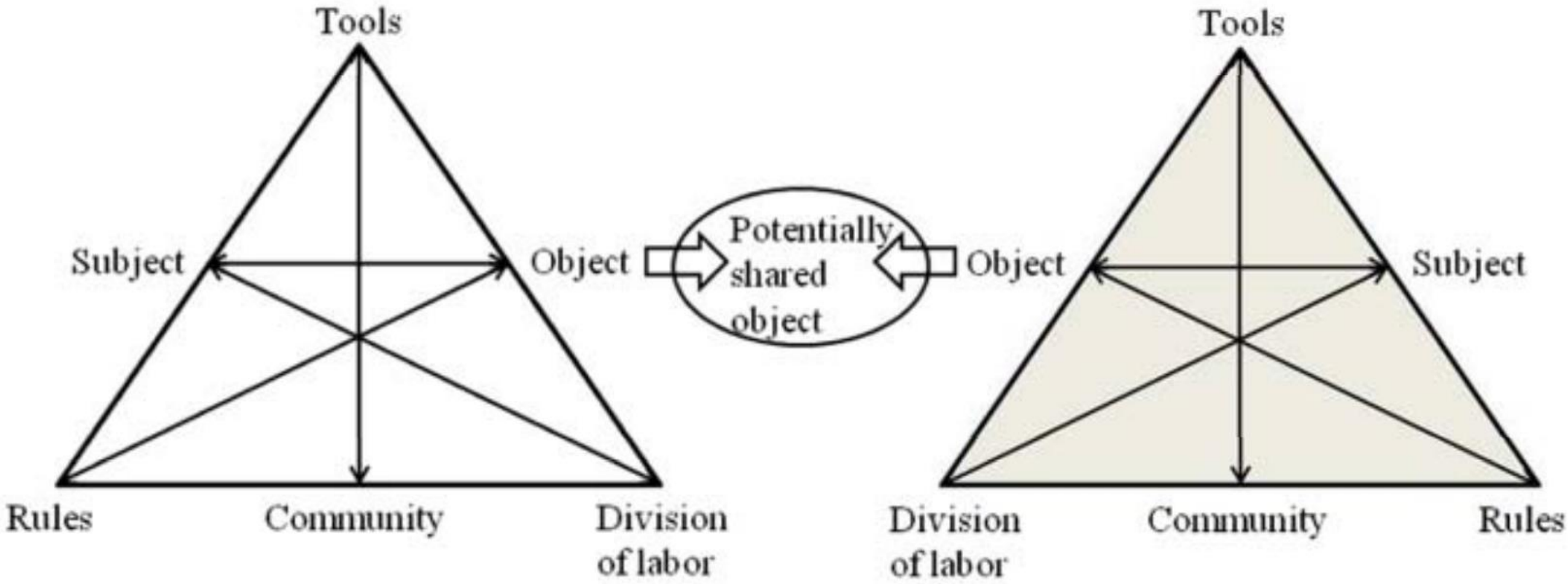






Boundaries: ‘areas of unusual learning, places where perspectives meet and new possibilities arise. Radically new insights often arise at the boundaries between communities.’
(Wenger, 1999. p.8)





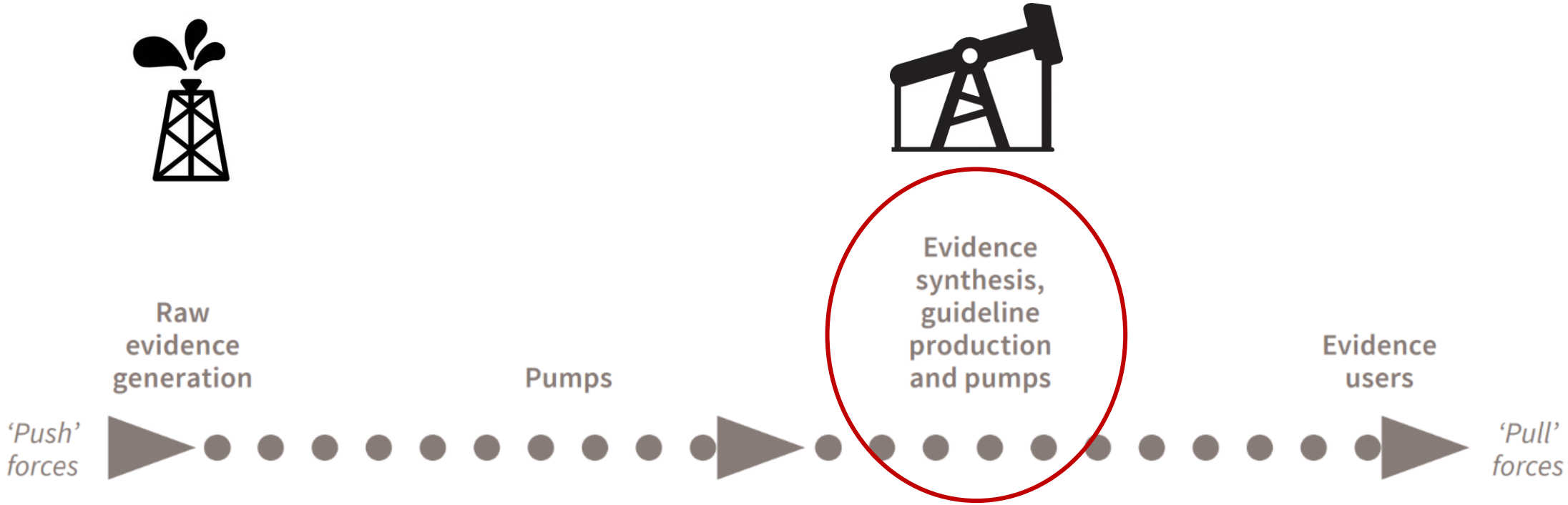
(Engeström, 2001 in Akkerman & Bakker, 2011)

Knowledge brokering

‘A type of mediation and/or boundary spanning which supports knowledge flow between research, practice and policy in a variety of ways.’

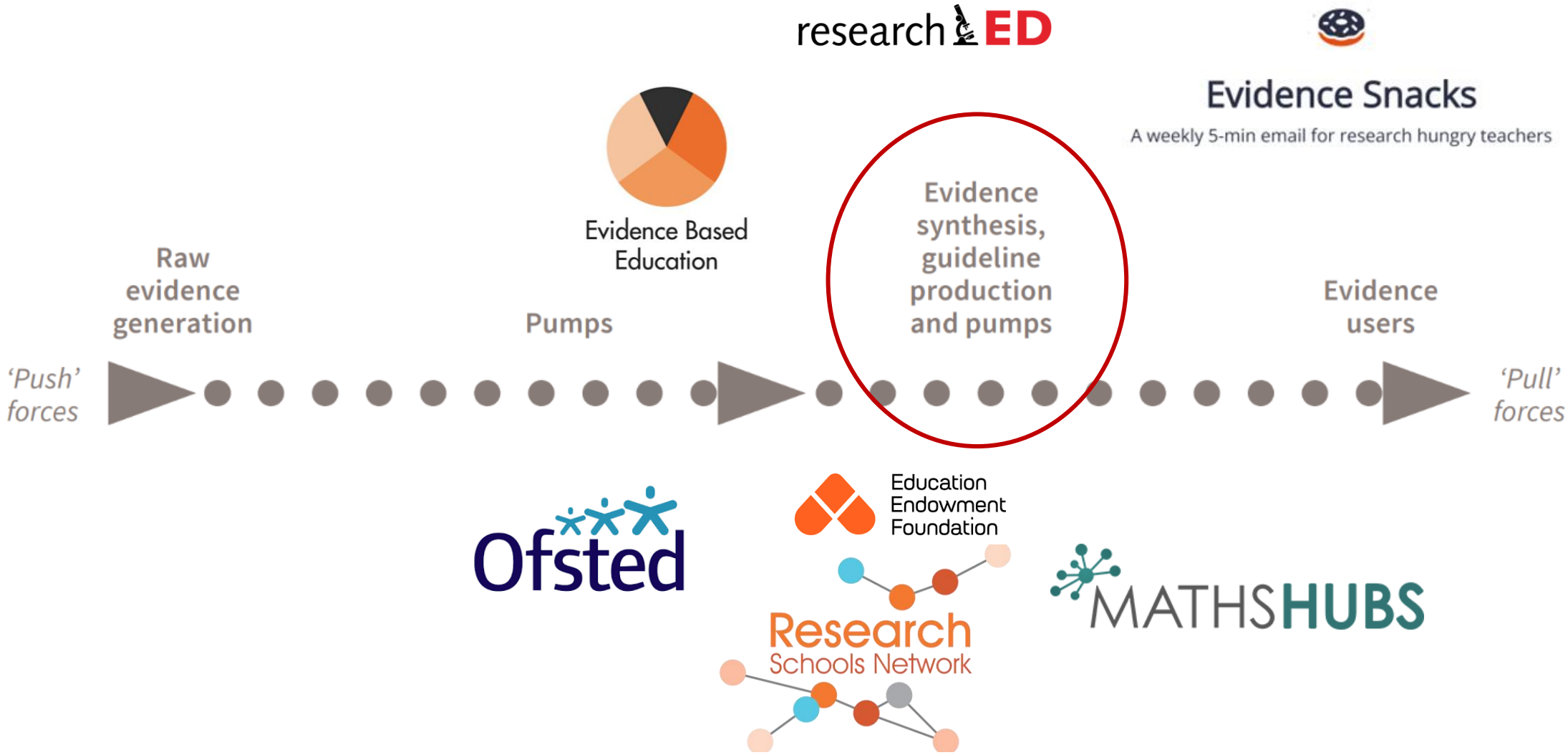
(Rycroft-Smith, 2022, p. 7)

A busy space: the ‘evidence eco-system’



(Shepherd, 2014)

A busy space: the ‘evidence eco-system’



Evidence brokering or knowledge brokering?

Department for Education

Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework

‘The ITTECF, as with its predecessors, is based on the best available evidence from this country and around the world, assured by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF).’

SCHOOLS WEEK

Row over new Ofsted ‘high-quality’ research checks

New inspections will judge teacher trainers as needing 'urgent improvement' if use of 'discredited research' isn't tackled



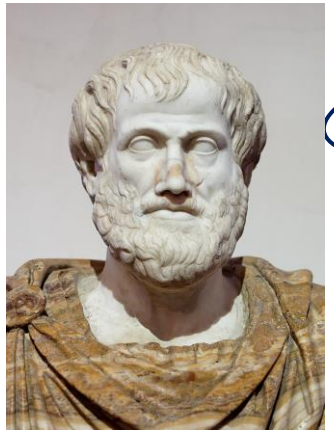
Lydia Chantler-Hicks

19 Sep 2025, 12:00

More from this author

See discussion

Evidence brokering or knowledge brokering?



- Episteme
- Techne
- Phronesis

(e.g. Malin et al. 2025)

- Knowledge for teaching
- Knowledge in teaching
- Knowledge of teaching

(Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999)

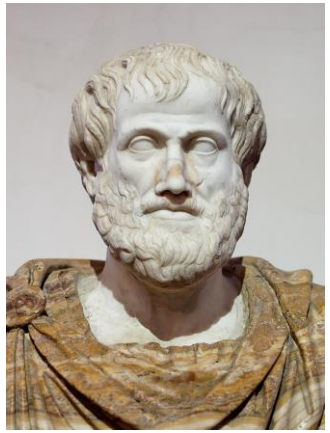
- Propositional knowledge
- Case knowledge
- Strategic knowledge

(Shulman, 1986)

- Formal knowledge
- Practical knowledge

(Fenstermacher, 1994)

Evidence brokering or knowledge brokering?



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(e.g. Malin et al. 2025)

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Knowledge brokering

‘A type of mediation and/or boundary spanning which supports knowledge flow between research, practice and policy in a variety of ways.’

(Rycroft-Smith, 2022, p. 7)

Interrogating the definition

‘Smoothing the waters’ or ‘activism and disruption’?

Two-way flow?

‘A type of mediation and/or boundary spanning which supports knowledge flow between research, practice and policy in a variety of ways.’

(Rycroft-Smith, 2022, p. 7)

- Community?
- Who is doing the brokering?
- Transformation of practice?

Features of knowledge brokering

Key concepts

- Boundary brokers
- Boundary crossing
- Boundary objects

(e.g. Wenger, 1998)





‘Mechanisms’

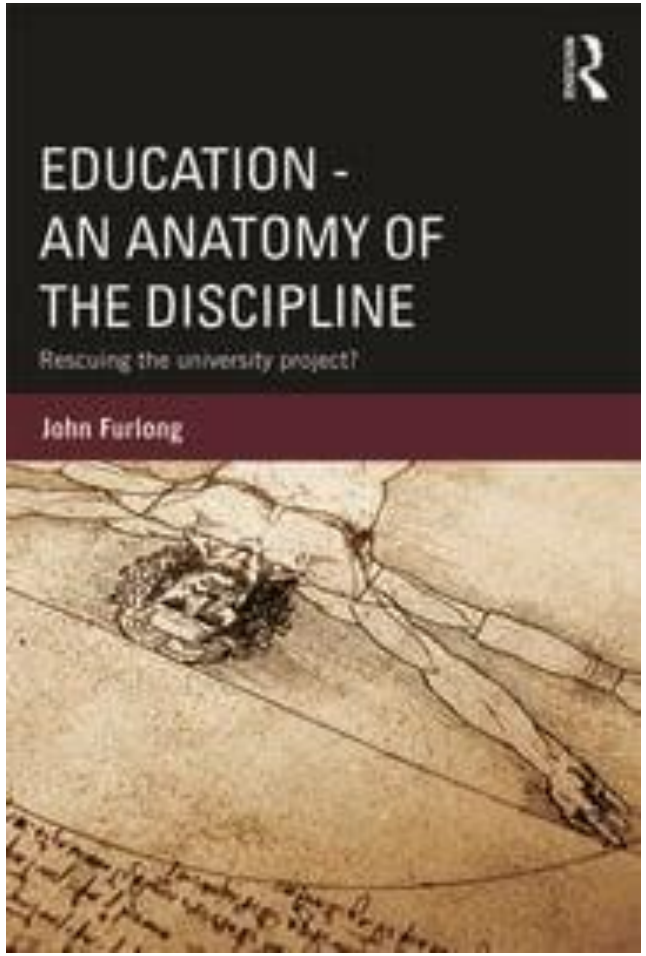
- Identification
- Coordination
- Reflection
- Transformation

(Akkerman & Bakker, 2011)

As ‘specialists in practical theory’, university-based teacher educators are…

‘**uniquely well placed** to work with practitioners to help them form a bridge for themselves between their own practical experience and other forms of professional knowledge.’

(Furlong, 2013 p. 186).



Special attributes of UBTEs?

Local social capital	• Respects local contexts • Knows the 'right' people • Is not affiliated to any one school group • Is able to facilitate diverse groups	Identification
Valued expertise	• Has connections to wider knowledge-base • Is associated with academic 'kudos' of university	Coordination & reflection
Outsider perspective	• Represents safety and idealism ('what could be') • Offers critical friendship • Fosters pedagogically productive talk	Coordination & reflection
Experience and empathy	• Has a background as a teacher • Is a colleague of academics • Is able to relate and talk to all parties	Transformation

(Knight, 2024)

‘The fact that **somebody’s been interested in what you do**, what you can see and your opinion on it is really important.’

‘**Going into schools** sends a clear message that actually [universities] care about what’s going on in schools.’

“It couldn’t just be anybody”



Creating the conditions

‘Brokering knowledge is delicate. It requires enough legitimacy to be listened to and enough distance to bring something really new.’

(Wenger, 1999, p.10)

Creating the conditions

‘Teacher educators need to know a great many things that are different from and go well beyond both what teachers need to know and what university faculty members need to know about their own areas of scholarly expertise…

We believe that a central component of preparing teacher educators as researchers should be the development of **an inquiry stance, which challenges the dichotomy between research and practice, thinking and doing, knowledge and experience.**

(Cochran-Smith et al. 2020, p.20-21)

Creating the conditions

‘I think people are waking up to the fact that we have a knowledge base and relationships with schools that give access to this kind of work…

I think **confidence** is important: **legitimising** the knowledge base of the teacher educator and that expertise.’

Possibility: feeling that you can

Readiness: feeling that you want to

Community: feeling that you know how

Three questions

1. How can we, and colleagues in school, reclaim some agency in the realm of knowledge for teaching?

2. How can we make the most of the distinctive place that UBTEs occupy in the ‘in between spaces’ of education?

3. Is there a way of drawing together and articulating some of the knowledge work we do in a more coherent and powerful way?

How can teachers and teacher educators develop as inquiring professionals?

University of Nottingham
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Thank you

rupert.knight@nottingham.ac.uk



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