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**Teacher education in France under the Hollande government: reconstructing and reinforcing the republic.**

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## **Reconstructing and reinforcing the republic – teacher education in France under the Hollande government**

### Abstract

Successive republican governments in France have constructed a complex educational context, which is rhetorically committed to a myth of provision of educational equality of opportunity (Baudelot 2009) whilst in practical terms is characterized by a system focused on the (re-)production of elites (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). This article aims to consider the political drivers and levers that are transforming French teacher education during the current challenging economic, social and cultural context. It uses a relatively new methodological approach to the analysis of policy evolution and development by applying a critical analysis of discourse, which considers the ways in which teacher education policy is ‘reproduced and reworked’. This is achieved through the discourse analysis of a policy speech made in October 2013 by the then Minister of Education, Vincent Peillon, contextualized by comparisons with reforms enacted by the previous Sarkozy government (masterisation). The article, therefore, utilizes a systematic framework that allows analysis at the levels of contextualization and deconstruction of the text. The article highlights developments to date in the arguably unique approach of the Hollande government, driven by the relationship between the republican state and the education system in France.

The article will also consider how reaction following the Charlie Hebdo attacks of January 2015 afforded opportunities to assert new validity for the teacher education policy espoused within Peillon’s speech.

## Keywords

Policy analysis, critical discourse analysis, French teacher education, masterisation

## **Introduction**

The approach to the organisation of teacher education in France underwent a massive transformation in 2010. As Lapostolle and Chevaillier (2011) point out, this transformation was centred around three educational policy reforms: the requirement that all teachers are qualified to masters level (masterisation); the reorganization of the recruitment process for teachers; and the integration of the formerly independent teacher education colleges (the Instituts Universitaires de Formation de Maîtres - *IUFM's*).

This article investigates the political forces that are re-shaping teacher education in France during a period of societal change and economic challenge. These forces crucially involves those which seek to maintain the historic commitment to republican values as central to the education system and those which are challenging the inherent franco-centricity of this status quo in light of France's growing multiculturalism, particularly highlighted in tensions within the educational system that precede, but have been brought into sharp public focus, by the Charlie Hebdo attacks of January 2015. The article employs an innovative methodological approach to trajectory analysis through critical textual work. The significance of utilising such an approach lies, as Ball points out, in the perspective that policy is not fixed but is 'reproduced and reworked over time through reports, speeches...and so on' (2013a, 299). The authors, therefore, chose to consider the ways in which teacher education policy is 'reproduced and reworked' through the analysis of a speech made in October 2013 by the then Minister of Education, Vincent Peillon. The value of political speeches as key drivers of policy has been widely posited in the literature (Steer et al. 2007, Hyatt 2013) and are noted by Exley and Ball (2011: 108) as feeding 'into normative

discursive shifts in the media and public mind, influenced by and influencing policy'. Ball (1993) previously has usefully differentiated between policy as text and policy as discourse noting that while textual production an important element of a trajectory analysis, it is only part of a picture that also includes the context of influence and the context of practice(s).

However, as the current teacher education policy of the Hollande government is a reform of that enacted by the previous Sarkozy government, the analysis will also offer insights into the trajectory of the policy of '*masterisation*' of teachers across governments. The speech was particularly significant as it signaled the advent of a very different approach to teacher education from that of the Sarkozy government, being grounded in the 'ESPE', (*École supérieure du professorat et de l'éducation*) which is the cornerstone of Hollande's education policy.

The article will also seek to highlight developments between the time of the speech and the time of writing this article (January 2015), offering some insights into the way in which the French government has responded in a complex and nuanced manner to the global pressure of neoliberalism, in arguably a unique manner in comparison with other international contexts, due to the historic and pervasive post-Revolutionary relationship between the state and the education system in France. It is in this new perspective that the significance of this analysis lies. The analysis will also consider the way that the changed context following the Charlie Hebdo attacks of 7<sup>th</sup> January 2015 has offered new avenues for the claim to legitimacy of the Hollande government's teacher training policy outlined in the speech.

## **Literature Review**

Dobbins and Martens cite PISA research which indicates that ‘a large number of French youths believe that they are not sufficiently supported and encouraged by their teachers’ and that lessons are ‘too monotonous’ and ‘teacher centred’ and there is an ‘absence of methodological diversity’ (2012, 30). Pressure from PISA results may partly explain why both the Sarkozy government of 2007-2012 and the current Hollande government have placed teacher-training policy as the cornerstone of their educational reforms. With masterisation and significant changes to the institutes where teachers are educated, the period since 2007 been a time of rapid and turbulent change.

Olssen et al. observe, that: ‘Fundamentally, policy is about the exercise of political power and the language that is used to legitimate that process’ (2004, 71-72). In pointing to the connection between language and power, they draw on the insights of both Fairclough - who asserts ‘language has become perhaps the primary medium of social control and power’ (2001, 2) and Ball who argues that power ‘is as much about what can be said and thought as what can be done – it is discursive’ (Ball 2013b, 57). He argues that discourses are about what can be believed and asserted, in which contexts and with what authority. Thus, certain possibilities for thought are constructed and others are denied or constrained.

‘Discourse’ is a concept fundamental to this analysis of the Hollande government’s teacher training policy, not least because the methodology adopted is the Critical Higher Education Policy Discourse Analysis Framework (Hyatt 2013). This framework, rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis, enables a systematic, rigorous, yet

flexible, approach not only towards the deconstruction of the policy text itself, but also the political context from which the text arises. This analysis reveals that Hollande's teacher training policy relies heavily for its legitimation on the discourse of 'the Republic' – a complex ideological construct that is critical to understanding the Minister's speech. It is also a discourse that has a long and powerful resonance in historical considerations of French educational policy. Lelièvre (2000, 5) points to the immense weight of tradition in the French education system. Indeed, Peillon begins his speech to trainee teachers with a rousing reminder of the importance of this tradition: 'You must live and breathe the history of our Republic. It is inextricably linked to the education system. It has been the case since the French Revolution' (Peillon 2013, 21-22).

Lelièvre confirms that 'Secular republican schooling, inaugurated under the triumphant Third Republic, completed the work of uniting the nation and forged the identity of the French republican citizen' (2000, 6). The corollary to this conflation of the Republic and its education system is that any neoliberal dismantling, for instance, of the state education apparatus, could be construed as the dismantling of the Republic itself. An example of this can be seen with the Sarkozy government's introduction of a new law in August 2007 (Loi Pécresse), drawing on the 'neo-liberal discourse of 'autonomy', giving universities control of their budgets and assets and increasing the powers of their university presidents. Universities will have the right to create charitable foundations and increase the presence on university boards of governors, of representatives from business and industry. The impact of neoliberalism in transforming the symbolic boundaries of French society is highlighted by Lamont and Duvoux (2014: 13) who assert that:

‘education remains the key mechanism for the production of inequality, at a time when the French government is directing more resources toward the well-off in budgetary appropriations for schools, which disproportionately go to middle-class establishments’.

The analysis of Peillon’s speech, thus, documents the tension between an evolving education system shackled by 19<sup>th</sup>-century ideology in a 21<sup>st</sup>-century world.

However, this inquiry into Peillon’s policy for new teacher training institutes, which link regional universities, reveals that the Hollande government is pursuing a very different policy in its Higher Education sector from its predecessor.

### **France as a secular republican educational system**

The modern French education system can be traced back to the Napoleonic era and the setting up of lycées and the baccalauréat examination system, in 1802 and 1808 respectively. Through the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, education became a deeply politicized battleground between the republican left and the monarchist right, with the former seeking a secular education aimed at embedding republican principles. The Jules Ferry Laws of 1881 and 1882 formed the basis of the modern republican school (l'école républicaine) cementing the anti-clerical philosophy, which has developed over the last 225 years.

Meuret (2003) argues that France is a country historically known for its introverted approach to education. It has traditionally been characterized by a uniformity of training and a concentration of authority from the central government, traceable back to these republican values which is

‘consistent with the typically French tendency for political uniformity and central government steering based on the logic of the *L'une et indivisible République*’ (Dobbins and Martens 2012, 27).

This has constructed an educational context which is both rhetorically committed to the provision of the myth of educational equality of opportunity (Baudelot 2009), whilst in practical terms being characterized by a system focused on the production of elites (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, Baudelot and Establet 2009).

So in France, the Republic and the educational system are fundamentally enmeshed as exemplified in, the then president, Jacques Chirac's pronouncement in 2003 that 'the school system is the cement of our nation' (France-Diplomatie 2014).

The paradoxical nature of the clash of egalitarian and elitist forces this has produced is articulated by Dobbins and Martens (2012, 28), who note that:

'the historically embedded strong role of the state in education policy has also led to situations in which well-intentioned reforms aimed at dismantling bureaucracy, increasing autonomy, competition and decentralization and thus "less government" are interpreted as an assault on equality'.

They note that reform is often opposed by the left as a challenge to the fundamental republican principle of *égalité* where the

reform capacity of France is also aggravated by the strong mobilization capacity of reform adversaries. The threat and reality of nationwide public strikes reduce the state's means for taking action despite favourable institutional prerequisites for reforms' (Dobbins and Martens 2012, 28).

### **The post -2010 context of French teacher education**

From 2010, entry qualifications to the teaching profession were set at 'Bac + 5' (Baccalaureate, Bachelor's, two-year Master's plus passing one of the competitive recruitment examinations or *concours*) by the Sarkozy government – the so-called 'masterisation' policy. Lapostolle and Chevaillier write that the abrupt change from a Bachelor's-level entry to a Master-level entry to the profession 'was perceived as

highly disruptive' (2011, 453) and publicised as 'Le casse-tête de la masterisation' (the terrible headache of masterisation) (Cailleau 2009).

As Lapostolle and Chevaillier point out, the 2010 reorganisation of teacher training led to Master's courses with 'three goals (research training, professional training and preparation for recruitment competitive examinations) that are potentially conflicting' (2011, 454). Indeed, three years later, in the researchers' experience, teacher trainees were still struggling with the legacy of Sarkozy's masterisation and, from a practical perspective, it did not appear much improved by Hollande. The trainees often complained about their chaotic timetable. During the semester they had three weeks of teaching practice in local schools; a three-day mock concours; courses on education theory; courses relevant to their specialism; their Master's theses to prepare; and compulsory foreign language courses.

Although the teacher-training curriculum did not appear to have been much changed as the masterisation policy transitioned from the Sarkozy government to the Hollande government, there were visible structural changes. The IUFM (teacher training school) were transformed, into 'ESPE', (*Ecole supérieure du professorat et de l'éducation*).

The ESPEs are a very new concept in France and were described in February 2013 by Michel Heichette, the then Director of the IUFMs of the Loire Region, as 'like nothing in existence':

Neither IUFM, or classic university department, managed by two ministers (the Minister of Education for Schools and the Minister for Higher Education and Research) halfway between pre- and in-service training, attached to a university but having to collaborate with other universities in its *académie* ...

The ESPEs could be a disturbing creation. ... In addition, this reform is nestled in the reform of university education and the ESPEs could constitute prototypes of what the universities will be asked to construct in the future university federations.

(Heichette 2013, 2)

Heichette reveals both the novelty and the complex positioning of the ESPEs in the higher education landscape and their dual stewardship by both Peillon and Fiaroso (the then Minister for Higher Education and Research). Heichette also points to a dual functioning of the ESPEs, not only as part of the teacher training system in France, but that they also served as a role model for Fiaroso's 'university federations'. The Sarkozy government began a process with the Loi Pécresse to encourage more autonomy in public universities, which led to some at the end of 2013 being on the verge of bankruptcy (El Guerjouma 2013). Fiaroso followed up with the Loi Fiaroso, which allows the universities to form federations with other universities, grandes écoles and research institutes in their region. It is not impossible to imagine the possible trajectory of such a policy – private or philanthropic organisations could one day become part of a university federation thus ushering in neoliberalism 'by the back door'.

### **Methodology**

Analytically, the article utilises the Critical Higher Education Policy Discourse Analysis Framework (Hyatt 2013). This offered a systematic, text-oriented approach to the analysis of higher education providing a rigorous 'analytical and heuristic framework for the critical analysis of higher education policy texts, and of the processes and motivations behind their articulations, grounded in considerations of the relationships and flows between language, power and discourse' (Hyatt 2013, 42). The framework thus attempts to meet Ball's (1993: 16) concern with taking into

consideration the contexts of influence and that of practice. Grounded in a critical discourse analysis perspective (Fairclough 2003), the frame adopts a transdisciplinary orientation, looking at social practices both within and beyond disciplinary boundaries to pursue new perspectives. As such, it is part of an emergent methodological approach for enquiry into the field of educational research in general (Rogers 2011), and the field of higher education research more specifically (Huisman and Tight 2013).

The Critical Higher Education Policy Discourse Analysis Framework encourages the analyst to view the policy text from multiple angles and insists on a thorough analysis of the immediate and longer-term socio-political context from which the text emerges. The framework considers policy texts from two perspectives: those of ‘contextualization’ and of ‘deconstruction’. The contextualization element of the frame comprises three parts: temporal context; policy levers/drivers; and warrant. The deconstruction element considers the textual resources through which education policy texts are realized, including: modes of legitimation; intertextuality/interdiscursivity; presupposition; and lexical/grammatical construction including evaluation.

### The Text

Peillon’s 15-minute speech was given to an audience of teacher trainees and academics on 3 October 2013 in the presence of Geneviève Fioroso, Minister of Higher Education and Research, (who also spoke), to inaugurate both the ESPE in Caen and ESPEs throughout France. Peillon explains in the speech that the ESPEs are the cornerstone of the Hollande government’s school reforms, consolidated under the

June 2013 law entitled ‘The Rebuilding of the Education System of the Republic’.

Peillon does not explain in detail how the new ESPEs are going to operate, but emphasises they will be a ‘meeting place of minds’ where teachers and researchers will have the chance to mix and collaborate freely (Peillon 2013, 96-104).

### Translation

A critical approach to translation is central to ensuring the credibility of the analysis of discourses embodied within any CDA-informed methodology. One methodological challenge to this article, and to other discourse analyses of key policy texts (including policy launch speeches like this), comes in offering a credible transcript and translation of the text (Squires 2009). It is incumbent, therefore, on the researchers to offer a rigorous approach to the production of such transcripts and translations thereof. In this case, there is no official transcript of Peillon’s speech nor of other web-based sources quoted including the 2007 quoted letter to teachers by Sarkozy. In order to meet this challenge we adopted the following approach to meet the necessary criteria of rigour and credibility. One of the authors (a bi-lingual English French speaker) transcribed the texts verbatim from the websites listed in the references section. The translations were subsequently verified by two ‘mother tongue’ French speakers, who independently checked the transcripts, simultaneously listening to the video, in the case of the Peillon speech. From the approved transcripts, translations of the texts into English were prepared. Translation choices were then verified by an independent mother-tongue French speaker, who has used English and lived in English-speaking countries for 35 years. Through this process, we attempted to address potential concerns for non-French speakers, or those who may need a written text, posed by the lack of an official transcript and translation. The speech is viewable

through a video link to the official French education website (Peillon 2013) and the transcript and translation available from the authors of this article.

### **Contextualizing the policy text**

Hyatt emphasizes that ‘All policy emerges, is constructed and is understood, within a temporal context and without a clear understanding of the impact and nuances of the context, any reading of a policy text can only be partial’ (2013, p. 45). The analysis, therefore, focuses on the period 2007 to 2014, which encompasses the entire Sarkozy regime (2007-2012) and the first 32 months of the Hollande regime. In many respects, Hollande’s teacher training policy rests on that of Sarkozy and it is therefore congruent to discuss elements (actors, organisations, structures) of the two governments’ policies ‘side by side’.

### **Socio-political context, actors, organisations and structures: 2007-2014**

The current French (socialist) government took power in May 2012 when Hollande defeated the previous centre-right presidential incumbent Nicolas Sarkozy. Both governments have held a majority so have avoided the situation of cohabitation, where president and prime minister are from different parties, which can inhibit the enactment of legislation. As a result, both governments have been able to pass laws relating to education very rapidly, leading to major institutional and programme changes in teacher training in the short period between 2010 and 2013. The haste of both regimes to pass laws relating to education reform may, in part, be due to a desire to reduce the education budget, as France spends more than the OECD average on education (Lugnier 2011, 147). Indeed, Duru-Bellat bemoans ‘the obsession with

economic needs' that 'remains a constant characteristic of French policies in recent decades' (2008, 89).

Although for many years, debates about France's education system tended to be inward-looking 'family affairs' (Baudelot and Establet 2009, 11), neither the Sarkozy nor the Hollande government has been able to ignore PISA data, which has increasingly been the subject of public debate (Dobbins and Martens, 2012) - despite PISA methodology not being immune to criticism. PISA data indicates that France's education system is far from the best-performing of OECD countries and, perhaps worse, that it reinforces social class differences with its pupils among the unhappiest in OECD countries.

Sarkozy chose to encapsulate his education policy in a, curiously traditional, open letter to teachers - a form that is most famous for its use in the Third Republic with the letter of Jean Jaurès to educators of 1888. However, Sarkozy explicitly breaks with the Third Republic, and traditional republican values, in insisting that students be treated as individuals and stressing:

It would be pointless ... to seek to resuscitate a golden age of education, of culture, of knowledge that never existed. Each era generates their own expectations. We are not going to remake the school of the Third Republic, nor that of our parents nor even our own. What is incumbent on us to do is to meet the challenge of the knowledge economy and the information revolution  
(Sarkozy 2007, p. 2 – translated by authors)

With its masterisation policy, the Sarkozy government went on in 2010 to 'thoroughly transform' (Lapostolle and Chevaillier 2011, 451) teacher training.

Lapostolle and Chevaillier explain that:

Until 2010, the Ministry used to select graduates with Bachelor's degrees and prepare them for two years in institutions that were distinct from universities,

the Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maitres (IUFM). The first year was dedicated to preparation for the competitive recruitment examinations and the second year was devoted to professional training. This preparation did not lead to a degree and, therefore, students who attended this preparation cycle, but were not recruited in the end, had no academic recognition for the two years they had studied after their Bachelor's degree. (2011, 451)

Under Sarkozy, the previously independent IUFMs were absorbed into universities where they undertook the initial training of teachers. After passing the concours, students were hired by the Education Ministry and then given in-service training. Previously IUFMs had handled both initial and in-service training. Complications arose in the organisation of the training periods, leading to some students unable to find a work placement (Lapostolle and Chevaillier 2011, 453-455) or some students put into teaching situations where they were unable to cope.

Peillon, in the first minutes of his speech, evokes the frustration of the teacher trainees (lines 11-19) and describes the teacher-training situation, as Sarkozy left it, as 'unacceptable' for 'a country like ours'. Peillon does not outline all the aspects of his reforms to teacher training in his speech, but they include making the concours more orally weighted and professionally oriented.

Peillon's new arrangements allowed no time for reflection and the aims of the different modules, as Lapostolle and Chevaillier (2011, 454) comment, as under the Sarkozy government, were not compatible. The potential for stress remained very high. With the concours between the first and second year of the Master's programme, a student failing the concours at the first attempt would have to enter the second year of the Master's with, at the least, diminished confidence that they could pass. It is worth bearing in mind that there is only a one-in-three chance of passing

the CAPES externe (le *Certificat d'aptitude au professorat de l'enseignement du* second degré: the most popular concours). Of the 14,865 students that sat for the examinations in 2013, only 5,164 were accepted (CAPES 2013). To fail to meet a cherished ambition to teach because of the obstacle of the concours, after having submitted to the rigours of a complicated two-year Master's, has the potential to be hugely disappointing. Also to be considered is the huge waste of time and resources in training students, at public expense, for two years who may, at the end, not be employed as they have failed the concours.

Teacher unions (e.g. FSU, SNUipp, UNSAEducation, SNES), university teachers' unions (e.g. SNESUP-FSU (National Union of Higher Education-University Union Federation) and the students' union UNEF (National Union of French students) are also key players in the context as illustrated by their major roles in protests and strikes in 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013 partly driven in response to the reforms in teacher training and the content of the concours required for teaching in primary and secondary education. This has led to a contradictory position in which many of the protests held in the name of improving the quality of the educational experience of apprenants (learners) and the working conditions of teachers and lecturers, actually serve to mitigate a system of teacher as fonctionnaire (civil servant) which arguably encourages pedagogical inertia and mitigates against development in research-informed developments in attitudes to learning, teaching assessment and classroom relationships. As Dobbins and Martens assert: 'one might argue that some reform adversaries are clinging to a principle (equality) which has not been realized and to a policy framework, which may be detrimental to its realization' (2012, 37).

### The episteme of the concours system

France is one of five countries in Europe that recruits its teachers through competitive examinations (concours). The question that ‘dare not speak its name’ is why not follow the majority of EU countries and end the concours system, which costs the taxpayer millions each year, and allow heads to recruit and select their teachers after the Master’s?

Lapostolle and Chevaillier explain why the concours system persists:

The founding principles of the French Republic require that teachers must be trained and recruited in exactly the same conditions over the whole of the national territory. Plans to abolish national competitive examinations and to transfer the recruitment responsibility to heads of schools, ... have met fierce opposition from the teachers’ unions on the basis that it would jeopardise the principle of equality in provision of public service over the national territory and that it would subject teachers to the ‘arbitrary power’ of school heads. This position is endorsed by a substantial part of the population and the political establishment (2011, 457).

Not even Sarkozy, with his tentative steps towards ‘modernisation’, could remove the concours. In 2011, he commissioned the ‘Prospering Report’ (Assemblée Nationale 2011) into the progress of the masterisation policy. The rapporteur tentatively suggested that with masterisation the concours was made redundant. He thought it would take 10 to 15 years, however, to prepare public opinion for such a significant change (Assemblée Nationale 2011, 118). Grosperin was, however, pressured by the members of his task force to remove this recommendation from the final version of the report. One commentator, Martine Faure, commented (Assemblée Nationale 2011, 139):

A teacher is a civil servant ... his or her recruitment must imperatively be undertaken in a transparent manner with a mind to maintaining Republican

equality throughout the whole territory ... Education must stay national and that implies the recruitment of teachers, civil servants, by concours.

In 'speaking the unspeakable' about ending the concours system, this analysis enters the territory of Foucault's (1970) episteme, which Hyatt describes as 'what counts as knowledge/truth in a particular era ... This might include ... how a society legitimates itself and achieves its social identity' (2013, 47).

### Policy-steering, drivers and levers

Policy-steering refers to the processes whereby national governments move from direct control over public service administration towards the use of a variety of different levers to indirectly guide policy. [Although the French government has not withdrawn from direct control of the school system, it certainly uses levers, specifically targets, to steer policy. One of the most notable examples was the - still unmet - target, set in the mid-80s, for 80% of high school graduates to leave school with a baccalaureate by 2000 (Lugnier 2011, 57 and 148)]. Scrutinising Peillon's speech, there appears little explicit reference to policy levers – there are no targets related to the number of concours applicants, for example. He does not even mention the Hollande government's target for 60,000 new teachers to be in place by the end of its five-year term. The analysis, therefore, focuses on policy drivers (the stated goals of policy), which are a more fertile area for analysis.

The ostensible drivers for Sarkozy's masterisation policy were, according to his Minister of Education, to significantly improve teacher training in the country by allowing teachers to begin their career with a higher qualification and to harmonise with European Union teacher training guidelines (Darcos 2008).

Lapostolle and Chevallier, however, suspect that the Sarkozy government brought in these changes with great haste under the pretext of complying with European initiatives, but they suspect that this was a ploy to overcome ‘national opposition to change’ (2011, 458). An article in *L’Express* on the eve of Sarkozy’s reforms entitled ‘The headache of masterisation’ pointed to financial savings as the most likely driver for the changes as staff and expenses in the IUFMs would be reduced upon their absorption into the universities (Cailleau 2009).

For the Hollande government the overt drivers for closing the IUFMs and creating the ESPEs, and the concomitant teacher training reforms, are overtly expressed in Peillon’s speech:

A plan for the education system ... is a plan for society. The need to pass on common values, your attitude to each other and others at large, is the reason we wanted to bring everyone together. We have stopped categorising, we have stopped separating those who are going to teach in primary school from those who want to teach in secondary school and those who want to teach in university. Those who are going to be schoolteachers in the ESPE are already working with those who are going to study to be university teachers. Academics and researchers are present in the place where teachers are trained (lines 95-103).

In a time of austerity, covert drivers for Peillon’s ESPEs could be concerned with financial reductions. ‘Bringing everyone together’ implies that there will be courses in common – it is not impossible that primary, secondary and university teacher trainees could attend introductory educational courses together. The ESPE, as mentioned earlier, is also going to be a role model for the new multi-university collaborations, Peillon could, thus, be attempting to implant the ethos of cross-fertilisation in the French higher education landscape.

## Warrant

Hyatt defines warrant as the overt justification given for a particular area of policy. ‘Evidentiary warrant’ is justification based on evidence, often empirical; the ‘accountability warrant’ is justification based on results or outcomes; the ‘political warrant’ concerns the way a policy is justified in terms of ‘the public/national interest, the public good or the construction of the “good society” ’ (2013, 48-49).

In explaining that ‘a plan for the education system ... is a plan for society’ (lines 95-96) and reminding his listeners that the education system and its values were the crucible for the formation of the Republic (lines 22-24), Peillon’s policy for creating the ESPEs and reforming teacher training are almost exclusively justified by political warrant. He suggests that the changes he proposes will lead to the construction of a better Republic. Indeed, he assigns teachers the role of ‘builders’ in this ‘rebuilding project’ (lines 86-87).

Peillon rarely uses the evidentiary warrant. Only on one occasion does he use statistics:

In our country, perhaps you know, 25% of our pupils have difficulty with basic skills when they enter collège. We are a country in which 150,000 young people leave school without qualifications each year (lines 87-89).

Arguably this is an illustration of the pre-eminence of the ‘grand narrative’ of the Republic as policy justification, over empirical/statistical evidence, that permeates the speech.

## **Deconstructing the text**

### **Modes of legitimation**

## Authorization

Hyatt defines authorization as a mode of legitimation ‘achieved by reference to tradition, authority, custom, law, institutional authority or individuals, with authority here seen as being unchallengeable’ (2013, 50). Indeed, in Peillon’s speech there are multiple references to the ‘unchallengeable’ traditions and values of the Republic.

Early in the speech, (lines 11-12), for instance, he tangentially mentions a collège named after Olympe de Gouges, an early feminist Revolutionary. Peillon moves into the crux of his speech exhorting the trainee teachers to ‘live and breathe the history of our Republic. It is inextricably linked to the education system. ‘It has been the case since the French Revolution’ (lines 21-23). Shortly afterwards he says that ‘The country of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen is a country that considers everyone has the right to education’ (lines 27-28). He goes on (lines 34-37) to refer to the ‘damage’ done to France and its education system by the previous government: ‘it was these values which permitted it, in the Third Republic, to establish the Republic’. He returns to the Third Republic before the end of his speech:

When the Republic was established after almost a century of torment – we had to wait until the beginning of the Third Republic for there to be no ... eclipse – it was established by the education system and the first legislation that was undertaken ... were the great Education Acts (lines 108-114).

Here there is reference to the Third Republic educationalist Jules Ferry whose legislation installed the three pillars of the school system: that it should be free, secular and compulsory.

Peillon concludes his speech by lauding the trainee teachers in the ESPEs as ‘the new Hussards Noirs of the Republic’ (line 147). Originally a cavalry regiment, the ‘Hussards Noirs de la République’ was the nickname given to teachers of the Third Republic, dressed in black and described as ‘sveltes, sévères, sanglés (well put together), sérieux’ (France Culture 2013). He does not address whether the Hussards Noirs are really relevant role models for trainee teachers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, demonstrating CDA’s acknowledgment that what is backgrounded through exclusion from the text can often be as significant as that which is foregrounded through inclusion.

Peillon’s search for authorization also goes back to before the French Revolution when he invokes the philosopher René Descartes. The first reference is in line 42 where he says ‘We are bodies, of course, but we are also minds’ – a reference to Cartesian dualism, which he uses to exhort trainee teachers to enrich their own and their trainees’ minds and not to be distracted by character weaknesses: ‘You will have to fight against negative tendencies – they’re present in each of us’ (line 47). In lines 78/79, he refers explicitly to Descartes: ‘It’s the spirit we want in the education system – a spirit of generosity – it’s a very old notion, a Cartesian notion. The most important virtue for Descartes was generosity.’ With a salary of €2000 per month, lower than the OECD average (Herbaut 2013), Peillon in this exhortation for teachers to be ‘generous’ is potentially attempting to construct teaching as a noble calling that should not be sullied by talk of financial reward.

### Rationalization

Hyatt describes rationalization as where ‘reference is made to the value and usefulness of a social action’ (2013, 50). Peillon exhorts teachers to be generous; indeed, the social action of ‘generosity’, and its inverse ‘selfishness’, are themes throughout the speech. There are three references to selfishness (lines 41, 48, 132) in the speech and five references to generosity (lines 50, 78, 79, 80 - two references). These frequent exhortations to generosity give the impression that to be selfish is profoundly un-Republican; being against, perhaps, the value of fraternité (solidarity). A negatively evaluated reference to ‘selfish reasons’ could be read as an attempt to convince teachers that teaching is a self-sacrificing profession, not entered into for financial rewards; for reasons unrelated to making a living; ‘one doesn’t choose to become a teacher for selfish reasons. One chooses to become a teacher because one believes in values’ (line 132).

He similarly reminds the audience that they should ‘Always be aware of the respect that you owe to each of your pupils’ (lines 54-55). Teacher respect towards pupils in France, is, in fact, questioned by Gumbel, who speaks of the ‘dictatorship of the classroom’ and its ‘pitiless and sometimes humiliating culture’ (2010, 14).

### Mythopoesis

Hyatt defines this mode of legitimation as ‘legitimation through narratives ... moral or cautionary tales’ (2013, 51). The clearest example of mythopoesis in Peillon’s speech is from lines 133 to 141. Peillon draws on teachers’ narratives around their reasons for entering the profession, to support his assertion that ‘One chooses to become a teacher because one believes in values and one wants to transmit them’

(line 133). He reports that most teachers decided to become teachers because of an influential teacher they had encountered. Interestingly, he stresses that the influential teacher ‘had authority but was not authoritarian’, to help legitimate his stance on the role of the teacher.

### Interdiscursivity/Intertextuality

‘Interdiscursivity’, Hyatt explains, refers to ‘the diverse ways in which genres and discourses interpenetrate each other.’ He defines ‘intertextuality’ as ‘the identifiable ... borrowings from other texts’ (2013, 51).

References to Descartes (line 79), and the ‘great historian’ Antoine Prost (line 112), are direct examples of intertextual reference, where the speaker aligns his argumentation with that of other respected authorities to enhance the claim to authority and credibility. Sometimes intertextuality takes the form of citing the imagined voice of others, in this case teachers, in order to construct a form of ‘straw man’ argument, which the speaker then critiques to imply their argument is a credible reading of the situation. In advancing a plea for the inclusion of disabled students, Pellion asserts:

We can’t look at each other and say ‘they won’t be able to do it;’ they’re not able;’ ‘they don’t have the means to ...’ No. (lines 30-32)

potentially echoing Baudelot and Estabiet who refer to ‘the culture of ranking students early on and sidelining them.’ (2009, 10). They also critique ‘France’s tolerance towards inequality and its reproduction.’ In fact, Peillon makes an implicit intertextual reference to Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) *La Reproduction* in line 90 ‘We are a country in which there is an increase in inequality – not a “reproduction” –

an increase in inequality at school according to one's social background' – a statement which is supported by a claim from PISA evaluations that social inequality in the French school system is increasing (Dobbins and Martens 2012).

Throughout the speech, the key interdiscursive references are those that inextricably link the French education systems with French Republican values. The centrality of this relational connection is set up in the previously cited (line 26-28) exhortation to '...the values of fairness. The country of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen is a country that considers that everyone has the right to education; that everyone can succeed' – an association that is regularly returned to throughout the speech and is inherent in much of the analysis above.

#### Lexico-grammatical construction (including evaluation and presupposition)

A thorough analysis of this aspect of textual construction would require a line-by-line analysis which is beyond the scope and space constraints of this article, as it requires a focus on, amongst other aspects: pronouns (e.g. the connections of 'we' and republican values); the positive and pejorative evaluatory nature of nouns, adjectives and adverbs, achieved by both inscribed, overt, and more covertly evoked realizations (Hyatt 2013) (e.g. 'fairness', 'equality', 'social cohesion', contrasted with 'cowardice', 'confused', 'foolish' and 'nastily'); and the lexico-grammatical construction of presupposition (e.g. it is telling that Peillon stresses that 'respect for difference is also what allows us to construct a common identity' line 75).

Immigration and the integration of immigrant children into the French school system is a highly sensitive and controversial subject (particularly in the wake of Muslim school-student unrest following the Charlie Hebdo killings), which Peillon felt unable

to mention directly perhaps in this speech. The term ‘difference’ is used abstractly allowing an interpretive space for potential readings of this as a referent to disabled, immigrant or other ‘different’ children – a nuanced strategy for advancing an argument without commitment to a course of political action).

However, to demonstrate the significance of this aspect, the analysis focuses on tense and aspect, which are used to ‘construct “understanding” about events’ (Hyatt 2013, 53). The English and the French tense/aspect systems are rather different, with the French present tense being far more elastic than its English equivalent. For instance, line 7 ‘les conditions ne sont pas toujours simples’ – a seemingly straightforward structure – is translated as ‘conditions are not always simple’ but it could also be translated with the English present perfect: ‘conditions have not always been simple’. In English, the use of the present simple can be used to construct a situation as a fact, something unchanging; the use of the present perfect can refer to a past situation that may or may not be continuing. The analysis chooses this seemingly innocuous part of the text as the Minister is referring to Seine-Saint-Denis – a troubled département near Paris with elevated levels of unemployment and crime and a history of social unrest. Peillon, through the nuanced potential for ways in which this construction could be read, may be evoking/suggesting a reading that conditions **are** historically difficult or **have been** difficult in the past but are going to get better, or indeed, a deliberate blurring of these readings that avoids an explicit commitment to policy that will guarantee the amelioration of this situation.

### **A continuing policy context**

All policy emerges, is constructed and is understood, within a temporal context, and, without a clear understanding of the impact and nuances of the context, any reading of

a policy text can only be partial. With this in mind, it would be important to acknowledge that the policy debate has moved on since the speech in 2013 and so to point out that these analyses resonate with continuing debates and contestation within the field.

Peillon, the minister of education (schools), lost his job in March 2014 in the government reshuffle, which saw Jean-Marc Ayraut, replaced as Prime Minister by Manuel Valls. Peillon was replaced, briefly, by Benoît Hamon, who became Minister with responsibility for both schools and for universities/research. Hamon was replaced by Najat Vallaud-Belkacem in August 2014. Difficult issues for the two previous ministers were related to ‘les rythmes scolaires’ – the number of days a week that pupils go to school and the hours they stay at school, and the organization of after-school activities. This is a common factor of discontent with French working parents as governments regularly adjust and amend such timetables, according to research from the parents union PEEP which suggested only 8% of parents believe that the reform of ‘les rythmes scolaires’ will allow students to do better in school (Cabilen 2014).

The ‘PRES’ project (*Pôles de recherche et d’enseignement supérieur*) is continuing, grouping universities into larger, affiliated regional groupings. This project began in 2006 under the Sarkozy government. There were 26 such pôles in 2012. The aim is to bring together public universities, grandes écoles, private business schools, and scientific organisations in a region to better co-ordinate doctorates, masters, and research. The ESPE initiative is also evolving with a simplified programme for its second year of operation (2014-2015). However, there is discontent around the variety of students who wish to do the Master’s which is a pre-requisite for teaching,

many apparently already come into the programme with a Master's. And the positioning of the concours in the middle of the two years of the Master's means that, effectively, the first year of the Master's is spent preparing students for the concours (Sève 2014).

Given the January 2015 events in France (the Charlie Hebdo killings, the responses to this and the centrality of French values to these issues), a new focus for debate is centred around the perceived inability of l'Éducation nationale to instill republican values into its charges.

### **Conclusion**

The authors contend that their CDA-informed analysis illustrates how Peillon is unable to avoid continual grounding of his argumentation in the traditional values of Republican thought, not least because he also wishes to differentiate his policy and underpinning values from that of the Sarkozy government with its avowed aim to remake the education system for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Sarkozy 2007, 2). At the same time, it illustrates the tensions inherent in attempting to stay true to such historical principles in a changed temporal context. It illustrates the tensions for the French educational system in general, and its teacher education structures in particular, in adapting its policy responses to a creeping neo-liberal context, whilst nuancing the discursive embodiment of this in its public-facing policy pronouncements.

The current context demonstrates the ways in which conceptualisations of key republican values of liberty, equality, fraternity, laïcité (secularity), and unity continue to evolve. These values underlie contemporary debates and controversies in

French education. Such evolution illuminates the ways in which French society negotiates its social, political and cultural renewal in periods of change and contestation. There is evidence that the calls for national unity in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo killings are being challenged. Apart from the more general social, political and cultural tensions, which have emerged since 7th January 2015, around 200 incidents were reported in schools within two weeks of the attacks. Over 80% of students in one Seine-Saint-Denis school refused to take part in the government-decreed minute of silence for the victims of the killings, and on January 14<sup>th</sup> 2015, there were reports of fights between pupils from rival schools in Senlis, with one group of pupils goading another by shouting support for the killers of the Charlie Hebdo editorial team (Anon. 2015).

There is clearly a historically grounded cultural pressure to maintain a stance that is congruent with French republican values. However, this grounding is historical, centred in the roots of modern France's two century-old anti-clericism. In response to the attacks, Education Minister Vallaud-Belkacem has put together a raft of 11 measures aimed at re-republicanizing French education through reinforcing the Republican and secular values in schools (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale 2015) by expanding civic education, not only of students, but also of those training to become teachers. The ESPEs (Hollande's teacher training institutes) will take centre stage by prioritizing the training of teacher trainees in what is considered France's fourth value after *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* – *laïcité* (secularity). A new strand has also been added to the competitive recruitment exams (*concours*): teachers will now have to explain, and demonstrate, that they share the values of the Republic. She also proposes more indepth teaching of religion, and the enhancement of critical skills in interpreting internet texts. As Lilla (2015 – no pagination) notes:

‘The minister wants the school establishments to be much more active in teaching democratic values and laicity, and in confronting racism and anti-Semitism. Their attitude should no longer be “don’t make waves” but rather “don’t let anything pass.” She made the case that educational reform was crucial for national security: France has ten thousand more soldiers patrolling the streets, she said, but it has a million teachers at its disposal’.

However, it would be naïve to conclude that France, with its ‘inextricably linked’ Republic and school system (line 22), is immune to neoliberalising tendencies. It could be argued that Peillon’s high Republican rhetoric around the Republican school is a case of *l’arbre qui cache la forêt* (foregrounded action that hides what is happening behind the scenes) (Groupes Revoltes 2013), obscuring a very different policy in the Higher Education sector, where public universities are being decoupled from the state.

The challenge for contemporary French teacher education policy makers is to negotiate a compromise between these core secular foundations, that are centrally bound up with French Republican identity, and the evolving role of education as a force for social cohesion, in a rapidly changing, economically uncertain, multicultural, yet increasingly polarized, context.

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