Chapter 2: From Teach For America to Teach First: The Initial Expansion Overseas

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Abstract

This chapter examines the founding, historical development, and impact of Teach For America and its first international counterpart, Teach First in the UK. First, the chapter focuses on Teach For America, launched in 1989, and traces its historical development over three decades in the US. Next, the chapter discusses how Teach First, launched in London in 2002, translated and developed the idea and success of Teach For America in a new context. The research on each programme is also reviewed briefly, highlighting how both programmes are underpinned by neoliberal views of educational 'problems' and promote market-inspired solutions. Overall, the chapter provides a critical and nuanced look at the models on which the Teach For All has been built since its founding 2007. While the two programmes share a common mission and 'theory of change', there are notable differences in their marketing, training, and positioning within their respective educational contexts. These differences reflect contrasting background and leadership of each programme's respective founder as well as each programme's unique development over time shaped by the national contexts in which they were embedded.

Introduction

Many observers assume that Teach For All (TFAll) represents the exportation and adaptation of Teach For America (TFA); thus, little attention is paid to TFA's British counterpart, Teach First UK, and the ways in which it contributed to both the creation and expansion of TFAll. Understanding how the two programmes differed but ultimately converged into what now constitutes the 'TFAll model' is paramount to foregrounding this volume. As explained in Chapter 1, TFAll was originally launched by Wendy Kopp and Brett Wigdortz, the founding CEOs of TFA and Teach First UK, respectively, to help social entrepreneurs worldwide successfully launch, develop, and sustain their own TFAll affiliate programmes.

This background is particularly important because TFAll is predicated on the experiences of TFA and Teach First UK. From the start, TFAll utilised the lessons gleaned from both programmes to conceptually develop the more generic 'TFAll model', a term used here to refer specifically to the programmatic features, organisational design, and 'theory of change' that TFAll requires all its affiliates to follow to become and remain part of the TFAll network. In addition, since TFAll launched in 2007, TFA and Teach First UK have often provided the human capital, knowledge base, and networks through which TFAll has been able to rapidly develop. For example, the majority of TFAll's staff have been former leaders and alumni of both TFA and Teach First, and a handful of alumni from both schemes have founded TFAll affiliate programmes around the world (e.g., Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, New Zealand). Moreover, through TFAll network annual conferences, personnel exchanges, and cross-national workshops, TFA and Teach First have shared strategies and templates for recruiting, training, and supporting participants during the two-year programme and afterward. Both organisations have also tapped into their own resource-rich networks of philanthropic funders, political supporters, and corporate advocates to support TFAll affiliates.

Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to explore the origins of TFAll through a comparative analysis of the emergence and evolution of TFA and Teach First UK. As Olmedo, Baily, and Ball (2013) recommend, 'rather than considering the [TFAll] model as a monolithic juggernaut of neoliberal reform and practice, careful attention needs to be paid to the wider social and deeper historical contexts within which it engages, and from which it has emerged' (p. 509). The chapter therefore begins with an examination of TFA's evolution over three decades, highlighting its historical roots as well as its controversial role in promoting neoliberal education reform. This section also provides a brief overview of the empirical research on TFA. The second section examines the launch and evolution of Teach First UK, followed by a discussion of the empirical research to date on the British scheme. The third and final section summarises the differences between the two models as well as the flexibility, resources, consistency, and legitimacy that they, *together*, have provided TFAll and its network of affiliates.

Teach For America: Establishment and Evolution

Wendy Kopp's Vision for TFA

The founding of TFA is an often-told and now iconic story of American social entrepreneurship (Dempsey & Sanders, 2010) that starts in 1989 with Wendy Kopp, a senior at Princeton University, who proposed the programme in her undergraduate thesis (Kopp, 1989). Kopp was originally from the Park Cities, a conservative, wealthy suburb of Dallas, Texas known as 'the Bubble' where there was little racial diversity and the public schools were well-funded and rated among the best in the country (Cradle, 2007). Kopp (2001) noted her public school experience prepared her do well at Princeton, unlike the public schooling of her African-American roommate from the Bronx who struggled. Hence, while an undergraduate, Kopp became aware of the stark inequities among children's schooling experiences in the US. Subsequently, she became interested in a potential teaching career but encountered barriers to entering the profession since she had not completed an undergraduate teacher education programme.

These experiences led Kopp to propose TFA as a means to recruit idealist, driven, elite graduates to teach in the neediest of schools for two-year stints. Her idea was inspired by President Kennedy's Peace Corps and President Johnson's National Teacher Corps: The former recruited graduates for overseas volunteer work while the latter sought elite graduates to work in schools in poor, minority communities during the 1960s and 1970s (Rogers, 2009). The National Teacher Corps, in particular, helped set the stage for the emergence of alternative teacher training programmes from the 1980s onward, and cultivated the commonplace assumption that a specific skill set was needed to teach children of the poor and that schools of education were failing to adequately prepare teachers for this work (Eckert, 2011; Rogers, 2009). Like these two earlier programmes, Kopp's plan for TFA rested on its ability to cultivate exclusivity by attracting only 'best and brightest' to its mission (Blumenreich & Rogers, 2016; Kavanagh & Dunn, 2013).

After graduating, and with her idea shunned by the Congressional representatives she contacted, Kopp turned to the corporate and philanthropic sectors to fund her start up. While at Princeton, Kopp had worked for the university's business-focused student magazine in a position that regularly had her interviewing and soliciting donations from America's elite corporate executives. Using the skills and contacts she gained as a result, Kopp courted

wealthy executives from high-profile companies and utilised the resources and networks offered by Princeton. As public education had become a major preoccupation among the business leaders since the release of the 1983 government report *A Nation at Risk*, Kopp targeted reform-minded corporate leaders to support her new initiative.

Within a year, the 21-year-old Kopp launched TFA having raised $2.5 million from business executives, philanthropists, and foundations. The organisation launched with a staff of 22 recent graduates from elite universities and a Board of Advisers and Directors recruited from leaders in business, education, and government. By the fall of 1990, its first year, TFA had recruited, trained, and placed 489 graduates from elite universities in low-income schools in five regions: New York City, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and rural North Carolina and Georgia (Kopp, 2001). TFA's recruits, known as corps members (CMs), were employed as full-time teachers in primary and secondary schools while they continued to work toward certification in their respective states (Rogers & Blumenreich, 2013). Prior to entering the classroom, corps members completed a five-week Summer Institute during which they received a crash course in how to teach while also gaining some teaching experience in summer school programmes.

Over the next three decades, TFA expanded and evolved from a relatively small and financially-strapped start-up to the largest single source of new teachers in the US and a political force in its own right (Scott, Trujillo, & Rivera, 2016). Its journey, which has been well-documented (e.g., Mead, Chuong, & Goodson, 2015; Schneider, 2011), can be categorised into three stages, each explored below and marked by turning points that prompted TFA leaders to re-evaluate its priorities and strategies amidst shifting political and educational contexts.

TFA's Initial Growing Pains (1990-1999)

Soon after its launch, TFA entered what Kopp (2001) refers to as the 'Dark Years' during which TFA struggled to secure ongoing funding and lurched from one idea to another as it tried to train and support the teachers it placed. TFA initially worked with the University of Wisconsin–Madison faculty to deliver the first Summer Institute in Los Angeles in 1990. However, Kopp cut ties with the school of education afterward and opted instead to internally develop TFA's Summer Institute, although TFA continued to utilise practices and materials from in university-based teacher education programmes (Schneider, 2014). Emboldened by TFA's initial success, Kopp called on states to deregulate teacher certification and allow school districts to bypass schools of education to directly hire and train their own teachers (Kopp, 1992, 1994). This led to greater scrutiny and criticism of TFA from eminent education scholars (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1994; Popkewitz, 1998), leading Kopp to firmly position TFA against university teacher education to gain more advocates and funders (Schneider, 2014)

Despite chronic funding shortages and other organisational woes (e.g., Kopp's managerial inexperience), TFA garnered considerable positive attention from national media and recruited an annual cohort of approximately 500-700 'elite' graduates, thus establishing its reputation as an exclusive organisation. In 1994, TFA succeeded in gaining federal funding through designation as an AmeriCorps programme despite its recruits not being volunteers but paid professionals. However, Kopp still struggled to secure long-term financial support for TFA because, she reasoned, there were no 'venture capitalist firms' like in the for-profit world to support organisations beyond the start-up phase (Kopp, 2001, p. 77) and foundations wanted to see evidence of TFA's 'systemic', long-term change (Kopp, 2001, p. 78).

This led Kopp to reconsider the marketing of TFA's mission. While TFA was conceptualised early on as a vehicle through which elite graduates could experience and then (presumably) understand how to fix public schooling, TFA had initially promoted itself primarily as a solution to teacher shortages in low-income school districts. TFA then began to place a greater emphasis on how its alumni would become active leaders for education reform and took concrete steps to support them in launching new education initiatives. For example, TFA alumni Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin started the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP), which has evolved into a national network of charter schools, based largely on their TFA experiences, in 1994-1995, (Horn, 2016; Mathews, 2009). In addition, Kopp developed The New Teacher Project (TNTP), launched in 1997 and led by TFA alumna and future Washington, D.C. schools' superintendent, Michelle Rhee. TNTP became an influential non-profit that works with school districts to set up alternative training routes and design teacher evaluation systems. In 1998, a founding TFA staff member, Kim Smith, established the New Schools Venture Fund (NSCF), a non-profit that directs philanthropic investments into new enterprises aiming to transform public schools nationwide (Zeichner & Pena-Sandoval, 2015). These and other early entrepreneurial initiatives would grow alongside TFA and form part of the influential networks of philanthropists, social enterprises, and policy entrepreneurs that shape education reforms.

These new initiatives, along with increased funding and a revised internal management structure, helped transition TFA out of the 'dark years'. In the late 1990s, TFA found itself on stronger financial footing with long-term support from its growing list of sponsors, donors, and expanding alumni network. Kopp also utilised the lessons from the early years to create a corporate-like organisation predicated on business strategies and data to drive its work. TFA began recruiting 700-1000 graduates annually, expanding slowly while it worked at the state and district levels to build new partnerships and support laws that enabled its operations. At the same time, TFA also began working more systematically to build a coherent curriculum for its Summer Institute that reflected its own particular ethos.

TFA's Rapid Expansion (2000-2013)

After struggling in its first decade, TFA quickly established itself as a power player within the American educational landscape in the 2000s. The political winds had changed as more policymakers endorsed bipartisan neoliberal reforms like charter schools, standardised testing, and private sector involvement in public schooling. TFA took advantage of this context and embarked on an ambitious growth plan to significantly increase the number of corps members and placement regions. TFA successfully grew its cohort size to nearly 4,500 CMs across 40 regions by 2010. In the same time, TFA's annual operating budget expanded from $30 million to $193 million, an increase of more than 600 percent. This financial feat was achieved by having TFA staff strategically recruit advocates and funders within its established as well as prospective regions. Diversifying the funding base through regional fundraising and relationship building also enabled the organisation to advance its political agenda (Mead et al, 2015).

TFA reached its peak cohort size of nearly 6,000, placed in 48 regions, in 2013. The organisation also began aggressively recruiting minority graduates to increase the diversity of its corps, an effort that gained scholarly attention as it accompanied TFA's displacement of minority veteran teachers (Muñoz, Heilig, & Real, 2019; White, 2016). To accommodate its larger cohorts, TFA also increasingly placed its recruits in special education and bilingual classrooms, prompting researchers to examine TFA teachers' experiences and needs in

coping as novice professionals in these complex teaching areas (Heineke & Cameron, 2013; Hopkins & Heineke, 2013; Thomas, 2018a).

TFA also developed its own presence and practices to influence education policy and establish itself as an authority in the field. First, TFA became an active advocate for its interests on Capitol Hill (Russo, 2012), ensuring the protection of its federal funding as well as TFA-friendly policies. Second, TFA introduced its own quantitative value-added approach to measuring teacher effectiveness, albeit in a rudimentary form, by introducing its 'significant gains' measurement system in 2002. This system required CMs to set, track, and report to TFA on its nation-wide goal of having their pupils achieve 1.5 years of academic growth (or 80 percent mastery of rigorous content standards) each year based on their own classroom assessments (Mead et al., 2015, p. 21). Subsequently, TFA cited this national student achievement data to bolster its claims that TFA teachers were effective, largely overlooking concerns about data validity. Third, at its Summer Institutes in 2002 TFA introduced the 'Teaching As Leadership' framework (Farr, 2010), which has been called the 'TFA-endorsed metanarrative' (Matsui, 2015, p. 59), 'TFA manifesto' (Thomas & Lefebvre, 2018, p. 861), and 'central philosophy' (Stoneburner, 2018, p. 4). This framework, based on the organisation's internal study of its most successful teachers, articulated TFA's view of what 'transformational' teachers in high-needs schools should know and be able to do. It also signalled TFA's presumed expertise and measurable impact to external audiences.

By the mid-2000s, TFA largely disengaged from debates of its teachers' effectiveness – declaring CMs equally effective, or more, than other teachers – and shifted focus to 'building the movement' (Kopp, 2008) to reform education nationally. To this end, TFA launched initiatives aimed at funnelling its alumni into social entrepreneurship, school and district leadership, and policy advocacy. For example, in 2008, TFA created the spin-off organisation Leadership for Educational Equity (LEE), a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)4 non-profit organisation that exclusively helps launch TFA teachers and alumni into careers with, for, and as policymakers at all levels of government (Miner, 2010; Reddy, 2016). LEE has helped alumni assume influential positions, forming a 'bench' of political reformers as well as school and district leaders (Cersonsky, 2012) with a common TFA-inspired 'mindset' for how to transform schools (Trujillo, Scott, & Rivera, 2017).

These developments have contributed to TFA's permanent and powerful position in American education reform. However, TFA's explosive growth, significant political influence, and close ties with the corporate education reform networks had also generated criticism, disillusionment, and animosity toward the organisation.

TFA's Recalibration (2013 to 2020)

After more than a decade of aggressive expansion, TFA faced growing criticism both externally from the public as well as internally from alumni and staff. As part of the corporate-backed education reform movement, TFA found itself under scrutiny in an increasingly polarized political environment. Most previous criticism of TFA had focused on its brief training, questionable in-service support for CMs, and the low rates of retention of CMs in the classroom long-term. New critiques of TFA demonstrated how its positioning, practices, and celebrity alumni consistently championed neoliberal reforms despite TFA's claims of political neutrality. For these reasons, academics, journalists, and TFA alumni became increasingly critical of its management, motives, and impact (e.g., Anderson, 2013; Cersonsky, 2013; Joseph, 2014; Schonfeld, 2013).

In many regions, TFA has been accused of disempowering communities, displacing local teachers, and creating parallel school systems. Its practices were especially controversial in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans, where TFA played a large role in redesigning and staffing schools to the detriment of local teachers and communities (Buras, 2011; Dixson, Buras, & Jeffers, 2015; Sondel, 2017; Sondel, Kretchmar, & Hadley Dunn, 2019). In Kansas City and Chicago during the 2008 recession, the number of TFA recruits placed in schools increased while the district laid off hundreds of veteran teachers, angering many (Toppo, 2009). Relatedly, research into TFA's contracts with school districts raised concerns of power abuse through its securing of preferential hiring for TFA recruits in urban districts not experiencing teacher shortages. The contracts also absolved TFA of responsibility for the quality of their recruits while charging districts a non-refundable $3,000-5,000 'finder's fee' per recruit, draining money from already cash-strapped school districts (Brewer, Kretchmar, Sondel, Ishmael, & Manfra, 2016). Finally, TFA's influence as a political force worried many who watched TFA influence local school boards elections with out-of-state money (Reckhow, Henig, Jacobsen, & Alter Litt, 2017).

Consequently, TFA found itself waging a public relations campaign to counter criticism in some school districts, state capitols, and on university campuses, where recruiting became more challenging. As applications began to decline, TFA was forced to reduce its cohort size to 4,100 in 2015 (Rich, 2015). Yet, TFA's annual funding base continued to increase, surpassing $300 million the same year. High-profile supporters included the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Walton Foundation, and the venture capitalist and billionaire John Doerr, among others, many of whom championed other market-based reforms (Waldman, 2019). Amidst these developments, Kopp stepped down as TFA's CEO to lead TFAll but remained chair of TFA's Board of Directors (see Chapter 3). TFA alumna and long-time staff member Elisa Villanueva Beard and former McKinsey consultant Matt Kramer then served as co-CEOs until 2015 when Kramer left and Villanueva Beard assumed full leadership of TFA.

The backlash against TFA led its leaders to focus on improving and repairing the work and image of the organisation. TFA addressed criticisms of its inadequate training by developing an initiative that recruited some university students earlier in their studies to provide them additional teacher preparation prior to attending the Summer Institute. To address concerns with poor retention rates of CMs in the classroom, TFA launched fellowships to support alumni who wished to remain teachers. Finally, TFA secured a federal grant to redesign the content and method of delivery of its Summer Institute training to reflect the 'core practices approach' (Philip et al., 2019) first developed by teacher educators at Michigan State University (Forzani, 2014; McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013). TFA trialled the redesigned approach in its Tulsa regional Summer Institute in 2016, and, despite a study showing little effect on trainees, implemented the new training across all its Summer Institute sites from 2017 (Rappaport, Somers, & Granito, 2019). Despite these changes, recent research suggests TFA's Summer Institute still needs additional refinement to better support CMs (Stoneburner, 2018).

As TFA continues to work toward its stated mission of ensuring a quality education for all, the size of its cohorts remains steady around 3,500 as does its annual operating budget of roughly $300 million, though it maintains total assets of more than $420 million as of 2018. The organisation, like its training, continues to reflect an 'entrepreneurial, corporate ethos – emphasizing leadership, goal-setting, and management strategy' (Schneider, 2011, p. 437). Many uncertainties linger regarding the future direction TFA will take in a constantly

changing political and economic context, though with the rapid advance of neoliberal reforms in the US education sector in recent decades, TFA is no longer a radical idea/organisation but is instead a seemingly permanent part of the educational landscape that wields formidable influence on education policy.

Research on TFA

Empirical research on TFA has evolved and expanded in scope as TFA has developed. In its first decade, TFA was critiqued by leading teacher education scholars (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Popkewitz, 1998). As TFA expanded in early 2000s, scholarly attention turned to whether the programme produced effective teachers, particularly in comparison to uncertified and certified teachers who completed university-based schools of education programmes. The results of such studies were often contradictory. A handful of studies (Clark, Isenberg, Liu, Makowsky, and Zukiewicz, 2015; Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004; Raymond, Fletcher, & Luque, 2001; Xu, Hannaway, & Taylor, 2007) concluded TFA teachers were equally or, in a particular subject, more effective than traditionally certified teachers. Meanwhile, other studies (e.g., Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Heilig, 2005; Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002) refuted such a notion, arguing TFA teachers were less effective than new and veteran teachers holding full certification.

These studies are somewhat limited in their generalisability since nearly all of them collected data on teachers in only one region, with the exception of Decker et al. (2014) who examined TFA teachers in 6 of TFA's 15 regions. In addition, most studies assessed TFA teachers in the elementary or middle school level and measured student achievement through pupil test scores in only maths and reading (exceptions include Backes & Hansen, 2017; Xu et al., 2007). In reality, TFA teachers are placed in a wide range of grade levels and subject areas. Further limitations of the studies include their almost exclusive focus on urban schools, largely ignoring TFA teachers who work in rural communities (e.g., Native American reservations), and the wide variance in research design and methodology. In sum, although scholars continue to research and re-examine the topic (e.g., Penner, 2019; What Works Clearinghouse, 2016), the results of these quantitative 'teacher-effectiveness' studies have not settled the debate about TFA's ability to consistently produce effective educators. As a result, scholars have continued to argue that TFA fails to adequately prepare its recruits for teaching and does little to retain its teacher in their classroom long-term (Darling-Hammond 2011; Ravitch 2013).

Critical research from social science perspectives also grew as the organisation expanded its size and role in policy. A number of studies focus on TFA and examine its practices and impact, including the training and socialisation of its recruits (Brewer, 2014; Rappaport et al., 2019; Schneider, 2014; Stoneburner, 2018; Veltri, 2008, 2010, 2016) and the retention and careers of its alumni (Blumenreich & Rhodes, 2007; Boyd, Hamilton Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005; Donaldson, 2012; Donaldson & Johnson, 2010; Higgins, 2011). In addition, researchers have examined TFA's impact on the teaching profession (Gutmann, 2013; Trujillo et al., 2017) and teacher education (Labaree, 2010; Maier, 2012). There is also growing evidence that tensions between TFA and schools of education occur, in part, due to differing conceptions of 'social justice', teacher professionalism, and the purpose of

education (McNew-Birren, Hildebrand, & Belknap, 2018; Meyers, Fisher, Alicea, & Bloxson, 2014; Thomas & Lefebvre, forthcoming).

Another avenue of research examines various aspects of CMs' journeys through and after TFA, including: why individuals join TFA (Gillis, 2019; Straubhaar, 2019; Straubhaar & Gottfried, 2014), where CMs are placed (Curran, 2017; Donaldson & Johnson, 2010; Zahner et al., 2019), what CMs experience during the TFA programme (Ahmann, 2016; Blumenreich & Rhodes, 2007; Thomas & Mockler, 2018; Veltri, 2010), and the views of TFA alumni (Brewer, 2014; McAdam & Brandt, 2009). Other studies illuminate how CMs grapple with mandated reforms (Fisher-Ari, Kavanagh, & Martin, 2017; Heineke & Cameron, 2013) and the complications that inevitably come with representing a controversial programme (Thomas, 2018b). Meanwhile, a growing number of 'counter-narrative' publications bring to the forefront the voices of TFA alumni who are reflective and critical of the organisation's mission and practices (e.g., Brewer & deMarrais, 2015; Matsui, 2015).

Finally, recent scholarship examines TFA as a political force within the US. Scott et al. (2016) argue that TFA's greatest impact is not in classrooms but in policy arenas where TFA networks, alumni, and corporate models of managerial leadership have come to dominate. Other studies investigate TFA's close network and relationship with charter schools (Horn, 2016; Kretchmar, 2014; Kretchmar, Sondel, & Ferrare, 2014; Lefebvre & Thomas, 2017; Sondel, 2015; Waldman, 2019), with advocates of deregulation within teacher education (Kretchmar et al., 2018), and its close links with new privatised and practiced-based forms of teacher training (Mungal, 2016, 2019; Stitzlein & West, 2014). As TFA alumni move into various leadership roles in the US and beyond, it seems the global impact of TFA and its network is just beginning to be felt, and to be researched empirically (see Chapter 3).

The Internationalisation of TFA: Teach First UK

Teach First's Founding (2001-2003)

The first international adaptation of TFA was launched in England in mid-2002 after two influential London-based business coalitions – London First and Business in the Community (BITC) – proposed the idea to improve London's secondary schools. London First is an influential coalition of London stakeholders established in 1992 'to make London the best city in the world in which to do business' (London First, n.d.). BITC is a high-profile national coalition of hundreds of large businesses across the UK established in the early 1980s and well-known in executive boardrooms, government corridors, and local communities for leading corporate social responsibility initiatives (Grayson, 2007). In the early 2000s, both organisations were extremely well-connected, resource-rich coalitions that were experienced in organising corporate sector involvement in social causes, especially education.

The idea for Teach First came from a study, commissioned by London First and BITC and prepared by McKinsey & Company, which concluded teacher quality and school leadership were the main factors determining school performance. A 28-year-old New Jersey native and junior consultant on the McKinsey team, Brett Wigdortz, was convinced the TFA model could improve schools despite little prior knowledge of TFA. Wigodrtz believed in the TFA model because its focus on recruiting the 'best and brightest' mirrored McKinsey's own thinking behind the 'War for Talent', a term the consulting firm used to describe how companies competed to attract and retain highly-effective managerial talent (Michaels,

Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001). Following the 'War for Talent' philosophy, McKinsey consultants coached companies on how to aggressively seek out new talent pools, lure top hires to their organisation, and retain them through feedback, coaching, and leadership opportunities – an approach that Teach First would later emulate.

The education director for London First, Rona Kiley, teamed up with Wigdodrtz to lead efforts to establish a TFA-type programme in early 2002. Kiley, an American and wife of Tony Blair's newly appointed Transport Commissioner, was already familiar with TFA and sought its help in lobbying for a 'Teach For London'. She found Kopp unsupportive of the idea and unwilling to become involved, however (Rauschenberger, 2016). Nevertheless, with Kiley's persuasive manner and influential network connections through London First and BITC, the idea for 'Teach For London' quickly gained the support of London's business community and eventually the government. Teach First eventually launched in July 2002, with Kopp in attendance to show her newfound support for the programme.

To build a coalition of support, Kiley and Wigdortz utilised TFA's statistics on its elite recruitment and alumni retention to illustrate the model's merits. While several leaders in the UK government and education sector were already aware of TFA's successes, the idea for a 'Teach For London' was seen by some as unnecessary in England at a time when the government tightly controlled initial teacher education (also known as initial 'teacher training') and new teacher recruitment numbers were particularly high. The proposed scheme was only reluctantly accepted by the England's Teacher Training Agency (TTA), which regulated the sector, on the condition that it followed current regulations, including partnering with a university training provider. These stipulations forced Teach First to develop its own version of TFA that was more aligned with England's educational landscape (Wales and Scotland have devolved jurisdiction over their own education systems). Thus, unlike TFA, Teach First became an experiment working *within*, not separate from, the university teacher training sector.

Subsequently, Teach First emerged in ways that were less connected to TFA and more representative of its founder's experience, responsive to local contexts, and reflective of the political compromises it had to make to exist (Rauschenberger, 2017; Wigdortz, 2012). Although both TFA and Teach First had close personal and financial ties to the corporate sector, Teach First utilized their corporate supporters' expertise to design its branding, recruitment strategy, and candidate selection processes from its first year of operation. Teach First also featured managerial training and internships with its sponsors as part of its programme, which distinguished it from TFA. Overall, Teach First emulated and was firmly tied to the corporate sector. This, along with Teach First's partnership with universities to deliver the summer training, marked it as somewhat different from TFA.

Still, the two programmes were very similar in obvious ways. Teach First's mission – 'To address educational disadvantage by transforming exceptional graduates into effective, inspirational teachers and leaders in all fields' (Hutchings et al., 2006) – echoed TFA's vision and employed TFA's 'theory of change' to enact it. Both recruited and supported elite university graduates to teach for two years in struggling schools and then become leaders for change in a variety of fields. Both TFA and Teach First's recruitment messages aimed to 'appeal to idealism and altruism' of graduates, called on them to become change agents, and portrayed schools and pupils as in need (Hutchings, Maylor, Mendick, Menter, & Smart, 2006, p. 13).

The Expansion of Teach First (2004 –2016)

Teach First's initial 2003 cohort consisted of 186 graduates from the UK's elite, research-intensive Russell Group universities (e.g., Oxford, Cambridge). These recruits, most commonly referred to as 'participants', were trained in a six-week Summer Institute run by Teach First and Canterbury Christ Church University College and placed in 43 qualifying secondary schools around London. The recruitment of such a cohort helped Teach First gain more high-profile funders among the UK's leading companies and foundations. Teach First recruited cohorts of approximately 200 for London secondaries until, with the government's support, it eventually doubled the size of its cohort to nearly 500 by expanding to Manchester in 2006, the Midlands in 2007, Liverpool in 2008, and Yorkshire and the Humber regions in 2009.

In 2010, the new Coalition-led Government backed Teach First's further expansion with an extra £4 million, despite massive spending cuts of nearly £3.5 billion to the education budget. With this support, Teach First began officially placing recruits in primary schools across its regions in 2011, and then in early years education, working with children ages three to five, from 2013 while also expanding to new regions across England. In addition, in 2013, Teach First expanded into Wales, placing 159 participants in 51 Welsh schools over four years. The organisation has attempted to expand into Scotland but has met resistance from schools of education and professional bodies that work more collaboratively with the Scottish government than their English counterparts (Crawford-Garrett & Thomas, 2018; Denholm & McEnaney, 2017).

In 2015, Teach First became the U.K.'s largest graduate recruiter with a cohort of 1,685 trainees. According to Teach First, its 2015 cohort came from 128 different universities and nearly a quarter were 'experienced professionals', indicating Teach First had widened its recruitment beyond recent graduates from 'top' universities. During this period, Teach First continued to develop its Summer Institute and in-year support with its university partners in each region (Blandford, 2014), redesigning its training in 2009 to provide participants with a masters-level Post Graduate Certificate of Education, thus qualifying them to teach outside of England.

During these years of expansion, Teach First gained greater policy influence in education, launching an initiative 'Policy First' that provided a forum for alumni to develop views and recommendations, connect with policy-makers, and access support in pursuing careers in policy (Ball & Junemann, 2012). While Policy First had a mission similar to that of TFA's LEE, it was not an independent organisation but remained an initiative within the Teach First organisation. Policy First issued a number of policy reports written by Teach First alumni that gained recognition from policy-makers, including the biannual *Lessons from the Front* (Teach First, 2007, 2009), funded by Credit Suisse and Deloitte, and *Ethos and School Culture in Challenging Schools* (2010), sponsored by PricewaterhouseCoopers. Teach First also became well-known to wider audiences through the 2014 BBC documentary series, *Tough New Teachers,* which profiled six Teach First teachers. As Teach First celebrated its first decade, Wigdortz also released his memoir detailing how he launched and developed the organisation (Wigdortz, 2012), much like Kopp (2001).

Still, debates on and criticism of Teach First persisted. In 2009, the organization was criticised when researchers found that approximately 20 percent of its placement secondary schools served pupils performing at or above the local and/or national averages (Maddern, 2009). Some have criticised Teach First's minimal training, cost, low long-term participant

retention rate in classrooms (Whittaker, 2018), elite branding and outsized influence (Elliott, 2018; Southern, 2018), and positioning of teaching as temporary service (Stanfield & Cremin, 2013).

Teach First Reconfigured (2017–2020)

Since 2017, Teach First has undergone significant change due to new leadership within the organization and the need to adapt to a changed educational landscape. In the decade prior, educational reforms in England introduced numerous new routes into teaching; normalized school-led, employment-based teacher training (most visibly through the School Direct Programme since 2013); and popularized the idea of new teachers' rapid promotion to leadership positions (Spicksley, 2018). In this context, Wigdortz stepped down as Teach First's CEO in September 2017 and was replaced by Russell Hobby, former head of the National Association of Headteachers Union.

Under Hobby's leadership, Teach First dissolved many off-shoot initiatives it had started over the years, which included an alumni-led programme promoting access to higher education for disadvantaged pupils and an initiative in support of social entrepreneurship among Teach First alumni. While refocusing on its original mission of recruiting and training teachers for disadvantaged schools, Teach First also became a hub for staff recruitment more generally by adding to its brand a number of different fast-track routes for teaching assistants, career-changers, and those who want to return to teaching after having left (Hazel, 2018). In addition, Teach First formally began offering leadership development courses leading to professional qualifications for middle and senior school leaders in its partner schools with the rationale that new teachers thrive when training in schools with effective leadership. Finally, Teach First underwent a £136,000 rebranding effort, changing its vision and logo to highlight its new direction (Smulian, 2019). Teach First now promotes itself as a trainer of both new teachers and school leaders within 'disadvantaged' schools, with a new organisational motto of 'building a fair education for all' (Teach First, 2019b). Under these changes, anyone completing any one of the various fast-track or school leadership programmes are now deemed 'ambassadors', or alumni, of Teach First.

These changes represent a massive shift in the design of Teach First and may call into question its status as a TFAll programme in the future. Yet, the core two-year Teach First programme made headlines in mid-2019 by recruiting a record-breaking 1,735 trainees. This significant jump in numbers – up from 1,259 a year before – came with evidence and speculations that Teach First was lowering its standards and becoming less selective than in its early years (Whittaker, 2019) though Teach First disputes this. As of 2019-2020, Teach First continues to place its cohort of teachers in ten regions across England (Wales is not currently featured as a placement site on its website). Like TFA, the organisation also highlights its impact in education through the careers of its alumni, which include 51 social entrepreneurs, 65 headteachers, and 200 policy-makers and researchers (Teach First, 2019a).

Research on Teach First UK

Outside of government-funded evaluations of Teach First (Hutchings et al., 2006; Ofsted, 2008), research on Teach First is limited and primarily focuses on the programme's impact in schools. One study commissioned by Teach First examined alumni careers and reported that Teach First teachers tended to leave the classroom in greater numbers after teaching a third year but were more likely to progress to school leadership roles with increased salaries than other teachers (Allen, Parameshwaran, & Nye, 2016). Another commissioned study

examined Teach First teachers' pedagogy and impact, finding they often effectively assumed informal leadership roles, usually with support of administration (Muijs, Chapman, & Armstrong, 2012, 2013). More recently, a study by Allen and Allnutt (2017) suggests that Teach First teachers had likely helped schools produce gains in GCSE test results. In contrast to impact studies, Hramiak (2014, 2015) examined Teach First participants' use of culturally-responsive teaching and found them developing strategies for overcoming cultural gaps, which they perceived as existing more between curriculum and pupils than teacher and pupils.

A growing body of literature also examines Teach First from critical sociological and political perspectives. Smart et al (2009) draw upon Bourdieu's theories to argue that Teach First reproduces class hierarchies by enabling participants to accumulate additional social, cultural, and symbolic capital while re-enforcing middle-class values and working class tropes. Elsewhere, Bailey (2015) utilises a Foucauldian perspective to highlight how Teach First shapes what counts as knowledge, assets, and capabilities in education. Using critical discourse analysis, Elliott (2018) argues that Teach First is dominated by the vested interested of elite stakeholders and is ultimately creating 'a Trojan army of mini neo-liberalists' set to lead social change through 'a heroic, individualistic, meritocratic approach' (p. 272). Relatedly, Leaton, Gray and Whitty (2010) reflect on Teach First's influence on the teaching profession and suggest the organisation has created a 'branded' professionalism based upon a 'largely self-interested model of teacher behaviour' (pp. 12-13).

Other researchers focus on Teach First's impact on policy. Stephen Ball and colleagues illuminated Teach First's ties and influence in multi-layered networks of non-profit organisations, philanthropies, edu-businesses, and policy entrepreneurs (Ball, 2007, 2012; Ball & Junemann, 2012). Ball's work has illustrated the complexity and opaqueness of these network modes of policy-making and stressed how such networks blur the lines between 'private' and 'public', ultimately making them less democratic and accountable to the public. Relatedly, Ellis, Steadman, and Trippestad (2018) highlight Teach First's promotion of policy entrepreneurship among its alumni and examine its links to the development of a stand-alone graduate school of education modelled on the TFA-inspired Relay Graduate School in the US.

Conclusion

As the stories of TFA and Teach First UK suggest, while the global appearance of TFAll is relatively new, the idea behind it is not. For Kopp and Wigdortz, the experiences of founding and expanding their respective programmes led them to launch TFAll with the conviction that their hard-learned lessons and ultimate successes were applicable and achievable in other national contexts. Indeed, in TFAll they offered an exportable model of fast-track teacher training that doubled as a leadership 'pipeline'. As illustrated in this chapter, avoiding direct confrontation with unions and other opponents within the education establishment while building the power and influence of TFA was a key lesson Kopp learned during the 'Dark Years' of TFA. This lesson was understood by Wigdortz and Kiley but somewhat misapplied initially as they found a leading educationalist and the headteachers union willing to back the Teach First idea.

Another factor that affected the differing nature of TFA and Teach First UK was the background and perspectives of each founder. Kopp and Wigdortz both had similar visions for their respective programmes, but their personalities, networks, and life experiences led

them to implement their programmes and respond to their contexts in ways that built on their personal strengths, knowledge, and connections. This was most clear in the early stages of founding their programmes as Kopp utilised her Princeton University networks to reach out to Ivy League alumni, businesses, and educationalists, while Wigdortz tapped into resources and connections offered through the corporate networks of London First and BITC. Likewise, Kopp initially drew on her familiarity of the Peace Corps and National Teachers Corps to build TFA while Wigdortz utilised his knowledge and experience of McKinsey's 'War for Talent' to shape Teach First and attract both supporters and participants.

In sum, both TFA and Teach First UK were and continue to be guiding models of best practice for TFAll and its affiliates. TFAll and most of its national affiliates share versions of the 'Teach For' or 'Teach First' name. All share a common narrative and 'theory of change' as well as key organisational and programmatic features that were first developed and tested by these two organisations. The historical overviews of TFA and Teach First UK in this chapter have also highlighted how, despite efforts to remain politically neutral, both programmes remain controversial and are part of the ongoing debates regarding how to recruit, develop, and retain effective teachers. For this reason, the growing empirical research into TFA and Teach First UK provides crucial background information and a critical lens with which to understand these programmes and their replication worldwide. With a firm grasp on the history, peculiarities, and context of TFA and Teach First UK, researchers are better prepared to assess the TFAll programmes in other countries and the continuities and commonalities as well as adaptations and innovations that are shared among them.

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