

Chapter 100

What Counts as Quality Teaching? Diverging Pathways in the Dis-United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

The professional development of teachers has attracted much critical attention in each of the four nations of the United Kingdom since 2010. This chapter offers a ‘home international’ comparison of policies to support the initial qualification and continuing education of teachers in the period following political devolution. A rationale is offered for cross-national comparison in this small and closely linked system. A comparison is offered of routes into teaching and the teachers’ Standards in order to explicate divergent models of professionalism. By comparing policies across the Anglo-Celtic isles debate on the distinctive contribution of higher education to professional learning is enabled. Tensions are acknowledged within a policy ensemble that seeks to promote research excellence and teacher development.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher education across the four nations of the UK – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland - is undergoing a period of significant change. Political devolution from 1999 has opened up new spaces for increasing divergence in national education policy. The 2014 referendum on Scottish independence and the 2015 UK general election have provoked new interest in the politics of identity and a re-examination of center-local relations in public policy. Responsibility for policy related to teacher development and publicly maintained schools now resides with the Department for Education in England, the Scottish Government (*Riaghaltas na h-Alba*) at Holyrood Edinburgh, the Welsh Government (*Llywodraeth Cymru*) at Cardiff, and the Northern Irish Assembly at Stormont Belfast. In the last five years, government commissioned reviews of teacher education have been undertaken in Northern Ireland (Sahlberg et al., 2014), Scotland (Donaldson, 2011), Wales (Tabberer, 2013; Furlong, 2015) and England (Department

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for Education, 2015). The United Kingdom in the post-devolution period presents an interesting opportunity to review policy alternatives across a relatively small and closely linked system. This chapter presents a ‘home-international’ study of the different ways in which teacher quality and associated policies for teacher development are being conceptualised and enacted in an increasingly ‘disUnited’ Kingdom (Philips, 2003).

The chapter is structured in four parts. First, the rationale for cross-national comparison is outlined. Consideration is given to the influence of globally mobile ideas on teacher education, and the interaction of the global with the local. In considering how travelling ideas on teacher development are mediated within national and sub-national communities, due consideration is afforded to the governance of teacher education in the different systems, including the composition of the respective policy communities. Second, an overview is offered of the diverse routes into teaching that are currently available in the UK in response to issues of teacher supply. Third, in order to explicate underpinning models of professionalism, an analysis is offered of the teachers’ Standards in each of the four nations of the UK. The Standards documents are examined in terms of their regulatory and aspirational functions as the issue of teaching quality is, not unreasonably, linked with systems for teacher accountability. Consideration is afforded to differing views on teacher learning and professional growth that inform policy on teacher education in the different jurisdictions, including prospects for progression from qualifying to teach through to masters-level learning and leadership roles. Returning to the interaction of the national and international, ‘market’ and ‘professional’ elements of the emerging professional development frameworks in post-devolution UK are identified (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). The chapter concludes by appraising the strength of the university connection in the UK i.e. the relationship between educational research and professional education and, importantly, the implications of this for the development of the teacher workforce across the Anglo-Celtic isles.

CROSS NATIONAL COMPARISON AND THE GOVERNANCE OF EDUCATION

It is important to place the reform of teacher education in regional/national contexts within a transnational frame (Tatto, 2007). The Anglo-Celtic isles are, of course, subject to the transnational movement of ideas on teacher development. The professional development of the teacher workforce has attracted increasing attention in global education policy (OECD 2005, 2011; World Bank, 2013; Asia Society, 2013; European Commission, 2013). Policy makers are keen to learn from comparing and much attention over the last decade has focused on policy emulation or ‘borrowing’ (Steiner-Khamsi and Florian, 2012). Non-state actors are increasingly influential in promoting the transnational flow of ideas, policies and practices. This includes an array of international organisations (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, World Bank, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), philanthropic organisations (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Carnegie Foundation), research organisations, think tanks, and professional networks (RAND Corporation, Standing International Congress of Inspectorates). Travelling themes include entry standards, practicum enhancement, the imperative of career-long teacher learning, leadership development and the use of evidence to inform improvement action. Furlong (2015, p.8) notes that the most effective strategies for teacher development internationally share five common features.

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