

Becoming a teacher in the United Kingdom in the 21st century

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Abstract

In this article I seek to explore how teacher education policy has been shaped and influenced by political interventions. The main focus is on the UK, but I argue that this approach to teacher education as a 'policy problem' is part of a wider global phenomenon. Part of this discussion necessarily needs to differentiate between what has been happening in different parts of the UK, for in spite of the globalising influences, there appears to have been some divergence between the trajectories of the four jurisdictions in relation to developments in teacher education. In drawing on recent developments in 'clinical practice' within teacher education, I draw attention to the importance of a research oriented approach to teacher education.

Keywords: teacher education, policy, research oriented approach, United Kingdom.

Как стать учителем в Соединенном Королевстве в 21 веке

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Аннотация

В данной статье я исследую, как курс развития педагогического образования менялся под влиянием политических вмешательств. Основной фокус статьи – Соединенное Королевство, но я также отстаиваю позицию, что данный подход к педагогическому образованию, как к «вопросу политики», является глобальным феноменом. При этом рассмотрение контекста Соединенного Королевства подразумевает четкую дифференциацию разных его частей, поскольку, невзирая на влияние глобализации, между четырьмя различными административно-политическими частями страны существуют определенные расхождения в подходах к педагогическому образованию. Опираясь на последние достижения в «клинической практике» в области педагогического образования, я отстаиваю важность исследовательско-ориентированного подхода к педагогическому образованию.

Ключевые слова: педагогическое образование, политический курс, исследовательско-ориентированный подход, Соединенное Королевство.

Introduction

During the early part of the twenty first century teacher education has been the subject of much change in many countries around the globe. From Australia to Austria, from Norway to Scotland, we have seen reviews, reports and reforms. In Russia also, with the major project being led from Kazan Federal University, we see ambitious plans to modernise teacher education. Within the United Kingdom, all four jurisdictions (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) – as well as the Republic of Ireland – have seen major reports that have led to changes of various sorts in the provision for initial teacher education (Teacher Education Group, 2016).

The reasons that there has been so much concern with teacher education are in part an element of the wider concern about education that has led to the 'Global Education Reform Movement' – the GERM, as Sahlberg (2011) calls it. But the particular focus on teacher education has arisen because of the widespread realisation that the quality of teaching does matter! And of course if the quality of teaching matters, then the ways in which teachers are prepared to undertake their work is a key consideration. So this welter of reform is perhaps not a real surprise. Indeed what may be the real surprise is that it has taken so long for there to be so much policy interest in the area.

In a fascinating review of developments in the USA, Cochran-Smith and Fries (2008) have traced a number of phases, culminating – for the present time at least – in the definition of teacher education as 'a policy problem'. In previous phases, she argues it was variously defined as a curriculum problem (1920s to 1950s), as a training problem (late 1950s to early 1980s) and then as a learning problem (early 1980s to early 2000s). It was in the 1990s that teacher education became defined as a policy problem, especially in the USA.

However, although the political interest – both in the USA and the UK – is relatively recent, there are several questions that have been central to the development of teacher education from the nineteenth century through the twentieth century and which still pertain to this day, within this more volatile context. In this article I seek to explore these questions and show how they are significant to current developments, especially within the UK. Part of this discussion necessarily needs to differentiate between what has been happening in different parts of the UK, for in spite of the globalising influences, there appears to have been some divergence between the trajectories of the four jurisdictions in relation to developments in teacher education.

In the following section, I discuss models of teaching and teacher education and how they have developed across the UK and how they relate to differing conceptions of the work of a teacher. The second section sets out the key elements of a 'clinical practice' approach to teacher education. Throughout the chapter I draw on a range of sources, including my own experience as a teacher educator (including most recently at the University of Oxford), a wide range of research that has been carried out and ideas that have emerged from the work undertaken by the British Educational Research Association with the Royal Society for the Arts in an inquiry into research and teacher education (BERA-RSA 2014a; 2014b), as well as on a collectively written book on teacher education across the UK and Republic of Ireland (TEG, 2016).

Models of initial teacher education

In 2010, a team of us at the University of Glasgow carried out a literature review on teacher education in the 21st Century. This had been commissioned by the Scottish Government as part of Graham Donaldson's review of teacher education in Scotland, subsequently published as *Teaching Scotland's Future* (Donaldson, 2011; see below as well). In this literature review we suggested that it was possible to identify four significantly different paradigms of teaching and the nature of teachers' work.

These we called:

- i The effective teacher – emphasising skills, content, performativity and measurement.
- ii The reflective teacher – skills and content again, but with the addition of knowledge about learners, and consideration of the values underlying and the purposes of education.
- iii The enquiring teacher – systematic enquiry into all of the above; deploying research and evaluation methods and techniques.
- iv The transformative teacher – adopting a 'critical enquiry' approach, looking beyond the classroom, considering social context, moral and ethical issues, developing alliances (adopting a 'stance').

(Menter, Hulme, Elliot et al, 2010; also Menter 2010.)

These paradigms can be seen as ranging across a continuum from a limited or 'restricted' view of teacher professionalism to a more expansive or 'extended' model (Hoyle, 1974). Clearly the challenge of preparing someone to become a teacher will vary according to which paradigm is aspired to.

In a paper prepared for the BERA-RSA inquiry into research and teaching, a team of philosophers suggested, in somewhat similar vein, that there were three aspects of knowledge that contribute towards teaching – practical wisdom, technical knowledge and critical reflection (Winch et al, 2013; BERA-RSA 2014a). Again, the approach taken towards initial teacher education is likely to be strongly shaped by the particular balance of these forms of knowledge that are believed to be important in preparing the best quality of teacher.

It is valuable therefore to consider how major policy statements have defined teaching and models of learning to become a teacher. As was mentioned earlier, there has been a steady stream of policy reviews and documents emerging around the world concerning these matters and it has been very illuminating to compare some of them with each other. In particular, the contrasts between recent statements in England and Scotland show a very marked contrast.

In November 2010 the Department for Education at Westminster published a White Paper entitled *The Importance of Teaching*. The then Secretary of State, Michael Gove, used this document to set out the main plans of his intended policy in relation to teaching and teacher education. A close reading of the paper shows quite clearly that teaching is seen as being essentially a craft that is best learned through an apprenticeship model set within a school. The contribution to be made by studying education or by researching education was limited or non-existent. Teachers' main tasks were to convey subject knowledge and to manage children's behaviour. Subject knowledge was to be learned through study certainly – usually through pursuing an honours degree in that subject. But the management of behaviour and other matters such as literacy and numeracy teaching, as well as responding to learners' special educational needs were to be learned through working alongside experienced teachers in school. Schools themselves should be encouraged to take a much more leading role – indeed a pre-eminent role – in the provision of teacher education and the White Paper announced the creation of a new approach, to be called 'School Direct' in which schools would be allocated training places by government and would select candidates and organise the programme of learning. This approach fitted with the wider mantra that was adopted by this government of education becoming a 'school-led system'. Mr Gove aimed to have at least half of beginning teachers being trained by school-led approaches by the time of the next election – that is by 2015; a target that was indeed achieved.

In January 2011, the Scottish Government published the report written by the former Chief Inspector of Education, Graham Donaldson, notably a professional educator rather than a politician. Nevertheless, his report had been commissioned by a politician, the Cabinet Secretary for Education. The ensuing report *Teaching Scotland's Future* (Donaldson, 2011) was based on a very different view of teaching. It set out a model of teaching as a complex and intellectually challenging occupation, requiring practical learning experience in schools certainly, but also requiring significant study in higher education. It also saw teachers as active decision makers in schools who would need to be able to exercise leadership in their work. The report emphasised the contribution of the university and indeed challenged the universities to offer more than they had done to enhance the quality of teacher education.

We thus saw within the space of a few months in these contiguous parts of the United Kingdom fundamentally different accounts of the nature of teaching and fundamentally

different views about the best approaches to initial teacher education (although it was called initial teacher training in the English White Paper). Hulme and Menter (2011) have carried out a detailed analysis of some of the key differences between the two documents. Simply setting out different views in policy statements such as these does not of course directly or necessarily lead to an equivalent variation in the practices of teacher education that are carried out. Nevertheless in Scotland the Government did accept all fifty of Donaldson's recommendations and set about implementing them. In England the White Paper policy proposals became enacted in practice. However in both settings there was a process of mediation – a process of 'enactment' that in both cases has the effect of 'softening the edges' on the extremes of the policy approaches. Indeed in England there has been a subsequent review, more similar in approach to that of Donaldson, a review carried out by a primary school headteacher, Sir Andrew Carter, who with the support of an advisory group produced a report early in 2015 on effective approaches to initial teacher training. Although Carter was appointed to this role by Michael Gove, by the time his report was produced Gove had been replaced by Nicky Morgan (who has herself been replaced during 2016 by Justine Greening) and this may be part of the explanation of why this report seems much more nuanced and less polemical than the 2010 White Paper (see Mutton, Burn and Menter, 2015). It may also of course relate to the fact that Carter is himself a professional educator rather than a politician.

One of the key concerns that underlies all of these reviews and discussions is the question of teachers' professional knowledge and skills. What is it that a good teacher should know and be able to do? Once that question has been discussed there is then subsequently a further key question which is how best the beginning teacher learns and/or develops those skills and knowledge.

Whatever age range the teacher is working with it is now widely acknowledged that there are going to be at least three major elements of professional knowledge that will be needed. The first is curriculum knowledge, that is knowing and understanding what it is that is to be taught – the appropriate knowledge, concepts, understandings and skills, as well arguably, as values and/or dispositions. Secondly there is what has been called 'professional content knowledge' – PCK – that is, knowing and understanding the subject content in such a way that it can actually be taught. This implies knowing something about how knowledge in a particular field is constructed and how a learner best comes to understand and know it. The third aspect of professional knowledge is what might best be dubbed professional knowledge and understanding of teaching. This would range from theories of learning, through theories of classroom management (including behaviour management), the philosophy and sociology of education and schooling and much else besides. This element also of course includes much that is skills-based and requires the learner to be able to 'translate' theory into practice – although many would argue that that distinction is not a helpful one.

Indeed, it is because of the complex nature of professional learning that recent research has increasingly emphasised the need for integrated models of professional learning, which break down the distinction between theory and practice and which emphasise the link between cognition and experience. The models that perhaps best demonstrate such an approach are sometimes called clinical practice models and such an approach is what emerged strongly as the favoured model within the BERA-RSA inquiry.

Research-based clinical practice in teacher education

Drawing on the paper written for the inquiry by Burn and Mutton (2013), the interim report from the inquiry offered the following definition of research-informed clinical practice:

"Although the precise terminology varies, the notion of 'clinical practice' in education essentially conveys the need to bring together knowledge and evidence from different sources, through a carefully sequenced programme which is deliberately designed to integrate teachers' experiential learning at the 'chalk face' with research-based knowledge and insights from academic study and scholarship. Inspired by the medical model, the goal is to refine particular skills and deepen practitioners' knowledge and understanding, by integrating practical and academic (or research-based) knowledge, and to interrogate each in light of the other.

The meaning of 'clinical practice' is potentially ambiguous, since 'practice' can be understood both as a deliberate process of rehearsal for beginners or novices, and as routine or established ways of working for experienced practitioners. While this review focuses on clinical preparation for novice teachers in programmes of initial teacher education, it is also possible to apply the principles of 'research-informed clinical practice' to professional learning for experienced practitioners as well as new recruits. (BERA-RSA, 2014a).

We see therefore that this approach is not just relevant to pre-service teacher education but can be invoked more generally as a model for professional learning throughout the career.

There have been several examples around the world of these kinds of approaches, including aspects of Professional Development Schools in the USA, projects in Scotland (Scottish Teachers for a New Era and The Glasgow West Teacher Education Initiative) and in Australia (see Hooley, 2013, although different terminology is adopted in this context). But one of the most sustained examples of this kind of approach is that developed at Oxford. Initiated in the 1980s the Oxford Internship Scheme set out to establish a full partnership between the University and a number of local state schools. The scheme was developed collaboratively by the various partners including the local education authority and has been operating successfully ever since. An early account is provided in the collection of articles edited by Benton (1980) but subsequent developments can also be seen in the accounts from Hagger and McIntyre (2006). A sustained analysis of the nature of beginning teachers' learning in this context has been undertaken by Burn, Hagger and Mutton in their Developing Expertise of Beginning Teacher (DEBT) project, an overview of which can be found in Burn et al (2015).

What is common to all of these schemes is a sustained attempt to integrate theory and practice in professional learning. Indeed Hagger and McIntyre (op. cit.) talk of 'practical theorising' and 'theorising practice' to emphasise the dialectical relationship between these elements. A further common feature is the sustained effort to make explicit the contribution that each participant makes to the learning processes. For example, in the Oxford scheme, university staff are designated respectively as curriculum tutors or as general tutors, with the former taking responsibility for ensuring the students have access to appropriate subject knowledge and to the distinctive elements of their own subject's pedagogy. The latter staff are responsible for the development of the wider professional knowledge of the student in terms of national and local policies as well as general aspects of learning theory and other research. In the schools where students are placed, teachers who work with the trainees may be either Professional Tutors or Subject mentors. The Professional Tutors play a very significant role in ensuring the coordination of the programme within the school as well as in supporting the students in understanding the ways in which general professional matters are implemented in the particular school context. The subject mentors on the other hand ensure that the student has access to resources within the subject department and is supported in their planning, preparation and teaching. All of the staff working on the scheme experience considerable professional

development themselves through their engagement and this again is a common feature of clinical practice models.

In recent years the Oxford scheme has been developing further, initially with just a limited number of schools, within the City of Oxford, to become part of a wider more broadly conceived partnership, which has been called The Oxford Education Deanery. This has again been developed non a collaboration basis between the schools and the University. There are two elements to this expansion of the longstanding partnership within the internship scheme. The first is that the Deanery seeks to establish activity on three 'levels', not only initial teacher education (ITE), but also continuing professional development (CPD) and research. The CPD partnership includes a range of interactions between the Department and the schools, including a Master's programme – the MSc in Learning and Teaching. This programme recruits openly, nationally and internationally, but there is a strand within it which is focused on local schools and provides an opportunity for collaborative endeavour for registered teachers to focus on matters of common concern in these schools. The research element has led to the identification of 'Research Champions' on the staff of each school and to a range of significant joint activities between the academic staff of the Department of Education and teachers within the schools. Some of this activity also involves the pre-service interns. One such example, focussing on an aspect of science education, is written up by Childs, McNicholl and Edwards (2014).

However, the second aspect of the expansion of the longstanding partnership is the range of partners – as well as being 'multi-levelled- the Deanery is 'multi-relational'. In a spirit of sharing and exploiting the full range of resources available in the wider community of learning represented by the City of Oxford, the Deanery is a partnership with the wider university and with a number of other partners. So, the Oxford University Vice-Chancellor very explicitly offered the University's support – not least because the University sees the Deanery as an alternative to the establishment of a University of Oxford Academy (school), along the lines taken by some other English higher education institutions. It is seen as an element in the University of Oxford's deep commitment to widening access and participation in higher education generally and in the University itself. So several central departments of the University as well as a range of colleges and other subject departments are playing a role in the Deanery. There is growing involvement also of the University's museums, of the Students' Union as well as a partnership with some primary schools, student volunteering bodies (The Student Hub) and the local authorities.

In the context of wider education policy in England therefore, we can see how the partnership stemming from a longstanding commitment to high quality initial teacher education has been developing an alternative trajectory to that being promoted by central government, an alternative which is based on principles of social justice and high quality educational provision (Fancourt et al 2015). Furthermore, we can see that in terms of the four paradigms of teaching that were identified earlier in this chapter, we can place these approaches very much in the third and fourth categories of 'enquiring' and 'transformative' teaching. Whilst teachers working in the scheme are becoming both effective and reflective, it is clear that the approach seeks to move them well beyond these qualities.

The relationship with educational research is an especially critical element of this approach. There are signs that there is increasing recognition of this in England, with moves towards 'evidence-based teaching' being encouraged by government and investment in school-based research by bodies such as the Education Endowment Foundation. The proposed College of Teaching in England would have a strong emphasis on teachers having access to published research (as Scottish teachers do through their General Teaching Council), as well as encouraging an enquiry orientation in their own work.

The final report from the BERA-RSA inquiry (BERA-RSA 2014b) adopted the following model of the requisite knowledge and experience for a teacher.

Figure 1: Dimensions of teacher effectiveness and teachers' professional identity



Here we see all of the traditional elements of teacher education but with the addition of the research strand, such as does indeed happen in clinical approaches of the kind referred to above. This is framed in terms of 'research literacy' which is defined in the BERA-RSA report as being a combination of an ability to be able to read and critically evaluate research carried out by others, as well as possessing the capacity and skills to engage in appropriate school-based enquiry.

Conclusion

Teacher education has become something of a political battleground since the 1980s. In order to ensure that we continue to prepare teachers of the highest quality in science (as well as in other subjects) it is crucial to take great care over the arrangements for professional preparation and training. There is a danger in politicians exerting their ideological prejudices, which may well be partly based on their own experiences of school, as a pupil. Rather, educationists should be examining the evidence to make judgements about the most appropriate forms of teacher preparation and indeed should be seeking to maximise the opportunities for all concerned to be engaged in professional development, not focusing entirely on the beginning teachers but thinking about staff at all levels both in the schools and the universities.

Elsewhere (Menter, 2105) I have sought to identify 'enduring themes' in teacher education and these are certainly all relevant in the discussion of science teacher education.

- The relationship between theory and practice
- The nature of professional knowledge
- The sites of professional learning
- The pedagogical contributions of the school and of the university
- Curriculum and assessment within teacher education
- The extended continuum of professional learning

In this article I have referred to all of these in some way or other. I would add to this list a concern with the relationships between research, policy and practice in teacher

education. Ensuring that each informs the other is critical to the development of a healthy, constructive and productive approach to teacher education.

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