
1 The issues and tensions around teacher education and training in the university

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The purpose of this book is to explore the role that universities have in the education and training of teachers. Twelve case studies of contrasting national and regional contexts provide the basis for an analysis of policies and practices in this strategically significant area of educational development. The perspective is global and seeks to establish common ground between different countries, irrespective of wealth or tradition.

Teacher education and training has become contested territory, with complex pedagogic and ideological forces interacting with historical structures and ideas. Teacher education is a relative newcomer to the world of universities. It does not have the historical lineage of medicine or law, and teacher preparation is a large-scale, mass, not elite, endeavour. Teachers make up one of the world's biggest occupation groups. The UNESCO eAtlas of Teachers estimates that there are 29 million primary teachers, with many more needed to support expansion in the sector. The different structures of secondary education make numerical estimates more difficult, but we can see that an occupation group in excess of 50 million requires significant provision to cover pre-service and ongoing professional education and training.

It could be argued that universities are well placed to respond to the challenge of scale that teacher preparation represents. The tertiary sector, in most parts of the world, is expanding fast. A few decades ago, a university education was unquestionably a select process. This is changing, with many countries now sending over half of young people onto some form of higher education, and a few sending an even higher proportion. The evidence suggests, as the case studies will demonstrate, that, for the most part, bringing teacher education into the university has been, and is still, a problematic

process. I want, in this opening chapter, to describe the issues and tensions associated with this, and to point to some general concerns that seem to occupy many countries, despite the very different contexts that they represent. I will return to this in the final chapter, where I will explore the extra dimension that the detailed case studies provide. I will then assess the extent to which an informed agenda can be developed that would identify points for reform and improvement relevant to all the major stakeholders.

In an important sense, the history of teacher education is a success story. Over the past three centuries, and especially in the twentieth century, institutions of teacher education, increasingly university-based, expanded in all parts of the world. Recognition of the importance of educating teachers has become a part of the policy agenda for most national governments. The need to ‘qualify’ teachers is now widely recognised and is an unquestioned assumption in most countries. Teachers are seen to have played an important role in the remarkable improvements in the range and quality of schooling in many countries, with South Korea, Singapore and the Shanghai region of China providing just three examples.

Yet, despite this record, teacher education in the first decades of the twenty-first century has experienced unrelenting criticism.

Arne Duncan, President Obama’s long-serving Secretary of Education, one of the leading critics, has said:

By almost any standard, many if not most of the nation’s 1450 schools, colleges and departments of education are doing a mediocre job of preparing teachers for the realities of the 21st century classroom.

And *Time* magazine, one of the journals reporting the speech, was equally forthright:

It was a damning, but not unprecedented, assessment of teacher colleges, which have long been the stepchildren of the American university system and a frequent target of education reformers’ scorn over the past quarter-century. (*Time* 23 October 2009)

In England, similar, perhaps even more strident, political attacks have characterised debate over the past two decades. In 1990, Conservative government proposals to give schools rather than universities the major say in teacher training were warmly supported in *The Times* (11 June): ‘Current teacher training courses lack rigour and are not up to university standards.’

New regulations were put in place to require that four-fifths of all teacher-training courses took place in schools, a move that was strongly supported

by some right-wing think tanks. The response of the teacher education community to such political intervention (interference, some would say) was almost wholly negative. One leading academic journal of teacher education, published from the UK, headed an editorial ‘May Day? May Day!’ (*Journal of Education for Teaching* 1994, 20:2).

The debate in England has rumbled on for more than 20 years. In 2013, the then minister argued strongly that ‘the best people to teach teachers are teachers’, rather than, as he saw it, the prejudiced community of education professors (reported in *The Telegraph*, 21 March). This assertion was made without reference to the strong evidence that courses were receiving increasingly strong approval from trainees and the headteachers who subsequently employed them (Furlong et al. 2006) – a trend that continues, despite recent research demonstrating the strengthening relationship between schools and universities working in partnership (Evans 2013).

Concern about the quality of teacher education goes well beyond the developed world. Successive UNESCO Global Reports monitoring the progress to secure a school place for every child by 2015 have called for the reform of a teacher education and training system perceived as outdated, insufficiently practical and failing to prepare teachers who, in developing countries, can be effective in the classroom (UNESCO 2004, 2014). UNESCO has established an international task force to address these problems (teachersforefa.unesco.org).

The aim of this book is to reach beyond the rhetoric and political positioning that can be associated with teacher education policy to examine in some detail the experience of 12 countries and geographical contexts spread across the globe. How widespread is the public and political unease about teacher education? How strong is the position of the university in different places and contexts? What strategies and practices underpin the work of university-based teacher educators in these different places?

The 12 countries have been selected from across the globe. Over many years working in developed and developing parts of the world, I have been struck by the community of common interests that there are around the way teachers are prepared. There are, of course, many contextual differences. It is important to acknowledge and understand these. But universities have a unique place in all societies, and, increasingly, have been acquiring a major role in the process of teacher education. Schoolteachers, the focus of this book, represent one of the world’s biggest occupational groups, and the university task in teacher education represents a sizeable and logistical challenge. I was fortunate that a distinguished panel of experts from such diverse geographical contexts accepted the invitation to contribute to this book. In

that invitation, I suggested a number of issues they might consider in preparing their contributions. These included:

- the origins of the university role in relation to teacher education and training
- the evolution of the teacher education role of the university to present times
- the nature of any political and public debates about the quality of teacher education and training (identifying key stakeholder groups and the way they inter-relate)
- the research record about the effectiveness of the university role in teacher education and training
- contemporary trends, and possible future scenarios, in the structure and organisation of teacher education and training
- current research within the national context that might assist in any changes in teacher education and training
- reflections on the political and public confidence in the university role in teacher education and training (to include an analytical consideration of the forces underlying such confidence/lack of confidence).

I did not want the varied contributions to be formulaic in necessarily responding to each of these issues. One of the fascinating outcomes of this process is to observe how, given a common task, different emphases and pressing concerns emerge. The aim was to make this book valuable to everyone with a stake in the way universities prepare teachers. The different case studies and the accompanying analyses seek to provide a mirror that will allow anyone with an interest in this process to think about the ways their own policies and practices might develop. The question in the title of this book is set to highlight the uncertainties that exist in many countries. I believe that these concerns need addressing more robustly than has hitherto been the case. As I will go on to suggest, I share some of these uncertainties but, along with all the contributors to this book, my answer to the question in the title is yes, universities do have a role in teacher education and training. In some countries, however, there are strong political pressures suggesting otherwise and the arguments underpinning this stance need understanding and response. This is one of the purposes of this book.

In this first chapter, I want to look more closely at the dichotomy between the world of university-based teacher education and the public and political scrutiny it has undergone in the past and is still undergoing. I want to suggest

that we look beyond the politicisation of teacher education and examine the deeper social pressures that are often overlooked in the debates and controversies around teacher preparation and support. The teacher education community needs, I believe, to be responsive to these pressures and map out a reform strategy that takes account of social, political and professional unease. I will suggest the directions that this needs to take.

In doing this, it is important to stress that I am not thinking of any one national system. There is now a strong global discourse around the education and training of teachers. There are many interesting, usually localised, examples of new and innovative practice that do address the issue of public confidence, and some of these I will refer to. My main concern is with systemic change and at scale. To achieve this, I think we need to rethink some of the ideas and assumptions that underpin present practice. I want to look at general concepts, and to do this I need to look first in more detail at what I have termed the ‘success story’ of teacher education and the problems that have arisen subsequently.

Formal provision for educating teachers, in Europe, goes back some way. Jean Baptiste de la Salle established the first French *école normale* in Reims at the end of the seventeenth century (Johnson 1968), and the first German seminary for teachers was set up in Gotha in 1698 (Neather 1993). In England, the first teacher-training college was established in Southwark, London, in 1798. Nearly 40 years later, the first teacher-training ‘normal school’ in the USA was set up by Cyrus Peirce in Lexington (Provenso 2011).

These institutions focused almost wholly on preparing teachers for the elementary or primary phases of schooling. As primary education expanded, becoming universal in most parts of Europe by the end of the nineteenth century, so the institutions of teacher education proliferated. These were single-purpose institutions with, in some countries, strong links to the church. By the early years of the twentieth century, such institutions were educating very large numbers of teachers for the rapidly newly created mass education systems.

The origins of teacher education are, therefore, unlike professions such as medicine or law, outside the academy or university. This was to change through the twentieth century. What one commentator (Neave 1992) has termed the ‘universitisation’ of teacher education began to take hold.

The incorporation of teacher training into the university sector proceeded at different rates from country to country. In the USA, the move took place primarily in the 1930s; in England, in the 1970s; in France, in the 1990s; and in South Africa, in the first decade of the present century. Other countries

moved at varied timescales but, in most parts of the world today, teacher education is either provided by universities or validated by universities. As primary teacher education became incorporated, so the pressure to provide teacher education for secondary teachers increased and it became increasingly recognised that a subject degree was insufficient for entry into teaching. One, sometimes two, years of pedagogic preparation for pre-service courses quickly became the norm.

The involvement of the university in teacher education has had important consequences. The increasing number of primary teachers educated to degree level contributed to the rising status of the primary sector. The universities, for the most part, guarded closely an academic freedom and autonomy that, initially at least, protected teacher education from government intervention or regulation.

Over the past 25 years, however, the role of the university and the practices of the university in teacher education and training have come under relentless scrutiny. In England and the USA, the politicking around teacher education has been highly confrontational, but there are other examples.

In France, the Sarkozy government in the first decade of this century set about abolishing the equivalent of university departments of education (the Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres-IUFM) and moving teacher education into the subject departments of the universities (Lapostolle & Chevallier 2011). A study for UNESCO found that the vast majority of European countries had introduced regulatory or legislative reform to improve the quality of teachers (Moon et al. 2003). In Australia, there have been numerous governmental and state reviews of teacher education. The Ramsey report for New South Wales (Ramsey 2000, 24) pressed the need ‘To align teacher education with the needs of our times: in too many current instances this seemed not to be the case’, and suggested that:

The current way of conceptualizing teacher education reflects a traditional adherence to discipline areas, and precludes the involvement of multi skilled educators in the school environment [...] the current paradigm for thinking about teacher preparation programs is outdated and has been over-taken by changes to work patterns and practices.

The report looked at the position of teacher education within the university:

Teacher education is less connected to the other disciplines in universities than it has ever been. In the very period when the university disciplines should have engaged with teacher education, they have distanced themselves from it as much as teacher education has from them. Equally, teacher education in the State’s

[New South Wales] universities does not generally operate within models that make strong connections with schools. (Ibid., 25)

If we are to understand the situation of teacher education today, and if we are to set out proposals for repositioning and reform, then it is necessary to examine the origins of this sort of disquiet. How did a system of teacher education that had gone unchallenged for most of the twentieth century gain such critical political attention and, in some countries, acquire such notoriety?

It is important to remember that criticism has come from across the political spectrum, Democrats as well as Republicans, Socialist as well as Conservative parties. The concern represents something more than party politics.

I believe that the worry about teacher education is part of a wider social unease about the quality and effectiveness of schools generally. In Europe, North America and Australasia, and increasingly in developing countries, concern about achievement in schools is a major political issue. It is not only national achievement overall, as judged for example by international tables such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), but also the inequalities of achievement within countries that are creating unease. These doubts are expressed across the political spectrum.

I think that the concern about teacher education is, in no small measure, a consequence of the progress made in education. Over the past 50 years, larger proportions of the populations than ever before, in most developed countries, are achieving educational success. In the UK, over 40% of the population go on to higher education, compared to less than 10% in the middle of the previous century. In South Korea, the proportion of young people entering university has just topped 80%. In France, the same proportion pass the secondary-school-leaving baccalaureate.

These improvements have led to many more educated parents who, implicitly or explicitly, know the social and economic importance of education for their children. It is unsurprising, therefore, that a less deferential, more abrasive approach to the quality of schooling has come to characterise our social institutions. Parents are prepared to be critical of schools and teachers. Where politicians take up the standards issue, they are plugging into a deep source of parental worry. This is not confined to the richer nations. A report by The Nelson Mandela Foundation in South Africa, aptly titled 'Emerging Voices' (Nelson Mandela Foundation 2005) provides vivid testimony of the disquiet of parents about the quality of teachers. And on YouTube, you can watch demonstrations by parents and children about the quality of their

teachers in places as far apart as India and Mexico. Is it any wonder that teacher education becomes a central feature in this broader picture?

Political scrutiny and attacks on teacher education also reflect the ambiguous status of teacher education within the university. One perceptive commentator in England (Hencke 1978) has part of the explanation for this:

Teacher training began in 1798 in Southwark, a slum district of London. That Southwark rather than Oxford or Cambridge was the home of teacher training explains many of the problems facing teacher educators today [...] unlike theology, medicine or law it has no historic claim to a university tradition of academic excellence or respectability. It has more in common with medieval craft guilds, whose apprenticeship system preceded modern technical education.

I have already referred to Arne Duncan's views on teacher education and training in the USA. Critiques in that country go back some way. The much-quoted report of the Holmes Group (1995) on Schools of Education in the USA presents a damning indictment of teacher educators who, in the unsuccessful quest for status and legitimacy in the academic community, became cut off from their central mission, the world of schools and the work of teachers.

I think it is worth dwelling on the teacher educators' 'quest for legitimacy' because I believe this to be one of the major fault lines of the present structure of teacher education. As teacher education institutions became part of the universities, so the staff that made the transition had to adjust to new systems of status and reward. Research and scholarship had much higher visibility than in the teacher-training colleges or colleges of education that existed formerly. The 'practical' work of preparing teachers for the classroom sat uneasily with prevailing cultural norms of academic life. Although doctors, lawyers and architects embraced 'the practical', there was less of a perception that this was necessary in teaching.

Given this context, teacher educator legitimacy was sought more easily in the social sciences, particularly sociology. The burgeoning development of the sociology of education followed the influx of teacher educators into the universities. The forms of social sciences, to which many teacher educators were drawn, were not primarily focused on practical and professional work. While significant work was carried out on issues such as the social origins of the curriculum, the relationship of social stratification to schooling and the nature of disadvantage, teacher education began to acquire a reputation in schools for overly theoretical courses unrelated to the real world of teaching.

There are consequences from this. The quest for legitimacy has only been partially successful. Teacher education has remained the poor relation in many parts of higher education. The practice of teaching has struggled to gain legitimacy. In England, tutoring on the Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) does not always have the status it deserves, although universities have improved their standing with schools (Furlong et al. 1994). In the USA, most of the schools of education in the leading universities do no teacher preparation. It is unsurprising, therefore, that as many teacher educators move away from the ‘practical’, so they expose themselves to the criticism of being out of touch or too concerned with theory. The practical component of teacher education has repeatedly come under criticism for lacking articulation with other course components, and in many education courses across the world the practicum takes up only a small component of time.

The gap between teacher educators and schools continues to be significant. In many countries, teacher educators (as the Australian review suggests) have failed to establish a support base either within the schools or within the wider university academic community. Into this vacuum, governments have been regulating and legislating independently of the teacher education community within the university. For the most part, these interventions have championed practical skills, competences and performance-orientated modes of teacher education and training. The universities, often outside this discourse, have been unable to establish an alternative capable of convincing political opinion.

In some contexts, it is true, the teacher educator community has sought to mediate between the governmental and university perceptions of the teacher education curriculum. In England, for example, where the conflicts between government and teacher educators has been especially acute, some universities sought to anticipate concern with a more practically focused approach to education and training. As a young headteacher in Oxford in the 1980s, I was involved in the school-based model developed by Harry Judge and colleagues at the University Department of Education, the Oxford internship scheme, modelled, as the name implies, on approaches to medical education. Few universities followed this approach until required to do so by government regulation. And regulation in turn created an ideological battlefield between those advocating craft skills and competence (governments) and others (teacher educators) advocating a more rounded education embracing grounding in theory as well as practice.

Let me, therefore, summarise this discussion:

First, the universities have played a pivotal role in raising the status and ambitions of teacher education. This has been especially true for primary teachers and for secondary teachers who had previously been trained outside the university. In most countries, the university maintains a strong involvement in the teacher education process.

Second, departments of education in universities have become increasingly isolated from schools. And the links between education and other disciplines within the universities are weak.

Third, the curriculum of teacher education has been strongly influenced by ideas and concepts from the social sciences, and this has laid university departments open to the criticism of being overly theoretical and lacking in engagement with the practice of teachers. Partially as a consequence, quite instrumental skills-based and competence/performance-orientated regulatory frameworks have been prescribed by governments and government agencies.

Fourth, teacher preparation has, in many countries, become embroiled in political and ideological debates that have created defensiveness in the teacher education academic community.

Fifth, given the increasing levels of distrust between university-based teacher educators and governments, departments of education have become less influential in the policy and practice debates about school improvement and reform.

You will find aspects of this summarising analysis in the case-study chapters that follow. I think there is sufficient breadth to bring out some general conclusions that will be of value to the policy community around teacher education, particularly those working in universities. In the final chapter of the book, I will begin the process of exploring the new directions that policy might follow.

I have grouped the case studies with the European contributions together in Chapters 2–6, before extending the analysis to high-income countries such as the USA and Australia. The growth economies of India, China and Chile precede two case studies from sub-Saharan Africa. To provide an initial orientation, each of the case studies is briefly summarised in the final section of this chapter.

In Chapter 2, **Academic and practical: Research-based teacher education in Finland**, Hannele Niemi provides a brief overview of Finnish teacher education and its position in the Finnish higher education system, particularly in the university context. All primary- and secondary-school teacher education was moved to universities in early the 1970s, and, since 1979, teacher