

Jean Murray · Anja Swennen
Clare Kosnik *Editors*

International Research, Policy and Practice in Teacher Education

Insider Perspectives

 Springer

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Preface

Being a teacher educator is frequently underestimated, a complex activity that seems deceptively easy to those looking from the outside. Why? There are so many reasons. Chief among them is that teaching has always appeared easy to those who have never taught, so can teaching teachers about teaching be considered any more serious or challenging? Also, because there are no requirements for being a teacher educator, no preparation or credential other than (perhaps) prior teaching experience, our ranks are populated by too many who have confirmed that teaching must be easy since they have so easily stepped into—and been equally easily accepted for—the role of teacher educator, regardless of their experience or background. All this has been exacerbated by the move of teacher education into the academy, which has not afforded us higher ranking, or greater respect, but rather has served to further fuel debates about our (lack of) disciplinary identity and positioned us as a field without a knowledge base.

It is no wonder then that the work we do is characterized by contradictions, blind spots and tensions: teaching others how to teach is not a step-by-step curriculum, a series of strategies or methods to implement with fidelity, despite dogged perceptions that it can/should be that simple; we depend on many others to assist us in our work—arts and sciences faculty, school practitioners, for example—but have little say over the substance or quality of the assistance these others contribute; our teacher candidates can enter the field—or not—regardless of whether we deem them to be ready, often in spite of or completely aside from our efforts; everywhere in the world, policymakers shift, shape and (re)direct via edict and mandate what we do, often in ways we know are wrong-sighted or premature but feel powerless to resist. We are simultaneously blamed for the failures of schools and teachers, at the same time that we are perceived to be essential instruments—linchpins—of reform, change and innovation. If we experience dissonance, there are plenty of good reasons.

Clearly this is not a pretty state of affairs; teacher educators find themselves caught in-between compliance and resistance, sometimes pawns, sometimes targets or even agents, of reform policies. It is no wonder that we are overcome by “profound pessimisms” (Chap. 14) as we struggle to assert our independence and our

relevance, even while we find ourselves marginalized and too frequently absent from the sociopolitical decision-making table. Competition for resources, threat of censure or funding reductions and ever-proliferating regulations keep us busy and distracted; we retreat into our “tribes” and “territories” (Chap. 14) as a survival tactic, a way to preserve what little we may have and stay in the game.

Undoubtedly, I too could be accused of being profoundly pessimistic, authoring a preface that emphasizes the constraints and limitations teacher educators face and the untenable position they/we seem to frequently find ourselves, the brunt of criticism and scapegoating. And yes, it is important to clarify that not all teacher educators are subject to the same surveillance and restrictions teacher educators in places such as the USA, the UK and increasingly Australia are undergoing. Still,

As part of the agenda for reforming schools, many governments across the world now see teacher education as a policy lever for improving teaching and school performance at national levels, and for reforming teacher professionalism. (Chap. 1)

Education reform has become ubiquitous, as all nations look to schools and schooling as the key to economic and social advancement and the development of productive citizens. It is also widely accepted that teachers are essential to student achievement and that quality teachers produce quality outcomes. Thus, there is a frenzy of reform efforts in education that focus on teachers, especially at the pre-service level—their preparation, retooling and upgrading, professional development and assessment. All of this has focused attention on teacher education/educators worldwide, which situates this volume as more than timely because it offers a perspective of the global reform movement from within, giving voice to those who are uniquely positioned to comment first-hand on the scope and impact of prevailing shifts in teacher education policy and practice on an international scale. The fact that this volume puts teacher educator scholars in conversation with one another is critical not just because teacher educators from many nations can use its pages to share knowledge and experiences, but because they are able in addition to speak in a more coherent voice to a diverse audience of teacher educators of all nationalities about “the ways in which policy is both produced and reproduced, that is, how it is lived and played out by ‘insider’ groups in the field” (Chap. 1).

Collectively then, this book addresses a series of questions, with each chapter offering thoughtful answers that help to illuminate how teacher educators on the ground and actively engaged in the work of preparing quality teachers own, interpret, enact and experience education reform policies. These questions include:

1. *Who are teacher educators?* Chapters that speak to this question take up the issue of teacher educator identity, membership, preparation and nurturance. Some of the issues tackled include the blurring lines between university-based teacher educators and school-based mentors and how their roles overlap and connect; teacher educator knowledge(s) and skills and what teacher educators now need to know and be able to do as notions of quality teachers and teaching evolve; teacher educator legitimacy, marginalization and renewal; and how teacher educators navigate among competing discourses about them and their purpose.

2. *In what ways are teacher educators responding to the current policy and reform landscape?* The conversations in relation to this question reveal teacher educator resistance, agency and inventiveness in the face of policy directives and impositions and describe the various ways in which teacher educators have used the reform movement as an opportunity for learning and professional development. One example has been the creation of “third space[s]” for different ways of working with schools or other partners; another is the renewal that has occurred when teacher educators find their roles redefined; yet another is the reconceptualization of knowledge and knowing and who owns expertise in pre-service education.
3. *What new knowledge(s) are teacher educators contributing to the field?* The various reforms teacher educators face have also helped to galvanize their energies around new inquiries that further inform not just practice and programmes but also policy. Thus, teacher educators are simultaneously recipients and generators of policies and policy change. Through research into teachers’ professional development and leadership, new pedagogies and instructional tools, alternate ways of doing teacher preparation that emphasize collegiality and co-teaching and diverse research methodologies that can better explicate the intricacy of pre-service teacher preparation, teacher educators exercise their autonomy and their agency, even as they instruct.

Through their work, research and theorizing, these teacher educator authors transform the “shoulds,” “oughts” and “musts” that seem to exemplify too much of contemporary policy—which seeks to control or manage what happens in teacher education—into possibilities and narratives of genuine practice, showcasing how singular ideas mandating change can actually play out in unexpected, yet productive, ways that honour and respond to very real and multiply diverse contexts. This collection is a strong reminder that teacher educators may be under scrutiny, many may be operating under severe constraints or questionable policies, but they are not simply acted upon but are also actors who have clear positions, productive ideas and inventive practices. They—and the work they do—are undoubtedly buffeted by change, but here these teacher educators demonstrate their capacity to take hold of change through analysis, research, creative response and imagination.

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Chapter 1

International Policy Perspectives on Change in Teacher Education



Jean Murray, Anja Swennen, and Clare Kosnik

1.1 Introduction

The timeframe for publishing this book is an interesting one internationally. As increasingly sophisticated and economically competitive ‘knowledge societies’ evolve around the world, national and international demands on education multiply, demanding the production of high-quality educational ‘outcomes’ from schooling and higher education. Intensifying globalisation and international competitiveness has had profound consequences for national and transnational government policies for education. Certainly, in schools, results from PISA and other international attainment indicators have often driven high senses of government anxieties about educational – and hence economic – competitiveness and sometimes result in attempts to reform schooling, change teaching methods and/or introduce austere testing regimes. As part of the agenda for reforming schools, many governments across the world now see teacher education as a policy lever for improving teaching and school performance at national levels and for reforming teacher professionalism.

There is now a widespread, international understanding that the quality of an education system is dependent in large part on the quality of its teaching force. This consensus has placed high focus on the effectiveness of recruitment and retention strategies in attracting and keeping well-qualified teachers in the profession. In particular, the quality and focuses of teacher education throughout the professional life

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course have also been placed under the policy microscope. Preservice teacher education, in particular, is often seen as a policy lever for bringing about change to teachers and teaching. Historical analyses internationally show that in many ways this emphasis is not new: teacher education has long been a major context in which the discourses and practices about what it means to be a teacher are both produced and reproduced. The potential for control of schooling this offers has meant that, since the inception of organised systems of teacher training, national and local governments – and in many countries religious bodies – have been major stakeholders in the field of teacher education, again with preservice a particular area of contestation. When a national education system as a whole has come under scrutiny, teacher education has always been subject to changes, as the historical analyses of Larabee (2004) on the USA, Furlong (2013) on England and Swennen (2012) on the Netherlands show, to offer just three examples.

What is new about the changes of recent decades though is that there has been a systematic politicisation of teacher education, with globalisation pressures increasing levels of government intervention in and regulation of teacher education in many countries across the developed and developing worlds (Trippstad et al. 2017). These interventions have happened over broadly similar time scales and often in similar ways, with new, sometimes radical and often fast-changing policy requirements implemented quickly in order to improve schooling through ‘reform’ of teacher education. Pressures from globalisation have also contributed to growing change and ‘marketisation’ of the higher education sector – in which nearly all teacher education programmes are still based – and the accompanying growth of neo-liberal regimes of performativity and audit in our universities and teacher education institutions. Many such institutions are now graded in national or international league tables, facing pressures to achieve numerous and often competing goals in teaching, research and community service. Overall, this situation means that externally generated policy requirements for both higher education and schooling sectors combined to change the face of teacher education worldwide. We give a brief overview of these changes in teacher education here in order to provide contexts for the research studies in this book; such an analysis is also useful for understanding the current issues in teacher education emerging from the studies. But our focus here is not only on these policy shifts per se but also on the less overt aspects and effects of them, as we discuss in more detail below.

1.2 Teacher Education Policy Change

It is not possible to undertake an analysis of teacher education policies without also taking into account the broad social, cultural, political and economic changes currently taking place across the developed world. It is clear that the economic crisis of 2008 onwards has had profound political and social effects on many countries and their policies for education, as well as for other areas affecting social welfare and

cohesion, including health, social care and employment. In relation to EU member states, for example, a report in 2015 stated:

Public budgets in all Member States are under great pressure. The global economic downturn and declining revenue in many Member States in recent years have aggravated this problem and put greater pressure on education and training budgets, as countries try to balance their public finances. Fiscal constraints have led to cut-backs in public funding for some phases of education. (European Commission 2015, p. 2)

But in addition to these economic factors, we also need to consider increasing social, cultural and linguistic diversity in many countries, the rising levels of social inequality in some and the ways in which all nations are dealing with the fallout from conflict and social unrest, particularly the current refugee crisis, fuelled in part by the Syrian civil war and in part by ongoing economic and social disadvantages in the Global South. Some of these factors have contributed to increasingly political turbulence and rejection of so-called 'expert' and 'establishment' views in the USA and across parts of Europe, notably the UK and Italy. Furthermore, the fast pace of technological changes is now clearly leading to changes in social behaviours in every nation; these changes affect the ways in which we understand the world, view knowledge production and participate in knowledge dissemination. Education is inevitably caught up in these social changes as all generations of learners and teachers experience them within whichever educational settings they learn and work.

These factors form powerful background influences on how education policy 'reforms' for teacher education are devised, implemented and evaluated. Kosnik et al. (2016) in their analysis of such policies identify eight types of teacher education 'reform' initiatives happening internationally. Given the variety in the architectures of teacher education nationally and transnationally and the often-differing cultural and educational values which underpin that variety, there are inevitable divergences between countries in the exact forms these initiatives take, what they mean and how they are being implemented, but, over and above these differences, there are some interesting commonalities which emerge from Kosnik et al.'s analysis. Most of their identified initiatives focus on preservice teacher education, underlining its centrality in reform efforts, although one important emphasis is a growing emphasis on in-service professional development or professional learning for serving teachers. The other seven initiatives can be grouped into two interlinked categories: first, increased, external regulation and surveillance of teacher education and, second, reforms which refocus curriculum content, format and, sometimes, even the location of preservice programmes.

In the first of these categories, Kosnik et al.'s analysis refers to reforms which impose the standards that programmes must ensure student teachers attain before they become teachers. The details of such standards are, of course, tailored to meet the social, cultural and political imperatives considered appropriate for teaching in specific national contexts, but the analysis shows common features including emphasis on the importance of high levels of subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, a range of good 'practical' teaching skills, the possession of a

good range of strategies to support pupils with diverse needs and being a good role model (Kosnik et al., *ibid*).

Linked into this standards reform – and also aiming to regulate – are the types of reforms which establish minimum requirements for teacher education programmes to meet. Here examples given include higher admission standards for beginning teachers, higher academic qualifications for teacher education and prescriptions about the length of programmes. Kosnik et al.'s analysis also identifies the prevalence of reforms aiming to increase the surveillance of teacher education through the external assessment of programmes. The authors indicate that these assessments vary greatly in terms of form, frequency, purposes, effectiveness and degrees of collaboration or imposition. Their detailed case studies explore the impact of such external assessments in the USA, where 'a regulatory and accountability climate' is now established in 'an era of increased surveillance of university teacher preparation' (p. 281), and England, where teacher education programmes undergo often high stakes and intrusive inspections by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

A second category of reforms involves a focus on curriculum content, format and, sometimes, changes in the location of all or parts of preservice programmes. Here Kosnik et al. (*ibid*) cite reforms which involve moves towards more 'research-based' teacher education. These authors offer two definitions of that often contested term: first, teachers drawing on and conducting research to improve the quality of practice and, second, research conducted *on* teacher education programmes in order to evaluate their effectiveness. The BERA-RSA review, conducted to identify how teacher education (2014, p. 5) in the four countries of the UK were or might be informed by research, adopted a 'broad and inclusive' view of the word 'research', which offers the following definitions of the ways in which preservice may be research-based or research-informed:

First, the content of teacher education programmes may be informed by research-based knowledge and scholarship, emanating from a range of academic disciplines and epistemological traditions. Second, research can be used to inform the design and structure of teacher education programmes. Third, teachers and teacher educators can be equipped to engage with and be discerning consumers of research. Fourth, teachers and teacher educators may be equipped to conduct their own research, individually and collectively, to investigate the impact of particular interventions or to explore the positive and negative effects of educational practice. (BERA-RSA 2014, p. 5)

Kosnik et al. also identify the ongoing trend in some countries for teacher education provision to move from colleges of education to universities (OECD 2011, quoted in Kosnik et al), with the growth of master's level preservice programmes also occurring in some nations. Murray (2015) in her analysis of teacher education across the UK and the Republic of Ireland refers to the 'the university turn', underway in at least three of those countries, influenced in considerable part by the Bologna Accord of 1999. This Accord, as a key piece of education legislation across Europe, formed a European Higher Education Area with a common qualifications framework, leading to the development of master's level preservice awards in many EU countries, including Ireland, Finland, Portugal and Hungary. In other countries

including Norway and the Netherlands, similar reforms increasing the length of time of study and the qualification level for new teachers are still underway.

A master's level of qualification in preservice certainly involves *more* time in the university and *more* sustained student teacher involvement in research (BERA-RSA 2014), signifying national commitments to strengthening the 'academic' and 'cognitive' elements of teacher education. This also brings epistemological changes to the curriculum of teacher education as it changes and extends the distinctive knowledge base of teaching to be acquired in considerable part through research engagement and study at a university.

A further series of reforms have involved making teacher education more practical, with 'two main ways of achieving this ... proposed: (a) enhancing the theory-practice connection in campus courses; and, (b) linking the campus program more closely with the schools' (Kosnik et al. 2016, p. 273). This 'practicum turn' or 'practice turn' in teacher education (Furlong and Lawn 2011; Mattsson et al. 2011; Reid 2011) has certainly been a noted feature of teacher education policy internationally in the last decade. An OECD report in 2012 (quoted in Kosnik et al., *ibid*) comments that in many countries, '[i]nitial teacher education is increasingly being transferred to schools'; the same report also argues for greater 'complementarity between field experience and academic studies'.

In a similar vein, the European Commission report of 2015, looking at all European Union member states, identifies:

A trend towards re-modelling Initial Teacher Education for student teachers to learn in school settings so that they can get into real classrooms early in the programme, spend more time there and receive stronger support in the process. (European Commission 2015, p. 4)

As Groundwater-Smith (2011, p. ix) articulates, this kind of 'turn' to practice has involved exploring 'professional practice knowledge and the ways in which our understandings impact upon the design and enactment of ... "the practicum curriculum"'. Faced with the need to accommodate this 'turn', many universities have engaged in various forms of knowledge generation on/in practice, as part of their changing teacher education provision, including the development of 'clinical practice' (Burn and Mutton 2013).

This turn has, however, again played out very differently across various countries and institutional settings. In some countries, for example, parts of the USA and England, it has resulted in 'a hyper-emphasis on clinical practice – extensive immersion in the field, (*and*) limited (or no) emphasis on research or "theoretical" course work' (Goodwin and Kosnik 2013, p. 335). In countries where such emphases are found, traditional routes in teaching are often under threat, alternative routes into teaching proliferate and teacher educators based in higher education see themselves as living in a hostile political landscape and subject to sustained criticisms (Gilroy 2014; Goodwin and Kosnik 2013).

In contrast to this picture, in parts of Continental Europe, the 'practicum turn' has instead involved following the Finnish model in which 'research-informed practice' is part of preservice provision in both universities and schools (Kansanen 2013). In this kind of model – again following the example of Finland – specialist

‘training schools’, with specially trained and well-qualified mentor teachers, may also be established. An example of this is the type of school-based teacher education established in the Netherlands (see Van Velzen, Volman and Brekelmans in this volume) in which schools and teacher education institutions collaborate to educate new teachers. This has not only led to the improved education of teachers but also to the development of primary and secondary schools as partners in teacher education and the development of teachers as school-based teacher educators.

Alternative routes into teaching have also proliferated in some contexts. Examples here include programmes in which all or most of the training takes place in schools rather than universities (as in the School Direct programme in England) and ‘direct-to-teaching schemes that give a professional qualification with a minimum of formal teacher education (whether university- or school-based) before or shortly after beginning to teach’ (Kosnik et al. 2016, p. 272). Many countries have also experienced the rapid spread of programmes – based originally on the Teach For America scheme – which recruit only those with ‘good’ undergraduate degrees onto ‘fast track’ schemes for teaching and educational leadership. European countries as diverse as Estonia, Norway, England, Bulgaria and Austria now have such ‘Teach for...’ schemes. Online training programmes (such as Hibernia in Ireland) also continue to proliferate in some contexts.

There are often strong links between the generation of these alternative routes and the ‘turn to the practical’ through largely school-centred training models in teacher education. Other drivers for these alternative routes vary from concerns about the quality of existing teachers and their academic knowledge, desires to widen the demographic profile of the teaching population (e.g. by attracting more mature entrants or those from ethnic minorities) or the creation of simple ‘stopgap’ measures to address temporary teacher shortages in a given area (Kosnik et al. 2016). Some of these alternative routes may provide high-quality learning for student teachers, but others are untested, and the quality of learning is not always guaranteed, particularly when essentially experimental routes are expanded rapidly and at scale.

More worrying still, schools in some countries are now permitted to recruit and employ untrained teachers, if they so wish. The absence of any kind of preservice programmes in such cases is particularly lamentable – and is certainly divergent from the norm in many developed countries. Across Europe, for example, analysis of TALIS data (European Commission 2015) shows that more than nine out of ten teachers have completed preservice courses (91.2%). The same analysis shows that trained teachers feel better prepared for the different aspects of their job than those who have not completed such a programme. A large majority of these teachers (80%) say that their studies included what many experts – including the Commission itself (European Commission 2015) – would consider to be the essential elements of a preservice programme: the ‘content’ of teaching (subject knowledge); its ‘pedagogy’ (understanding of teaching and learning); and ‘practice’ (classroom-based training). These elements can be defined alternatively as pedagogical competences, subject-matter knowledge and subject didactics, practice and the development of students’ capacities for reflective practice and on-the-job research.

As Kosnik et al. (2016) identify, there has certainly been an enhanced focus on teacher subject knowledge in many teacher education reforms. In some countries this emphasis has meant demands for more subject knowledge to be incorporated into education degrees at undergraduate or master's levels; in other nations it has resulted in a demand for higher levels of qualifications for entry into postgraduate routes or for screening of teacher candidates' ability in literacy and numeracy. Some – but by no means all – nations have also increased their focus on the specifics of subject knowledge for teaching, including subject didactics or pedagogical subject knowledge (see, e.g. Swennen and Volman 2017).

1.3 Policy and 'Insider' Perspectives

We give an overview of these policy changes here in order to provide contexts for the research studies in this book; such an analysis is also essential for understanding the current issues in teacher education emerging from the studies. But our focus here is not only on these policy shifts per se, rather on the many, often hidden aspects of them as and when they make their complex ways to implementation in the field of practice. Policy analyses of change in teacher education abound, but many of these texts focus on the macro level of the field. There is, of course, considerable value in many such analyses, not least because they enable the exploration of contemporary trends in educational policy-making per se. Policy analysis understood in this way can also contribute to the critique of what Popkewitz (1987) terms 'the public discourses' or macro discourses of teacher education as they shift over time. And as Popkewitz (1987, p. ix) argues, 'public discourses also often serve to "dull one's sensitivity to the complexities that underlie the practices of teacher education ... (by) a filtering out of historical, social and political assumptions"'. Yet beneath the public discourses of the moment, it is often possible to trace recurring, historical factors, themes and issues of the field.

Some analyses of educational reform, though, tend to portray policy essentially as a static and preformed entity, generated by anonymous government agents and then handed down in fixity to practitioners and other stakeholders in the field to undertake essentially straightforward and homogeneous processes of implementation. Here we adopt a definition of power which deploys the work of Michel Foucault (1988) to see power as a relation exercised through the social body and at the micro level of social relations; it is not purely owned and exercised by governments or regulatory organisations, and it can be productive as well as repressive. One of our interests in this book is in the effects of policy when it is understood as a mechanism of power, in Foucauldian terms as part of a 'discipline'. The work of Stephen Ball (1994, p. 16) is useful in understanding policy as a series of 'representations' which are 'encoded and decoded' by stakeholders. We want to explore how policy in this sense is created in complex ways 'via struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and re-interpretations' (Ball, *ibid*) and how it plays out or is given meanings by actors and stakeholders in teacher education drawing on 'their history,