RECOGNISING, REWARDING AND
DEVELOPING TEACHER EXPERTISE

TEACHER QUALITY, PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND POLICY

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This book draws together several strands of research and development undertaken over a number of years, particularly the *Accomplished Teachers and Teaching Project* funded by the Scottish Government and the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS). This project grew out of two areas of research interest which coincided around a common question about teacher expertise in pedagogy: firstly, the chartered teacher programme in Scotland (McMahon et al. 2007; Reeves et al. 2010) and secondly, teacher leadership (Forde 2011; McMahon 2011; Forde and McMahon 2014). The research itself began with symposia on the chartered teacher at ECER 2008, Gothenburg and ECER 2009, Vienna led by Margery McMahon, who brought together academics, local authority officers, policy makers, teachers and trade union representatives, to explore the issues related to chartered teacher and other similar schemes. This bringing together of representatives from across education was an important element in the development of the project on *Accomplished Teachers and Teaching*. There are many people we would like to thank for their contribution. We would like to thank those who presented papers at these symposia including Laurence Ingvarson ACER; Simon

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Abbreviations

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACT	Accomplished Californian Teachers
AITSL	Australian Institution for Teaching and School Leadership
AST	Advanced Skills Teacher
CCT	Chartered College of Teaching
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPDL	Continuing Professional Development and Learning
CT	Chartered Teacher
DCFS	Department of Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department of Education
DfES	Department of Education and Skills
ECER	European Conference on Educational Research
EIS	Educational Institute of Scotland
ET	Excellent Teacher
EU	European Union
EWF	Education Workforce Council
GTCE	General Teaching Council England
GTCNI	General Teaching Council Northern Ireland
GTCS	General Teaching Council Scotland
GTCW	General Teaching Council Wales
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectors

HMIe	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISTP	International Summit on the Teaching Profession
LA	Local Authority
NASUWT	National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
NBPTS	National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PRD	Professional Review and Development
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
SABER	Systems Approach for Better Educational Results
SCLPL	Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning
SEED	Scottish Executive Education Department
SfFR	Standard for Full Registration
SG	Scottish Government
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Study
TC	Teaching Council
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science
UCET	Universities Council for the Education of Teachers
UK & NI	United Kingdom and Northern Ireland
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

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The Question of Teacher Quality

Introduction

Teacher policy is high on the education agenda across the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland (UK and NI) as well as internationally, a key focus of which is the improvement of teacher quality and effectiveness in order to raise pupil learning outcomes. This emphasis on teacher quality and effectiveness often sits with other education reforms including curricular and assessment reforms and changes to the management and governance of schools. In relation to teachers, there have been changes to teacher preparation, the regulation of the teaching profession, and the professional development of serving teachers. While reforms to the initial preparation of teachers can be rapidly established through structural change and funding, what has proved to be a more complex process is the question of improvement and enhancement of teaching practice across the body of serving teachers. In these endeavours to improve teacher quality and effectiveness, two broad approaches are evident across different education systems: firstly, an approach premised on accountability that combines institutional quality assurance with performance management of individual teachers and, secondly,

a developmental approach which foregrounds professional learning as the key to improving teacher quality and effectiveness (Forde and McMahon 2015). Over the last two decades in various education systems these two broad approaches have co-existed with greater emphasis placed on one or other at different times, but these approaches have collided on occasion, particularly in schemes to enhance the practice and status of experienced teachers (McMahon et al. 2007). More recently, while policy and practice continue to draw from this mix of development and accountability, there has been a subtle move from reviewing the performance of a school largely through external quality assurance reviews to now include scrutiny of the performance of different levels in a system:

- education systems—whether national or state level
- local education systems—council or district level
- individual schools
- individual teachers.

Performance is largely measured by pupil attainment and so the scrutiny associated with this has intensified, fuelled by comparisons of different systems using international benchmarks, notably through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD 2018a) conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Sellar and Lingard 2014). PISA is one of several assessment programmes such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) developed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). These latter two programmes include data on teacher development while the OECD now has a cycle of teacher surveys, the Teaching and Learning International Study (TALIS). The TALIS studies have been drawn on substantially at the International Summits on the Teaching Profession (ISTP) (Asia Society 2011–2018), where the central concern is teacher quality and effectiveness.

The focus of this book is to examine the significance of teacher expertise in the policy drive to improve quality and effectiveness.

First though, a note about the use of the term 'teacher quality'. Darling-Hammond (2013) makes an important distinction between 'teacher quality' and 'teaching quality', arguing that teacher quality might be thought of as 'the bundle of personal traits, skills and understandings an individual brings … including dispositions to behave in certain ways' (p. 11) and 'teaching quality' relates to the 'strong instruction that enables a wide range of students to learn' (p. 12). There is a relationship between teacher quality and the quality of teaching and learning but, this is not a linear process of cause and effect, where improving teacher quality (however this is defined) will lead seamlessly to improved teaching and so to improved pupil learning outcomes. Darling-Hammond (2013, p. 12) argues that other factors have a significant impact on pupil engagement: 'teaching quality … is also strongly influenced by the context of instruction, including factors aside from what the teacher knows and can do'. The focus of this book is on teacher expertise as a central idea underpinning 'teacher quality' in building a teacher's capability. A range of policy interventions have tried to define, scrutinise, regulate and enhance teacher quality to raise pupil achievement. The political focus on teacher quality as the means of achieving system improvement calls for an interrogation of this policy stance, and associated interventions, and a consideration of an alternative approach.

In this book we propose that we need to re-imagine the question of teacher quality, not as an issue to tackle deficits in teachers. Instead we need to adopt a developmental stance that recognises and builds teacher expertise as the core of professional identity and practice. We need to enhance the expertise of as a wide group of teachers as possible, thereby building accomplished teaching. As a starting point, we need to examine current constructions of teacher professionalism, of the teaching profession, teachers' career and teacher learning and evaluation, to understand what might impede or facilitate the development of teacher expertise. We also need to consider recent policy interventions in the UK and NI, as well as further afield, intended specifically to build high quality teaching—through schemes that recognise and reward high performance and through strategies designed to build collaborative practice. Our intention in this book is partly to scrutinise current policy developments and approaches to enhancing teacher quality, both at an international level

through organisations such as the OECD, and at a national level. We begin in this chapter by exploring the question of system improvement and teacher quality and then look to some of the drivers for change evident with the different education systems in the UK and NI.

Starting Points: Accomplished Teacher and Accomplished Teaching Project

The origins of this book lie a project on *Accomplished Teachers and Teaching* (Forde and McMahon 2011) funded by the Scottish Government and the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) which in itself grew out of two areas of research interest which came together around a common question about the development of expertise: work on firstly, the chartered teacher programme in Scotland (McMahon et al. 2007; Reeves and et al. 2010) and secondly, teacher leadership (Forde 2010, 2011; McMahon 2011; Forde and McMahon 2014). These projects suggested that we needed to pay attention to teacher expertise in pedagogy as a means of bringing about improvement.

The first strand of the *Accomplished Teacher and Teaching Project* gathered examples of approaches to the recognition, support and in some cases, reward of accomplished teachers. The second strand investigated the concept of 'accomplished teaching'. These ideas underpinned the development of career-long teacher education (Donaldson 2011). However, it is clear that this reform programme is not unique to Scottish education but is shaped by and contributes to wider global trends and debates about education and the teaching profession. The initial focus of the *Accomplished Teachers and Teaching Project* extended to include the exploration of the issues evident in teacher policy both across education systems in the UK and NI as well as globally, especially through the work of supranational bodies as the European Union (EU) and the OECD. In this book we want to approach the topic of teacher quality from a different perspective, particularly the ideas of teacher expertise and accomplished teaching.

While there are significant policy demands for improvement in teacher quality and to build a 'high quality teaching profession', only

limited attention has been paid to considering what we mean by 'teacher quality' and a 'high quality teaching profession.' In our view we need to understand teacher quality in terms of teachers' pedagogic expertise and accomplished practice, and to achieve a high quality teaching profession we need to build accomplished practice, not just among an elite within the teaching profession, but across as wide a group as possible and to sustain this level of practice over teachers' lengthy careers. There are examples of expert, excellent or exemplary teachers which have been investigated, and indeed we discuss many of these in the course of this book. However, we argue that focussing on only a small proportion of the teaching profession will not bring about the necessary improvement in teacher quality required for system-level change and improvement. Therefore our contention is that we need to build 'accomplished teaching,' that is highly skilled pedagogic practice that fundamentally looks at, and seeks to address, learners' learning needs. Currently teachers work in contexts where they are held to account for their practice. However, such an approach, where teachers' practice is shaped by prescription and quality indicators, fails to recognise the deeply contextualised nature of teaching. At the core of accomplished practice we suggest, are sets of understandings and practices that enable teachers to:

- readily assess the learning needs of diverse groups of learners they are responsible for;
- draw from a rich repertoire of teaching strategies to create the conditions for effective learning for these diverse learners;
- display a readiness to explore and innovate in their teaching, particularly through enquiry pedagogies;
- use evidence from pupil responses and the outcomes they achieve to evaluate their own teaching practice; and
- seek opportunities to grow professionally particularly through collaboration with others.

In order to develop accomplished teaching across a critical mass of the teaching profession, we need to set aside simplistic formulations of teaching as a craft or a set of technical skills. While instructional techniques such as explanation, demonstration and questioning are

important, we need to understand that the process of successful teaching using a learner-centred approach, requires considerable expertise on the part of the teacher. Goodson (2003) argues that there is considerable debate about what we mean by 'expertise'. In this book we examine this idea of teacher expertise, how it might be defined, developed and recognised, by drawing from the field of studies on experts and expertise across different disciplines. We also discuss a wide range of issues such as constructions of teacher professionalism, the regulation of the teaching profession, teachers' careers, teacher evaluation and professional learning, to consider the way in which the recognition and development of teacher expertise might be fostered or hindered.

If we are to improve learning and raise achievement of all pupils, we need to foster teacher expertise. We argue that the development of teacher expertise is central to building teacher quality and so this means the re-location of expertise from outside the place of practice (whether this be universities, policy think tanks and international forums and supranational organisations) to the site of practice. Only by acknowledging, and then developing teacher expertise in the site of practice, can we develop accomplished teaching across a critical mass of teachers.

System Improvement and Teacher Quality and Effectiveness

Monteiro (2015) argues that there are two main approaches to teacher quality determined by the construction of education, whether education is primarily about economic development (human capital approach) or about social cohesion (human rights approach). The human capital approach stems from neo-liberalism and the drive to build a knowledge economy based on the generation and management of knowledge (Peters 2001) where teachers are 'high-level professional knowledge workers' (Schleicher 2011, p. 4). In contrast, the human rights perspective sees education as a 'public good' (Monteiro 2015, p. 16) and the means to bring about greater social cohesion and equity. Education therefore, is a public responsibility and should have benefits beyond the

economic development of the state—benefits in terms of health and well-being, engagement in civic life, tolerance and equality. The question of teacher quality would be a public concern as a means to ensure equity and opportunity for diverse groups of learners and the role of the teacher is to create the conditions for effective learning for all. While we might see a human capital imperative clashing with a human rights imperative, both have become part of the narrative of educational improvement. In his scoping study of effective education systems for the OECD, the twin issues of economic growth and social cohesion and equity are evident in Schleicher's (2011) construction of an effective education system. An effective education system has turned from building routine cognitive skills for lifetime jobs to learning to learn and to developing complex ways of thinking and ways of working (OECD 2000). To serve these economic purposes, rather than looking to produce an elite group of high achieving learners, it is necessary to raise the overall level of achievement and competence. The gap between high achieving and low achieving pupils is smaller in effective systems, making these systems more equitable (Darling-Hammond and Rothman 2011) and potentially creating greater social cohesion.

When we look across international policy reviews conducted for policy makers such as the McKinsey Reports (Barber and Mourshed 2007; Mourshed et al. 2010) and surveys from the OECD (2005, 2009a, b, 2011, 2018b), there are several themes underpinning efforts to bring about system level improvement in pupil learning outcomes:

- The changing expectations of pupil learning and achievement is the starting point where the demand for high skills, flexibility, active participation and well-being is leading to significant changes in the purposes and design of school education.
- The context for learning is evolving with the boundaries between the classroom, the school, the community and the virtual world increasingly more permeable.
- The need to create the conditions for effective learning for all learners in a context of increasing diversity.

- The anticipation of the demand for higher order cognitive and technical skills, the fostering of personal well-being and participation, the development of interdisciplinary curricula alongside increasing diversity of learners, have led to the concomitant need for teachers to develop their expertise as pedagogues.

This focus on systems level improvement place questions about teacher quality and effectiveness at the heart of education policy in the UK and NI. Seddon et al. (2013) propose that there has been a move from education being a central element in a 'pervasive nation-building project through the twentieth century' notably in North America, UK, elsewhere in Europe and Australia, to 'a neo liberal educational project'. However, against the backdrop of the neo-liberal project in education, within the UK and NI national identity continues as a central issue. Education has become a devolved responsibility of the Scottish Parliament and the Assemblies in Wales and Northern Ireland. Arnott and Ozga (2016) highlight the crafting of a narrative in Scottish policy which emphasises the differences between Scottish and English education. Different narratives are being developed in the different jurisdictions for the continued project of nation building. This idea of 'nation' is complex and deeply contested whether the task of education is variously to reinforce a post-Brexit identity of Britishness, to build the identity and language of Wales, to chart a pathway to independence in Scotland, to reinforce historic connections or forge new identities in Northern Ireland.

Using education to address wider socio-political issues has led to increasing divergence in structures and strategies used in the different jurisdictions in the UK and NI, including teacher policy, and has fuelled a drive for system level improvement. There are some clear differences in policy and provision, particularly the place of public and private providers of education and of governance structures. Nevertheless, the same imperatives in relation to teacher quality and raising pupil achievement are evident. Further, there are examples of policy emulation sitting side by side with efforts to create a distinctive education system within each of the jurisdictions.

Teacher Policy in the UK and NI: A Starting Point

The policy focus on teacher quality reflects a long-standing debate about teachers, the teaching profession, accountability and effectiveness in the UK and NI. MacBeath (2013), in a highly personalised account, provides a graphic illustration of the deep ideological divisions in education policy making. These divisions are accompanied by a lack of a 'policy memory' which leads to successive policy interventions being presented as the means to address, in seemingly radical and innovative ways, either the ills of the previous administration or some intractable problem, for example, the apparent intransience of the teaching profession to change or the perceived inadequacy of teacher preparation to realise other education reforms. If we look back briefly at the development of teacher policy in the UK and NI, the speech at Ruskin College by James Callaghan (1976), the then UK Prime Minister, is often regarded as a seminal moment in the subsequent growth in accountability and performativity in education policy in the UK. However, it was the waves of reforms, introduced by the Conservative Government through the 1980s and early 1990s, that had a more significant impact on the daily work of teachers and on the teaching profession across the UK and NI. A range of reforms over that period instituted sets of policies and practices to facilitate the public scrutiny of the performance of schools and teachers: through target based prescribed curricular programmes, testing, the construction of league tables of schools and through teacher appraisal. By the late 1990s, however, there were concerns in the UK and NI that the profession of teaching was in jeopardy. There were problems related to recruitment and retention of teachers and the impact of change initiatives on the work and morale of teachers. Part of the issue was deemed to be the pressure experienced by teachers as a result of the accountability and performativity policy agenda. MacBeath (2012), in his report on the future of the teaching profession, argues that centralised control, prescribed curricular and appraisal initiatives were leaving teachers disillusioned and disengaged, having to spend considerable amounts of time on paperwork and administrative tasks.

After more than 15 years of significant strife between policy makers and the teaching profession, at the turn of the century with a different administration—Labour was elected in 1997—there were attempts across the different education jurisdictions in the UK and NI to address issues related to the position of the teaching profession. Thus, in Scotland (SEED 2000, 2001), in England and Wales (DfES 2002, 2003) and then in Northern Ireland (DENI 2003, 2004) reports were commissioned to investigate teacher pay, conditions of service and workload as part of a project of re-engaging the teaching profession. These reports then formed the basis of the subsequent agreements between employers/government and the teacher unions.

These reports and agreements can be conceived as the starting point for significant developments in teacher policy—developments that continue to this day. Across the various reports two interdependent themes are evident. The first theme concerns the need to build and strengthen the teaching profession and is illustrated by the upbeat note of the Foreword to the *Time for Standards: Reforming the School Workforce* report for English and Welsh education where according to Estelle Morris, 'We have the best generation ever of teachers and headteachers' (DfES 2002, p. 1). The second theme is the linking of a renegotiated teacher contract to improvements in pupil learning, which in turn is driven by the need to stimulate economic growth. In the report of the enquiry in Scottish education, *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century: (The McCrone Report)* (Scottish Executive 2000, p. 4) the means to address these issues is the strengthening of the teaching profession.

> We must remove these weaknesses if Scotland is to be able to compete successfully, and if her economy is to prosper. That means that our objective should be to have an education service second to none. In order to achieve this, we need high-quality, trained, professional, motivated and contented teachers; and we need to restore public esteem for the teaching profession.

Both these themes of strengthening the teaching profession and making an overt link between a new teacher contract and raising pupil achievement are also evident in the Inquiry Report conducted in Northern

Ireland, *Improving Conditions, Raising Standards and Negotiating Arrangements* (DENI 2004, p. 13) which outlined the wish to see:

> … a system which continues to attract, retain and motivate well qualified and committed teachers. We believe that this can be achieved by ensuring that teachers are well rewarded, and supported, their skills and focus are continuously developed and are not diverted from their primary role of educating the young by being required to carry out unnecessary bureaucratic tasks. At the same time we wish to see rising school standards and these can be assisted through an efficient, effective and accountable teaching profession which is trusted, respected and valued by society.

These reports mark a historical moment when teacher contracts explicitly became a policy tool to not only strengthen, the quality of the teaching profession, but also to bring about improvement in pupil learning. Our concern in this book is the way in which teacher policy continues to evolve in each of the four jurisdictions in the UK and NI. There has been divergence in the development of education across these jurisdictions, which to some degree, it has shaped teacher policy. Nevertheless, to address the political ambitions around improving education to support economic growth, each administration has had to deal with similar issues related to enhancing teacher quality and effectiveness and indeed, instituted broadly similar strategies related to the teaching profession, with some notable variations on the theme. What is evident is the dynamic nature of teacher policy since these reports in the early 2000s. In these different education systems, successive administrations have been 'tinkering' with the role and development of teachers through a range of policy interventions.

Each system in the UK and NI has been concerned with questions related to teacher workload, the standing of the teaching profession and the development of teachers but each system has developed their own set of strategies. We can see this in policy interventions to deal with teacher workload, the regulation of the profession and, particularly pertinent to this book, the recognition and rewarding of high teacher performance. The scope of teachers' duties and workload was a significant issue in all education systems in the early 2000s and as part

of the agreements noted below (Table 1.1) the key duties of teachers were identified, alongside a list of routine tasks teachers should not be expected to undertake. To partly address workload issues paraprofessionals were introduced in schools in three of the systems but whereas England and Wales established high level teaching assistants working with classes, Scotland introduced support assistants to work alongside teachers. In Northern Ireland, the introduction of high level teaching assistants was rejected. Another area of divergence is in the regulation of the profession. Scotland had a longstanding General Teaching Council but Teaching Councils were established in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with contrasting evolutions: whereas the GTC in Northern Ireland remains, the GTC England was disbanded in 2012 and the GTC Wales subsequently has become the Education Workforce Council. A recent proposal for the GTCS to similarly become an Education Workforce Council (SG 2017) has not been taken forward. Another set of policy interventions, where there has been significant

Table 1.1 Reports on the teacher contract

Jurisdiction	Reports and agreements
Scotland	2000: Report
	A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century: The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Professional Conditions of Service for Teachers
	2001: Agreement
	A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century: Agreement Reached Following the Recommendations Made in the McCrone Report
England and Wales	2002: Report
	Time for Standards: Reforming the School Workforce (DfES)
	2003: Agreement
	Raising Standards and Tackling Workload: A National Agreement
Northern Ireland	2003 Report and Agreement
	Teachers' Pay and Conditions of Service Enquiry Part 1 Parity, Performance and Progression
	2004 Report and Agreement
	Part 2: *Improving Conditions, Raising Standards and Negotiating Arrangements* (DENI)

borrowing across the UK, are the various schemes to recognise high teaching performance such as Advanced Skills Teacher (Taylor and Jennings 2004), Excellent Teacher (Hutchings et al. 2009), Chartered Teacher (McMahon 2011), all of which were established following the reviews of the teaching profession but have effectively been discontinued, even though there is recent recognition of the need for career pathways for classroom teachers (SG 2017).

Education Policy: A Global Context

One of the fault lines in debates about teacher development and quality is the degree to which the work of teachers is prescribed and assessed through external mechanisms such as education policy, inspections, reporting of pupil attainment, performance management processes such as appraisal and the degree to which teachers and schools can exercise self-determination in shaping the curriculum, the teaching and learning strategies, the assessment of pupil learning and the review of teachers' practice. There are important differences between the position and culture of the teaching profession and the degree of national or state government direction within specific jurisdictions. However, one of the significant developments since 2000 has been the increased scrutiny of performance at a systems level. These developments in the UK and NI have been set against a backdrop where the analysis and comparison of the performance of different education systems has accelerated. The comparative standing of an individual education system against international benchmarks is politically highly charged.

Education as a key part of a neo-liberal project, is central to promoting economic growth in a global knowledge economy. This project has reshaped education with the emphasis on instrumentalism, on the development of human capital and where teacher quality is a vital policy tool to realise these changes. As a result, Rinne (2008) argues that at a national level there are now significant limits for policy makers to shape national education policy. Steiner-Khamsi (2013, p. 24) argues that 'standardized comparison privileges international over national developments in that globalization is presented as a pervasive external

force overwhelming local influences which somehow render the nation-states motionless by paralyzing policy actors' (Steiner-Khamsi 2013, p. 24). The international policy contexts and the efforts of supranational organisations to set the agenda for education is not a new phenomenon. Robertson (2012) notes that evidence of the work and performance of different education systems has been collected historically by international organisations such as United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) but this work was to support the underpinning goals of developing a unifying global culture. For education this was a less directive form of policy development to strengthen national education systems. UNESCO and ILO collected data, not to rank the effectiveness of different education systems nor to privilege specific sets of practices, but instead to be used by a national system to inform its ongoing development. UNESCO's role was advocacy, setting out a set of principles upon which an education system could be enhanced such as promoting teaching as a profession and recognising the contribution of teaching to civic society.

The example of the work of UNESCO illustrates the way in which education has long been a crucial component in global development. However, the approach of UNESCO contrasts with recent developments where data on education systems is now being used by international organisations to press the case for specific types of education reforms to enhance economic growth and competitiveness (Robertson 2012). Rinne (2008, p. 665) argues that 'global' has to be understood as a 'result of the conscious political decisions of people and groups of people… globalization is the outcome of processes that involve real economic and political actors with real interests.' Thus, Murphy (2014) highlights the economic driver underpinning the efforts of supranational agencies such as the OECD (Asia Society 2011) and the World Bank (2016) with each proposing an agenda for education to support the development of a knowledge-based economy. The World Bank (2016) launched a development programme, *Systems Approach for Better Educational Results* (SABER), which has two purposes: firstly, to foster reform of national education systems and secondly, to build a knowledge base around these reforms. The driver is solidly economic:

Using diagnostic tools and detailed policy information, SABER produces comparative data and knowledge about education system policies and institutions. It evaluates the quality of those education policies against evidence-based global standards, with the aim of helping countries systematically strengthen their education systems. (World Bank 2016, n.p.)

The influence of the international context on public education through supranational organisations such as the EU, the OECD and the World Bank cannot be underestimated in shaping policy proposals which impact on national and state/provincial education systems. Through a range of audits and surveys conducted by supranational bodies such as the EU and the OECD, 'evidence' is gathered which is then used as benchmarks to rank different education systems and to further a particular reform agenda. This focus on identifying top performing systems now underpins a range of reports by international agencies. An early report produced by McKinsey, an international management consultancy organisation (Barber and Mourshed 2007), examined the top performing education systems and the second McKinsey Report (Mourshed et al. 2010), the most improved education systems. Although the construction of 'top performing' and 'improved' can be questioned, nevertheless these are significant reports in the building of a policy discourse around systems level improvement, particularly the use of pupil data as the means of assessing and comparing system performance.

The OECD and an Education Reform Agenda

The influence of supranational organisations, especially of the OECD, on national/state level education systems is significant in the determination of policy priorities and strategies in relation to teachers and the teaching profession. The large scale reforms based on neo-liberal ideas and new public management have put under pressure public education systems (Rinne 2008). However, the process of this influence is complex. The OECD has no legislative or economic power but exerts considerable influence on teacher policy: 'steering by knowledge and

regulating the attitudes, values and measures of the member countries and directing a kind of "peer-pressure" method' (Rinne 2008, p. 668). The OECD influences by two principal means. The first means is through reports either scoping out an area across the member states, for example, school leadership (Pont et al. 2008) or reviews of specific education systems. Since 2003 the OECD has produced a range of reports on the different systems within the UK and NI. Some reports are at a UK level as in the annual *Education at a Glance* (OECD 2018b) but there are also reports that focus on specific education systems. For the OECD's project on *Improving School Leadership* (Pont et al. 2008) several background reports on school leadership were drawn up for England (Higham et al. 2007), Northern Ireland (Fitzpatrick 2007) and Scotland (Scottish Executive 2007), as well as for the Republic of Ireland (DES 2007). Further, the OECD undertook reviews on different topics for the various systems in the UK and NI: the *Review of National Policies for Education Quality and Equity* (OECD 2007) was completed for Scottish Education and the *Review of Evaluation and Assessment* for Northern Ireland (Shewbridge et al. 2013). Further, the OECD completed reviews on *Improving Schools* for Wales (OECD 2014) and for Scotland (OECD 2015). Reports such as these have been important in setting direction and identifying interventions in the development of policy in each system. The findings of the OECD (2015) report on Scottish education was used substantially in subsequent development of the *National Improvement Framework* (SG 2016).

The second means of influence is through international surveys on different areas. The most notable has been the increasing use of pupil assessment data to compare the performance of state/national education systems which has influenced policy and practice in different systems. Through what they term 'knowledge-based regulation tools', Rinne and Ozga (2013, p. 97) argue that the 'OECD has become a kind of global benchmarker of standards that are of the utmost importance to positional competition as well as reputational competition between nation-states and their education institutions' (pp. 98–99) from which arise significant political consequences for the nation state internally, as well as for the reputation of the education system in the global context. The performance of pupils in literacy and mathematics through PISA (OECD 2018a) is used

to rank different education systems in terms of both overall performance and the attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils and the results can be a significant factor in shaping state/national education policy. There are many examples of 'PISA shock' (that is lack of improvement or a fall in PISA results) where systems (for example, USA, Wales, Germany and Sweden) are galvanised into reforms on the basis of their comparative performance on PISA (Ringarp and Rothland 2010).

The OECD and Teacher Policy

Robertson (2008) depicts the way in which 'the teacher' has been set as a policy problem internationally and has given rise to projects such as SABER and TALIS. These schemes illustrate the centrality of teacher quality in the policy imagination underpinning the project of systems level improvement. The connecting of teacher quality, education improvement and economic development is the central focus in education policy in the UK and NI. These developments have consequences for policy makers, teachers and the teaching profession. Further this focus on economic development is reshaping of the role of the educator (Seddon et al. 2013). However, this is not a matter simply of policy ideas being generated through the various surveys and reports and then applied to the different education systems. Sobe (2013, p. 42) help us to understand the complex relationship between national policy developments and international policy direction, arguing that we need to move beyond seeing 'the global as something outside or as an external set of pressures that enter into a given cultural context or "local arena."' These binaries of external and internal, global and local do not help us understand the way in which the global is used by and works within local settings. National education systems use these global policy tools to further their own education agenda. PISA results have been a significant factor in the range of reforms related to the curriculum and assessment as well as in teacher policy, in Wales for example. Lingard and Sellar (2014) illustrate the way in which the first Scottish Nationalist administration used PISA as part of their project of nation building. Indeed, a decline in performance in the latest PISA programme has led to proposals for major system-level restructuring