THE NATION STRIKES BACK: RECENT INFLUENCES ON TEACHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE*

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Abstract

This paper revisits a previous paper, published in 2001, which focused on five European trends in teacher education: professionalism, research, feminisation, traditions and, and globalisation. The original paper proposed that 'Anglophone' (equated with neo-liberalism) and 'European' (equated with social democracy) teacher education policies contain different emphases and priorities, even if they are shaped also by specific national cultures and histories. This paper reaffirms the influence of neo-liberalism and social democracy on teacher education and also draws attention to two further issues: the difficulties of traditional teacher education when faced with increased cultural diversity and the faltering impact of globalisation, as the nation state reasserts its goal of re-creating, consolidating and transmitting national culture and norms.

It was argued in an earlier paper that few people appreciate the size of the task of educating Europe's teaching force: and even fewer are interested in teacher education in countries other than their own (Weiner, 2002). Despite exhortations to the contrary from the European Union (EU) and other supra-national bodies, we remain parochial when it comes to the education of our teachers. This was not always so, as Nisbet shows in his review of the cross-fertilisation of educational ideas across European countries pre-World War II (Nisbet, 2002).

Thus, when we consider how different countries have responded to the various impacts of global, economic and cultural change on education in recent years, we see difference rather than harmonisation. For example, Britain responded in the 1990s by creating a crisis of confidence in teachers and teacher education, followed by draconian measures to limit the autonomy of teaching professionals, impose greater conformity and regulation, and introduce checks and economic penalties in the case of non- compliance (Mahony and Hextall, 2000; Furlong et al, 2000). Reforms at the end of the 1990s in Sweden,[1] on the other hand, aimed

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at greater coherence between different routes and educational levels in teacher education and significantly, at raising the status of teachers by substantially increased research funding connected to schools and teachers' work. I argued in the earlier paper that the different teacher education trends in Britain and Sweden represent different educational policy trends more generally. Anglophone countries[2] have been driven by a variety of neo-liberal policies including imposition of national standards; increased diversity of school forms; expansion of private sector provision; heightened surveillance, inspection and accountability; and emphasis on the importance of continuous professional development (Scott & Freeman Moir, 2000), whereas Europe more generally, although experiencing similar pressures, has placed greater emphasis on education as a social good of democracy, together with a belief in the importance of teachers, and their need for professional autonomy and respect (Erixon et al., 2001)

I identified in the earlier paper five European trends in teacher education: professionalism, research, feminisation, traditions and globalisation in attempting to show that neo-liberal and social democratic policy-making display *different* emphases and priorities, even if shaped also by *specific* national cultures and histories. These will be summarised briefly here, accompanied by a critique of concepts of tradition and globalisation as articulated in the earlier paper.

Professionalism

'Professionalism' is today's predominant *leitmotif* for teacher education in Europe and elsewhere; yet, how it is utilised varies substantially. It is evoked, most commonly, in connection with the perceived shortcomings of previous (traditional) forms of teacher education and the need to 'improve' and 'reform' education and training of teachers. Its use has invited the imposition of greater state control (Hextall & Mahony, 1998) and the perceived need for changed pedagogies to expand educational opportunities and inclusion, both visible in the UK. In other countries such as Portugal, it has been used more to underpin the importance of knowledge and research in validating and embedding educational practices, in order to raise the status of teaching to that of other professions such as medicine or law (Buchberger et al, 2000). And in Sweden, it has been employed rhetorically as a means of cohering disparate neo-liberal government policies albeit in a broadly social democratic context (Kallós and Lundahl, 1997).

Ozga (1997) points out rightly, therefore, that professionalism should not be treated as a neutral or unchanging category; rather, its employment needs to be deconstructed historically and politically. Neo-liberalism has a built-in tendency to 'de-professionalise', that is to subordinate individuals and groups to the free-play of economic forces. Thus, in the UK context, Whitty (1996, p. 12) detects:

> ⋯ a move away from the notion that the teaching profession should have a
> professional mandate to act on behalf of the state in the best interests of its citizens to a
> view that teachers (and indeed other professions) need to be subjected to the rigours of

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[2] I include in the Anglophone category, the UK, and English-speaking post-Colonial countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and Canada; and in the European category, countries other than the UK in the European Union. While the UK is clearly located geographically (and politically) within Europe, its policy-makers have tended to look for inspiration west across the Atlantic or to ex-colonies rather than to mainland Europe.

the market and/or greater control and surveillance on the part of the re-formed state.

Claims to 'de-professionalisation' rest on perceptions that the professional status of teachers is in the process of being eroded, so that they are no longer distinguishable from other workers (Mahony & Hextall, 2000). '*Re*-professionalisation', on the other hand, occurs when the teaching profession is seen to be transformed by its new relationship to the state, in particular, regarding deregulation, decreasing resources and the audit society (Seddon, 1997; Power, 1999).

Social democratic regimes have different views on professionalism. For example, Vincent and Warren (1997) argue that welfare state professionals are generally produced as forces for social amelioration and reform, though simultaneously expected to be 'capable of delivering efficient public services through rational bureaucratic organisation' (Vincent and Warren, 1997, p. 145). This two-fold responsibility, however has drawn criticism: for example, from those who see professionals as self-serving and inefficient, with a tendency towards paternalism and boundary-maintenance rather than openness and dialogue.

Research

The development of teacher education as a research-based discipline is another agreed European goal. As previously, however, discourses concerning research have taken different forms in different countries. The incorporation of teacher education into the university sector under social democracy has been accompanied by the presumption that a research base will emerge similar to other applied fields such as social work. Within this frame, it is maintained that this new body of knowledge will in turn, support, influence and 'improve' teacher education (and school) pedagogies and practices, leading to higher university status for teacher educators.

Neo-liberal perspectives, on the other hand, have sought to insert into teacher education 'evidence-based' research models developed from medicine, following hotly debated criticisms of educational research as unscientific and poor-quality. The preferred approach here is that of the large randomised control trial, able to predict accurately, it is claimed, the outcomes of specific education policies and practices. Critics such as Hammersley (2001) however identify the danger of this position 'where the function of research is taken to be identifying "what works" or "what works best"'.

Significantly, more research in/on teacher education has been carried out during periods of reform than when 'traditional' teacher education prevails, and it is argued that researchers need to be drawn from the within the discipline if teacher education is to benefit from research. So a key target of European teacher educators and policy-makers is to bridge the skills and knowledge gap between the qualified teacher, postgraduate researcher and teacher educator (Erixon et al, 2001).

Feminisation

The over-representation of women is another consistent factor across European education

TABLE 1.   ATTRACTIONS OF TEACHING FOR WOMEN

Explanation	Commentary
A social good	Women have a greater commitment to teaching as a worthwhile activity associated with adequate levels of pay ('a good job for a woman')
Unthreatening to prevailing gender orthodoxies and identities	Women can simultaneously be 'proper' teachers and 'proper' women (wife, mother etc.)
Ideologies of mothering promote teaching as 'natural' for women	Women teachers are 'mothers made conscious' (Steedman, 1985) in that motherhood, rather than fatherhood, is understood as a 'natural' preparation for teaching young children (Blackmore, 1999).
'Pedagogy of the feminine'	Women are able to convert their private-sphere domestic and caring skills into vocational power in the labour market (Walkerdine, 1993).
Possibility of combining responsibilities in the home and as workers	The circumstances of teaching (e.g. hours, holidays, part-time work, person-orientation) are more suited to women's domestic and familial commitments.

systems though tends to attract relatively little comment. It is generally treated in one of two ways. Either, the fact that most teachers (and latterly teacher educators) are women and that women and men are located in different sections and areas of the teaching workforce, is ignored: or the majority presence of women is blamed for lowering professional salaries, 'softening' school cultures, and disadvantaging boys (Lahelma, 2000). It is rarely viewed positively.

Certainly, teaching has become 'feminised' over the last century to the extent that in most countries almost all pre-school and over 90 percent of primary teachers are women. Gender patterns are more equal at secondary and tertiary levels with roughly equal numbers of women and men teaching at these levels, though here again, proportions of women are rising. However, subject segregation prevails with more men represented in mathematics and science, and more women in languages and the humanities (e.g. Statistics Sweden, 2000; DfES, 2000. See also comparative study at this conference). Significantly, despite their minority status, pay differentials favour men. In Scotland, for example, women teachers are paid 19 per cent less than men overall, with differentials even higher (31 per cent in 2001) in some regions such as Aberdeen in the north (EIS-ULA, 2001).

At the present time of de-industrialisation, and with other occupations available, a key question is why teaching remains so popular among women but not men? A number of explanations are available summarised in Table 1 above.

Whatever their reasons for choosing to become teachers, once women enter the profession they become more aware and critical of the caring roles imposed on them, tending to favour their academic over their socialisation functions (Fischman, 2000).

Finally, as already intimated, there is little evidence that greater gender equality within teacher education or in schools is seen as a priority among policy-makers, although it is true some attempts have been made to encourage more men into teaching in the UK though with limited success (Thornton, 2001).

Traditions (*or inheritances*)

Historically, teacher education was carried out in seminaries (or teacher training colleges) and concerned mainly with initiating would-be-teachers of younger children (pre-school and primary) into prescribed curricula and related pedagogies by tutors recruited because of their effectiveness in the school classroom. Subject teachers of older children were taught subject studies largely in the university by tutors with more of a research or academic background. The vestiges of this two-track system remain in many countries across Europe, even if the largely practice-based seminar tradition is currently being challenged by research discourses. Subject teachers generally stay wedded to their subject, in contrast to the more generalist teachers of young children who tend to engage more with broader discourses of education. Both have little occasion to interact with ideas outside the immediacy of everyday school practice. However, this isolation has become less acceptable with increasing efforts by the state to intervene in and disrupt conventional teacher education, in order to bring about the successful reform of schooling. 'Based largely on tradition, modified and adapted by the craft wisdom of the teacher educator, [teacher education] has currently become much more influenced by national policies…often influenced by the prevailing views on good practice and the common-sense reasoning of policy makers' (Calderhead, 1988:1).

However, it is not only the arm of the state that has brought about a challenge to teacher education traditions, but also the difficulties of transmitting boundaried national cultures and knowledges in a period of increased ethnic diversity and ideological and religious pluralism. For example, what does it take for an adopted boy from Somalia to identify as Swedish? Is this transition desirable and if so, how can teachers contribute? What role has teacher education in providing student teachers with the knowledge and skills to recognise and root out racism where it appears in their classrooms? Recent research in Sweden suggests that teacher educators are not asking these questions or taking up these challenges; rather they are choosing to stay in the familiar territory of subject, socialisation theory and mono-culturalism (Hällgren, 2005; Hällgren, Granstedt and Weiner, 2006).

One outcome is that mono-cultural national curricula and subject-teaching preparation tend to downplay the influence of different cultural forces in shaping national knowledge; for instance, the early contribution of Arab-Islamic scholars to the development of mathematics, astronomy, medicine and optics, or the importance of translations of the Greek Classics by Islamic scholars for medieval and Renaissance Europe (Maziak, 2005). Thus national narratives, frequently adopted and transmitted uncritically by teacher educators, apply a 'whitewash' to knowledge and scientific discovery that denies the substantial contributions made by 'other' cultures and civilisations.

Globalisation

Globalisation has been yet another discourse that has affected European teacher education although what it means is much debated and contested. It is generally used to refer to trends towards world-wide rather than national or local economic and cultural change. According to Giddens (1994) globalisation is an economy-driven, world-wide force which

renders the domestic and economic strategies of national governments increasingly irrelevant, and which has intensified over recent years as a result of the development and expansion of instantaneous global communication, and the growth of trans-national corporations, mass marketing and transportation. Ideas as well as money and goods flow easily and speedily between countries and continents. The 'post-traditional social order' is one consequence, resulting in a challenge to 'old' ways of doing things and a forcing of 'traditions into the open'.

However, the forces of globalisation have their detractors. In contrast to those who see globalisation as a triumph of late capitalism, Herman (1999), for example, sees globalisation as largely anti-democratic, and engineered by elites to serve their own economic interests. He usefully summarises the arguments below.

> THE GLOBALIZATION OF RECENT DECADES WAS NEVER A DEMOCRATIC CHOICE by the peoples of the world--the process has been business driven, by business strategies and tactics, for business ends. Governments have helped, by incremental policy actions, and by larger actions that were often taken in secret, without national debate and discussion of where the entire process was taking the community. In the case of some major actions advancing the globalization process, like passing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or joining the European Monetary Union (EMU), publics have been subjected to massive propaganda campaigns by the interested business-media elites. In the United States, public opinion polls showed the general public against NAFTA even after incessant propaganda, but the mass media supported it, and it was passed. In Europe as well, polls have shown persistent majorities opposed to the introduction of the Euro, but a powerful elite supports it, so that it moves forward.
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> This undemocratic process, carried out within a democratic facade, is consistent with the distribution of benefits and costs of globalization, and the fact that globalization has been a tool serving elite interests. Globalization has also steadily weakened democracy, partly as a result of unplanned effects, but also because the containment of labour costs and scaling down of the welfare state has required the business minority to establish firm control of the state and remove its capacity to respond to the demands of the majority. The mix of deliberate and unplanned elements in globalization's antidemocratic thrust can be seen in each aspect of the attack process (original emphasis).

Additionally, the basis of the claims of globalisation has been challenged by the argument that the globalising turn was merely a juncture or high point of capitalism occurring simultaneous to the collapse of communism, and that it is in now in retreat with the onset of world disorder created by escalating terrorist acts and hyper-nationalist conflicts. As Gray (2005: 15) shows, globalisation is thus open to a variety of interpretations.

> Globalization is a revolutionary change, but it is also a continuation of the conflicts of the past. In some important respects it is levelling the playing field …, and to that extent it is a force for human advance. At the same time it is inflaming nationalist and religious passions and triggering a struggle for natural resources.

I depart here from the opinions expressed in the original paper on the impact of globalisation on European teacher education. Following the retreat of globalisation, it seems that the nation-state has been provided with a space to re-assert its hold over education and other national(ist) narratives, although 'league-table' comparisons, which can be argued are a strong

TABLE 2.   SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND NEO-LIBERAL TRENDS IN TEACHING
AND TEACHER EDUCATION

Trends	Social Democratic	Neo-Liberal
Professionalism	Incorporation of teacher education into university; research & knowledge base, professional	Re- and de-professionalisation, control from the outside, 'low trust'
Research	Increased research base; focus on practice; diversity of research approaches; profession & university-led	Increased research base; focus on practice; evidence-based research; government-led
Feminisation	More women entering teaching; subject, sector and pay differentials; limited strategies to attract men; under-theorised and ignored.	
Traditions	Craft wisdom, traditions, conservative, divided professionally, low status, anti-intellectual	
National agenda	to mediate and alleviate impact of globalisation	to extend and enhance the process of globalisation

feature of the globalised turn, still continue to exert power (e.g. PISA and the study undertaken in Professor Kudomi and his colleagues reported at this conference, Kudomi, 2005). Thus we can see different positions taken to globalising forces: while neo-liberalism is equated with the extension and enhancement of the process of globalisation, social democratic regimes have made more conscious attempts to mediate and alleviate its most serious impacts.

These different positions are evident, for example, in neo-liberal Britain and Holland, where the national interest has been to insert managerialist and market-led systems into teacher education and ignore teachers' professional values and identities (Dean, 2001). In other countries (for example, Finland and Sweden), the lure of global communication and 'flexible learning technologies' have interwoven with national narratives of prosperity and equality, to promote information technology as a guarantee of continued labour-market and social cohesion (Hällgren & Weiner, 2003). For Portugal, Denmark, Finland and Sweden, emphasis on the knowledge society had led to an investment in research on or for schools, teachers and teacher education, as a public and private good. Whereas in other European countries such as Austria and Belgium, the seminary and two-track tradition of teacher education continues as before.

Reflections

Thus, in summarising influences on European education and teacher education, I want to argue that neo-liberal and social democratic trends remain visible, although rather more as national endeavours and in the national interest than in the context of globalisation.

As can be seen in Table 2[3] the distinctions between the two discourses are particularly visible in conceptions of professionalism, research and national agenda. However, neo-liberalism and social democratic discourses are more analogous with regard to gender and in the conventional stances taken within teaching and teacher education.

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[3] Table revised from the original paper to exclude globalisation, and include national agenda.

In the previous paper, I was rather positive about what was happening in teacher education across Europe. Social democratic discourses seemed to be holding up at the same time as neo-liberalism was doing the job of exposing 'old' traditions to new critiques and challenges. Additionally, teacher educators were increasingly being encouraged to join the academic mainstream, with support in many countries for teachers to engage in research, and a raised profile of educational research, nationally and internationally. The downside was increased bureaucratisation and work-place pressure, feelings of loss of place and worth among many teacher educators, and inadequate professional and financial support.

However, some years on, I am a little more sceptical. On the positive side, the return of the nation-state and retreat (if temporarily) of globalisation in teacher education has resulted in a re-emphasis on the centrality and role of the teacher and professional values, at least rhetorically. However, what we also see are generally narrowed conceptions of nation and citizenship, and a seeming inability of education professionals to combine the transmission of national culture and norms with acceptance and appreciation (if not celebration) of pluralism and diversity. Thus for 'home-grown' teachers and teacher educators — the recruitment of minorities into teaching has not been generally successful — there remains the danger of failing to acknowledge both criticisms of the monocultural content and orientation of much of their pedagogy and the importance of a research-base to their work, professionally and intellectually.

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