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Teacher education in a global context: towards a defensible theory of teacher education

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Introduction

Teacher education is under scrutiny in virtually every country. In part this is a result of increasing public concern over the availability and quality of public education. Such education is seen by both individuals and states as a crucial factor in obtaining positional advantage in an increasingly integrated and competitive global economy. Simultaneously, increasing flows of ideas and people across national boundaries are subjecting traditional cultures to scrutiny and comparison. The result is that education systems are frequently subject to demands to combine technical and economic innovation on the one hand with social and cultural conservation on the other. The provision and preparation of teachers is, consequently, regarded as an issue of 'quality': quality defined as both 'technical competence' and 'socially acceptable values'. Sandwiched between the two great steering mechanisms of markets and money on one side and culture and tradition on the other, teacher education, like education more generally, needs a defensible theory that celebrates its contribution to the relative autonomy of individuals and education systems from both markets and traditions.

However, as teacher education itself becomes more globalised, most systems are preoccupied with pragmatic issues of enrolment and graduation; length of preparation; comparability of standards; mutual recognition; portability of qualifications and intercultural education. Political resolutions of these issues differ from state to state and are in some cases significantly influenced towards privatisation by intergovernmental organisations.

This combination of social and procedural issues underlies the current debate in teacher education and requires the development of a defensible theory of teacher education that supports the relative autonomy of teacher education from the pressures of markets on one side and traditions on the other.
Markets, cultures and education in the global village

Globalisation is ubiquitous and indeed frames much contemporary discourse in education and, particularly, in teacher education. Cheng, Chow, and Mok (2004), for instance, in their introduction to a volume on teacher education reform in the Asia Pacific, argue that

The impacts of globalization, international competition, and local social-political demands have induced rapid changes in nearly every society in the Asia-Pacific region since the 1980s ... How teachers can be prepared and empowered to take up new roles and effectively perform teaching to meet the [resulting] challenges and expectations raised from education reforms and paradigm shifts in school education is a crucial concern in policy and implementation of teacher education in the Asia-Pacific. (Cheng et al. 2004, 3)

Similarly, Tatto, in a special edition of the International Journal of Educational Research devoted to teacher education, suggests that

The influence of educational reform on teachers and their work is a result of global forces, mediated by local culture and directed, for the most part, at the institutions where teachers learn and work .... [where] formal and informal mechanisms of accountability are continuously created to secure compliance with globally determined standards of quality in teacher learning and practice. (Tatto 2007, 231-32)

Bates and Townsend, in their afterword to the Handbook of teacher education, observe that in the view of many commentators

Economic globalization is ... reinforcing a centralised and standardised policy agenda across many political systems: one which argues that only if politicians seize control of public education can it be transformed from its current disorganised condition into an appropriate mechanism of modernisation in an increasingly competitive economy. (Bates and Townsend 2007, 727)

Thus a strong argument is built around the idea that education, and therefore teacher education, is currently being transformed to better serve the cause of competition in an emerging world economy; markets and money are the dominating structures to which education and teacher education must be subordinated in the ruthless competition for economic survival.

The problem here, for society and educators in particular, is that a global market economy is both de-socialised and inherently unstable. Despite the attempts of international capital to re-order labour and politics to serve such an economy (Harvey 2007) the order produced does not constitute a social system capable of providing a context for personal or social development over an extended period.

The world of markets does not constitute a social system, but rather a field of strategic action in which actors strive to use an uncontrolled and even unknown environment ... Change replaces order as the framework for analysis and social action, because the field of strategic action is a constantly changing set of possibilities, opportunities and risks. (Touraine 2000, 27)

A global economy driven by markets, money and continuous innovation provides, therefore, an inherently unstable context for education and teacher education: an anarchy of risk.

Others, however, point to another facet of globalisation:

... [T]he effect of globalization has not only been in the economic domain, but also on the social and cultural content of nation-states, within and outside the developing world. Whole societies are being formatted on a globalized grid that has transformed
everything from music, art and culture to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment ... In terms of education, globalization has redefined how we teach, what we teach, where we teach, whom we teach – and even whether we teach. (Jansen 2007, 25)

There is, therefore, a cultural side to globalisation that also needs to be acknowledged. And, despite Jansen's concerns over the cultural homogenisation of the 'globalized grid', one of its manifestations is the increasing cultural diversity of many cities and nation-states (Townsend and Bates 2007, 7).

Globalisation therefore, both promotes the subordination of local cultures to 'global' culture and, simultaneously, contrives the increasing exposure of traditional cultures to one another.

One response to this cultural globalisation is an increased emphasis on the importance of local, particularly indigenous cultures. Some developing societies have policies directed towards the replacement of expatriate teachers with locals (Al-Hinai 2007). Other societies are seeking partnership and equity between indigenous and now dominant post-colonial, largely European, cultures (Greenwood and Brown 2007). For instance

Many Pacific people today believe that for the sake of cultural survival and continuity, schools (and in turn, teachers) should have a role in the transmission of the best of Pacific cultures, especially their languages, to future generations of Pacific people. (Thaman 2007, 57)

In the cultural sphere, then, there are trends towards (a) an emerging 'global' culture, (b) the increased juxtaposition of cultures and (c) the reassertion of local cultures – what Foucault (1980, 81) so wonderfully called 'the insurrection of subjugated knowledges'. Such cultural transformation has paradoxical effects leading, on the one hand to significant cultural conflict which, in its extreme form is argued to be a 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington 2002) or a 'clash of fundamentalisms' (Ali 2002) and on the other hand to processes of hybridisation and cosmopolitanism (Appadurai 1996; Pieterse 2001, 2006).

Indeed, if the economic context of teaching and teacher education reform is that of the anarchy of markets and their associated 'creative destruction' of tradition and social order (Touraine 2000; Harvey 2007), then the cultural context is that of an anarchy of cultures and their associated struggles for recognition (Fraser and Honneth 2003; Bates 2005).

The resulting competition between individuals and societies has brought a new emphasis on league tables and accountability through which success and failure may be judged and competitive and positional advantage organised and legitimated (Brown 2003). Teacher education is as subject to this process as other aspects of education.

**Comparisons, competition and positioning: new accountabilities for teacher education**

Education throughout the world is currently being reorganised, both within nation-states and between them. Teacher education is part of this reorganisation. As Tatro (2007, 232) suggests

This worldwide reform activity can be seen as an indicator of societies' economic, political, societal and cultural priorities. The regulation of teachers' education, development and work via current reform initiatives, increasingly appear accompanied by exogenous monitoring and accountability schemes at every level of the system ... Thus formal and informal accountability mechanisms are continuously created to secure
compliance with globally determined standards of quality in teacher learning and practice.

While there is certainly a general move in this direction, the reorganisation of education to enable comparisons and competition and, hopefully, improved performance, is a process of particular concern to the First and Second Worlds. Education in the Third World can hardly hope to even enter such a competition for, as Broadfoot (1999, 228) points out

... in the 49 least developed countries of the world, 50% of the children are not in school: 50% do not finish the first 4 years of schooling: 60–80% of these have no place to sit and write and 90% learn in a strange language.

Such global disparities appear to be increasing rather than decreasing.

Within the First and Second Worlds, however, there are both tendencies towards convergence and the continuation of significant differences within and between states and systems. Convergence is largely driven by intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Union (EU), Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and at another level, by the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Such convergence is encouraged through both policy documents such as the OECD’s The teaching workforce: Concerns and policy challenges (OECD 2002) and through the construction of international league tables such as developed through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2006).

The OECD is probably the most influential IGO and during its initial period was concerned with issues of economic development, but also of social equity and cultural convergence (Henry et al. 2000; Lawn 2001, 2003). However, it is clear that during the 1990s the OECD saw a displacement of its social agendas by market considerations as a result of the dominance of neoliberal agendas driven in particular by the United States (Rizvi and Lingard 2006; Harvey 2007).

The result is a shift towards the centralisation of policy setting coupled with the devolution of responsibility for implementation and associated strong accountability mechanisms, a narrowing of curriculum focus and an increased emphasis on testing. Despite a commitment to devolution the shift is strongly away from principles of engagement and social democracy that might serve cultural ends towards principles of corporate management directed to economic ends.

One of the crucial mechanisms of such corporate management is that of audit and comparison. This is achieved in education through testing procedures and comparisons. Here, countries’ performances are ranked against each other and the rankings used as a mechanism for driving policy and accountability through the various education systems. As Torrance (2006) suggests, however, these tests and their associated ranking procedures are highly selective in their focus (usually on reading, mathematics and science) and are generally restricted to what is easy to measure and compare.

The result is a regime of testing, governance and accountability that aims to make learners, schools, systems and states as economically competitive as possible (Tonna 2007). This requires a corps of teachers that is focussed on producing ‘trainability’ in their students: the capacity to be readily and continuously trained and retrained in response to the instabilities of technology, markets, production and the (dis)organisation of work. ‘Flexibility’, ‘creativity’ and ‘lifelong learning’ become the mantra of such systems and teacher education becomes focused on the technical
means of producing such commitments alongside a new biddability focused on the utilisation of information and communications technologies through which knowledge flows like money, dissociated from the knower (Bernstein 2000).

In this view of the world, education, like knowledge, becomes commodified, something that is to be bought and sold as a commodity or a consumable; a temporary possession of individuals who barter their transitory ownership in a market-place (Hartley 2002, 2003). Such a view also implies a valuation of teacher education in terms of its cost-effectiveness in facilitating such trainability and marketability in an essentially privatised economic system where individuals and institutions confront the market directly according to the cost-effectiveness of their individual utility in the production process.

The result for institutions of teacher education, as for higher education more generally, is an increased demand for flexibility, continuous retraining and mobility. This demand can only be achieved if such institutions can be made simultaneously subject to 'continuous improvement', more 'transparent' and comparable in terms of curriculum, pedagogy and certification.

A global market?
The World Trade Organisation would not seem to have an immediate relevance to such an agenda for teacher education. However, the recent rounds of negotiation over the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) are focused precisely on creating global markets in such services as education. Unlike most other IGOs the WTO has no social agenda and is focused exclusively on the promotion of global trade in goods and services through 'successive rounds of negotiations to achieve a progressively higher level of liberalization' (WTO, in Robertson, Bonal, and Dale 2006, 233). Given that global public spending on education now exceeds one trillion dollars US per year it is not surprising that the WTO (or more precisely some states within it, such as the USA, UK and Australia) should see this as a prime area for marketisation and profitability. While the immediate impact of GATS negotiations (and other regional 'free trade' agreements) is on higher education institutions, the free trade principles apply equally to all education sectors except those completely financed and administered by the state and free of any commercial purpose. By these criteria virtually all education in all countries will eventually come under the GATS rules (Robertson et al. 2006, 235).

The effect of such rules is not only to establish a global education market for private providers but also to expose public institutions to the need to remodel themselves on the structures and financial models of private institutions in order to compete. As private institutions typically commit themselves to servicing the areas of lowest cost and highest demand, public institutions can be expected to become residual providers of high cost/low demand areas or to close down such offerings as they can no longer be cross subsidised from high revenue areas.

As such pressures mount, both individual countries and groups of countries are pressured to reorganise themselves to meet such potential competition. Awareness of the implications of this global competition is exemplified by the European Union's (EU's) commitment to the Bologna Declaration where the 'idea of a globalized world threatening European competitiveness is part of the discourse' (Barkhol 2005, 26; see also Westerheijden 2003, 280).
The Bologna Declaration's main proposal was to encourage conformity in the structure of degree programmes throughout Europe based upon a two-cycle structure of three or four year undergraduate degrees followed by two year professional degrees. Crucial to the success of such a structure are guarantees of 'quality' and 'equivalence' that would ensure 'value' as well as relevance to the labour market and portability between institutions and countries (van Vught, van der Vende, and Westerheijden 2002; Westerheijden 2003).

While some progress has been made towards these objectives (Haug and Tauch 2001; Feerick 2004) significant obstacles exist (Clement, McAlpine, and Waeytens 2004). This is particularly the case for teacher education. Despite optimistic scenarios provided, for instance, by the Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE 2003):

Recognition of academic qualifications beyond a lowest common denominator remains a matter of discretion, despite moves towards a commonly recognizable basis of Bachelor and Master university qualifications. There is little harmonization of initial training for any of the professions, and none at all for teaching. The picture is one of confusion. (Sayer 2006, 70–71)

Such a conclusion is borne out by other studies that report multiple and incommensurable programmes of teacher preparation across Europe (TNTEE 2000) and indeed more broadly (OECD 2005). Partly this seems to be due to different traditions in the preparation of primary and secondary teachers. Primary teacher preparation, despite being transferred into the higher education sector, maintains strong elements of the 'normal school' tradition which itself developed out of an apprenticeship model of teacher education emphasising 'the culture of teaching, studying and learning and on the importance attached to methodology courses and teaching practice' (TNTEE 2000, 15). On the other hand, secondary teacher preparation emphasised an academic tradition within which 'scientific knowledge in academic disciplines' was paramount (TNTEE 2000, 15). The debate between emphasis on professional knowledge versus emphasis on subject knowledge is widespread in teacher education, not only in Europe but also in Asia (Cheng and Chow 2004) and North America (Darling-Hammond and Bransgrove 2005). But, beyond this, barriers to standardisation can be seen as profoundly cultural.

Culture and tradition in teacher education

As I have insisted on a previous occasion,

... [I]t is culture that gives meaning to life. Culture is the framework that connects beliefs, values and knowledge with action. Culture is the context within and the material from which we form our societies and selves. (Bates 1992, 194)

This being so, the historical dimensions of cultures are frequently articulated through education as a celebration of cultural, especially national, identity. Indeed, schools and school systems often have their roots in attempts to produce and/or reproduce particular cultures. Many national systems of schooling have been constructed so as to create and maintain commitment to a particular state. And, despite arguments to the contrary, the nation-state is alive and well (Green 2006).

Such systems have been resisted by cultures that are either minorities within particular states and who resent the absence or misrepresentation of their culture within the national curriculum, or by cultures that cross state boundaries and are
thereby divided by the artificial demarcation of official histories, values and commitments (Griffin 2000; Touraine 2000).

The result is that

Education for the twenty-first century presents educators with a paradox; on the one hand the necessity to respond to a knowledge-based global economy is critical ... but, on the other hand, schools with a captive audience are exploited as sites for cultural reproduction and for the transmission of a ‘shared cultural heritage. (Clay and George 2000, 206)

Increasingly, however, both nation-states and regional groupings are having to recognise the plurality of cultures within their borders. Typically they respond by developing ‘multicultural’ policies directed towards the recognition of difference while simultaneously promoting commitments to national or regional loyalties.

In this respect attempts by the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are particularly interesting. While ‘Europe’ and ‘Asia’ are general geographic denotations that encompass multiplicities of cultures and nation-states (many of whom have been in historical conflict), attempts are currently being made to promote overarching regional identities. Education is one of the main agencies charged with the creation of such identities and in both instances the reform of curriculum and of teacher education is a central concern.

Lawn (2001, 2003) describes the creation of a ‘European educational space’ within which the idea of Europe can be created and defined. Such an educational space is vital because

Rising free from older ideas of territory and people, [Europe] is a political and cultural project, an idea and a conduit, a projection and a form, in which meaning is created, delivered and maintained ... Europe is not a place, [a] warehouse full of cultural artefacts, institutions and asymmetrical relations. Europe is a project, a space of meaning, a state in process, and education is the core technology in which governance, ordering and meaning can be constructed. Without education, there can be no Europe. (Lawn 2003, 325-26)

As Lawn goes on to suggest, ‘Europe’ is being constructed in much the same way as its preceding States. This process sees education as a prime means for developing a sense of shared history (through the construction of a European curriculum), pedagogy (through the construction of a European teaching force) and assessment (through the construction of compatible certification procedures). Nowhere was this agenda more obvious than in the European Commission’s White Paper Accomplishing Europe through education and training (1997), which argued that ‘If Europe is to remain at the driving edge, economic and political progress must be complemented by offering a European vision to her young people’ (European Commission 1997, 1).

The difficulty facing such a project is the resistance of traditional cultures to such negation of existing individual and cultural identities, for while the European project continues at a bureaucratic level, at a cultural level Europeans are becoming more, not less, aware of differences in culture. The fluidity of population movements within the new Europe creates anew questions of what it means to be French, Polish, English etc. These questions necessarily translate into how such identities are to be managed within education systems and what particular demands the resolution of such issues might make on teacher education. For instance, as Sayer (2006) suggests

Far from showing signs of convergence, specific policies and structures have, in some cases become more confined and exclusive. So in the United Kingdom, the national
curriculum introduced to legislation for the first time in 1988 and operating with frequent modifications since 1992, was nationalist in intention, restricted the scope for local innovation and led to a required curriculum for teacher training which was centred on the enforced curriculum for pupils, with training institutions being inspected, graded and financed solely according to these criteria. The Department for Education and Employment ... set out required teacher competencies without reference to other EU member countries' views. (Sayer 2006, 67)

Moreover, the differences in official policy also establish differences in recognised languages as well as different notions of work, contract and service. The result is significant difference in what is meant by public service, corporate responsibility and how the profession or career of teaching is viewed (Sayer 2006).

Very similar processes are underway in ASEAN nations where attempts to forge a regional cross national-supra-national identity are also underway (Koh 2007). While this project derives again from a concern with economic competitiveness in a global economy, the charge given to the ASEAN organisation is to explore the role of education in promoting a shared regional identity. The priorities here would be to emphasise civic education as a major contribution to the acceptance of a multicultural society; multilingual education as a mechanism for enhancing cross cultural communication; and the creation of an overarching educational policy for the region that would shape the general direction of national education systems (Jones 2004).

The economic motivation and the procedural mechanisms advocated are quite similar to those adopted by the EU, in that a close specification of curriculum, a didactic pedagogy (albeit supported by new technologies) and centralised mechanisms of assessment and accountability combined with devolved management are seen as ways to enhance the production of useful skills in the student population.

Again, however, the issue of separate historical identities is highly problematic in this newly emerging Asian 'educational space' (Koh 2007). While some scholars, particularly in cultural studies, argue that there is a significant increase in inter-Asian cultural traffic and an emerging sense of 'the region' through the reworking of traditional cultures into a hybridised notion of 'Asia' the same problems remain. For instance, Lincicome cites the example of Malaysia where the education system is focused on the problem of creating a sens of 'a common national identity and national unity among numerically and economically unequal populations of Malays, Indians and Chinese [as well as] tribes like the Orang Asili' (Lincicome 2005, 198). The example of Singapore is also cited where textbooks in geography, social studies and history give only a 'short four page overview, of ASEAN as a region' (Lincicome 2005, 203). Such parochialism is particularly evident in curriculum, textbooks and pedagogy throughout the Asian region where conflicting accounts of national histories and relationships are presented (Nozaki, Openshaw, and Luke 2005).

There seem to be, both in Europe and Asia, conflicting struggles going on. At one pole of the struggle there are emerging national and supra-national elites driven by ideas of international competition in the global market and whose influence over national educational systems attempts to drive towards convergence. As Massey (2005) and Koh (2007) suggest, such convergence is being created through a new organisational architecture which brings together a network of networks in a new international 'space'.

In this light, the ASEAN education space is an emerging form of networking where elite networks, represented by government and educational administrators and bureaucrats,
meet and discuss matters related to education projects. An elite ASEAN network has been in place for some time ... (Koh 2007, 185)

At the other pole of the struggle is the increasingly vociferous plurality of cultures within and across nation-states; a plurality that is demanding the articulation of their histories within the curriculum of educational institutions. This series of demands constructs another space

... [W]here heterogeneity and difference are not only permissible but the norm. In this space there are no prescriptive/normative rules that constrain what can or cannot be spoken or performed. Because heterogeneity and difference characterize [this space] we can no longer insist that the story of the world is the story of the ‘West’ alone, as there are multiple histories and trajectories through which the story of the world can be constructed and reconstructed. (Koh 2007, 185)

Two conflicting demands are therefore placed upon education systems and upon teacher education in particular. First, there is the demand from markets and money articulated through elite IGOs and networks for a common curriculum, common assessment, ‘transparency’, central policy-making and strong accountability in devolved systems of management. The purpose is to serve economic competition in the global market. Second, there is the demand from local communities for the articulation of their stories, histories and interests in an increasingly multicultural world where diversity and difference are increasingly obvious. This struggle is often labelled the struggle between globalisation and localisation (Robertson 1995). Teachers, and teacher educators are often seen as failing to respond to either of these pressures and teacher education is consequently under review almost everywhere.

**Glocalisation and the reform of teacher education**

In such a contradictory context it is not surprising that while there is a general move towards increased intervention in teacher education, the process and effects of such a movement show considerable diversity. Some of the diversity is due to historical differences; especially those between countries that have traditionally seen teachers as bureaucrats responsible for implementing a centrally determined curriculum, what Tattoo (2007) calls a procedural approach (Chile, France and Japan, for instance) and those who have relied upon teachers’ professional judgement within relatively autonomous schools (Denmark, Germany, England, for instance). Other differences are due to differences in political orientation and the management style adopted by various countries. Here some countries have been moving towards significantly increased control of what teachers teach and how they teach it (Chile, England, China, Mexico) while others have been moving to loosen bureaucratic controls over schooling (Japan, Guinea) (Tatto 2007). A third dimension of difference is in the implementation of policies where some countries, notably Germany and Guinea, have had considerable success, while others such as Japan and Mexico have faced insurmountable opposition from teachers and their unions (Tatto 2007). A fourth issue to affect such implementation is clearly the relative demand for teachers in some systems where there is a significantly ageing teaching force compared to others where there is an oversupply (OECD 2005). Issues of quality and quantity, the positioning of teaching within the overall context of the labour force, mobility and alternative routes into teaching all contribute to the complexity of the structural issues in various countries (OECD 2005).
Attempts by governmental organisations and IGOs to address this complexity through the establishment of working parties on standards, curriculum and management have led in many instances to the development of Teaching Councils charged with the task of standardising and controlling teacher education (OECD 2005, Ingvarson et al. 2006, Zammit et al. 2007). Many such institutions are concerned with the convergence and competition presumed by the argument over globalisation and economic competitiveness. But on the other hand, such pressures towards globalisation of the economic variety are challenged by those who see the processes involved as damaging to local cultures and particularly to concerns over social justice, equity, gender disadvantage, political and civil rights, and participatory democracy (Behabib 2006; Olssen 2006; Torres 2006). Here, the issues are partly about localisation but also about the need to address diversity and find ways of living together (Luke 2005, 22).

Struggle towards the 'new basics' for teacher education must clearly take account of both pressures. Developing a curricular, pedagogical and assessment capacity in teachers that will allow them to enhance the economic prospects of their students is a necessity. Similarly, developing a curricular, pedagogical and assessment practice that enhances their students' understanding and ability to participate in a heterogeneous cultural life is equally important. Moreover, as Touraine (2000) suggests, teachers and teacher educators also need a certain autonomy from both global and local, economic and cultural pressures. This predicament requires a defensible theory of teacher education.

A defensible theory of teacher education?

The work of schools can quite conventionally be considered as focused on three practices: curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation (what Bernstein referred to as their 'message systems'; 1975, 85). Each of these message systems is contestable and changes in the fields of production and of symbolic control within the wider society inevitably bring pressures to bear for change in the school (Bernstein 1990). States have quite elaborate procedures for ensuring that such changes take place and current changes to officially sanctioned curricular, pedagogical and assessment practices across education systems are evidence of this. Official sanctions regarding teacher education follow the same pattern.

Contemporary changes in official educational policy are justified by appeals to the effects of the transformation of production through the application of electronic and communications technologies on the one hand (a sort of competitive panic regarding productive competence) and by concerns for social order brought about by recognition of increasing disparities and antagonisms between social groups on the other (a sort of moral and behavioural panic regarding social cohesion). The response to these twin panics is to attempt the restructuring of educational message systems to focus on the production skills required by the 'new economy' (especially basic communications skills in literacy, numeracy and information technology) and the social and behavioural skills required by the 'inclusive society' (especially the construction of personalities which might maintain motivation, commitment and acquiescence under conditions of periodic or permanent poverty and exclusion).

As a result pressure is exerted on the curricular message system to restrict it to a skills oriented focus where what counts as knowledge is defined all but exclusively in
terms of ‘productive’ knowledge. Pressure is exerted on the pedagogical message system for a visible pedagogy which implements the accumulation of productive knowledge but simultaneously for an invisible pedagogy which serves the purposes of moral and social order – embedding behaviours invisibly in the compliant performances of students. Pressure is exerted on the assessment message system through more frequent and public comparisons of performances of students, teachers, schools and institutions of higher learning according to universalised (but highly selective) criteria.

Curriculum and the problem of focus

One of the difficulties such systems of official direction and sanction face, is that the very technologies that supposedly require such controls act simultaneously to subvert them. For instance, while official knowledge is restricted and focussed on ‘productive’ knowledge, access to knowledge and information of all kinds through the World Wide Web allows continual transgression of officially imposed boundaries by teachers and students alike. For example, the official curriculum will increasingly be concerned with skill formation required by continuous innovation in technology and production in the global economy – especially in areas of communications, financial services, miniaturisation and biotechnologies – both medical and botanical. Access to and utilisation of the Web is fundamental to such activity. But those technologies which give access to the skills and information required by the global economy also give access to information on the negative ‘side’ effects of the globalisation of production: instability, gross inequalities, environmental degradation, political and economic repression. Moreover, while consideration of the social and ethical is excluded from official knowledge (whatever happened to sociology, history and philosophy in the teacher education curriculum?) access to the Web also gives access to unofficial knowledge regarding debates over the requirements of a global society: equitable development, human rights, access to communications technologies, freedom of association and expression, social, political and environmental action groups. The preparation of teachers must surely take these matters into account.

The problem of curriculum within such a context is clearly that of focus. Attempts to prepare teachers for a retreat into a skills-based version of the grammar school curriculum and its associated notions of pedagogical authority and rigid assessment are probably the worst possible ‘solution’ to contemporary difficulties, for they misconceive the nature of knowledge in the contemporary world and they profoundly mis-recognise the changes in authority relations brought about by the liberal-democratic traditions of Western societies. On the other hand, a curriculum that was more widely based and which brought students into contact with knowledge needed to construct both a global economy and a global society would be potentially more democratic and more defensible.

Pedagogy and the problem of motivation

The problem of pedagogy is not unrelated. If pedagogy is defined as ‘what counts as valid transmission of knowledge’ (Bernstein 1975) teachers must be prepared to face the key pedagogical problem of motivation. Here, the imitation of current practice or
the attempt to return to a more authoritarian pedagogy is unlikely to succeed. As John Elliott puts it:

If the traditional view of knowledge, reinforced by government policy and legislation, continues to be deeply embedded in school cultures within liberal democratic societies, then schools will fail as educational institutions, not because they are failing to maintain 'standards' but because they are failing to supply the culturally appropriate form of motivation for pupils to learn. The basis for such motivation resides in bestowing recognition and status on pupils as autonomous learners. The valuing of individual autonomy is deeply embedded in Western culture but becoming detached from the belief that the prior acquisition of stocks of objective knowledge is a condition of its realization. This is why traditional education no longer supplies motivation for individuals who seek recognition as autonomous persons. (Elliott 2000, 182)

The notion of students as autonomous learners implies a very non-authoritarian form of learning: one which the new technologies may, for the first time, make possible. If information of all kinds becomes widely available and accessible then the problem of pedagogy – what counts as valid transmission of knowledge – may take on a quite different form. The teacher may well be less concerned with didacticism and more concerned with helping students with relatively autonomous learning centred around personal creativity, values and commitments. But, as Taylor (1989) has argued, creativity, values and commitments are both individual and social constructions. They are indeed ‘sources of the self’ and fundamental to the making of identity, but they cannot be constructed without benefit of a social context. And how that social context is understood is vital for the construction of the self. Here the pedagogy of the teacher working with the autonomous learner, is most likely to address the issue of motivation through the careful (sometimes supportive, sometimes challenging) matching of knowledge with the students search for meaning. While the valid transmission of knowledge may often be prescribed by official discourse in quite narrow ways that limit motivation on the part of both student and teacher (often leading to withdrawal from engagement) it need not be so. A pedagogy which links knowledge with the process of construction of meaning and purpose in both individual and society would indeed be defensible.

Assessment and the problem of validity
Assessment is the third message system, one which Bernstein defines as ‘the valid realisation of knowledge’. Official discourse clearly defines assessment as assessment of student performance against the constricted (officially defined) curriculum and its validity is judged in terms of compliance with that curriculum and the ranking of individuals in terms of their compliance. But this is a very narrow notion of assessment and one which rather misses the central problem of evaluation and the problems it faces in the contemporary world. For example: the rate of knowledge production and the rapid transformation of ways in which it is distributed faces users with a significant problem – how to judge the validity, dependability and utility of the almost infinite array of information which they can access. The central assessment issue for educational institutions had now become that of how teachers and learners are to devise ways of testing validity claims – of testing the validity of information and knowledge claims that are new to both. This is by no means a simple issue, but contemporary circumstances force the issue to the centre of the curriculum and pedagogy of educational institutions. The open curriculum and an
autonomous pedagogy require tests for truth and utility that are centred around individual and social purpose. Assessment of pupil performance is necessarily replaced, or at least supplemented by the development and learning of techniques for determining the validity of knowledge claims from whatever source they arise.

In part, such validity arises from the tests derived from long-standing considerations in various intellectual disciplines (perhaps especially philosophy, aesthetics and ethics as well as history and science). This is why a liberal education that takes account of these traditions is important in teacher preparation. But the issue of use is also significant. If, for instance, the major difficulties facing a school or a community and the individuals within it are cultural and social, the utility of knowledge derived from production process may not contribute greatly to the motivation and learning of students. The use value of particular knowledge is an important aspect of the assessment of knowledge accessed through educational institutions.

Here the issue of localisation becomes important, for students inhabit local as well as global spaces. Global forces associated with economic and social change do shape local contexts but it is the local context that provides particular experiences that shape the activities of students and their families. In fact what Robertson (1995) calls ‘glocalisation’ is a more realistic label. Within such a concept that identifies and explores the interpenetration of the local by the global the utility and relevance of knowledge of various kinds might well be explored, addressing both the validity and relevance of such knowledge to the glocal economy and the glocal society. And this will be done within contexts that are, to a greater or lesser extent, changing as movements across religious, political, ethnic, cultural and geographical boundaries increase.

Considerations of this kind need to be incorporated into a defensible theory of teacher education (indeed, perhaps into a more general theory of education). They do, of course, need expanding and developing as well as relating to the ways in which subject knowledge is incorporated into the programme. They also need to be related to two further aspects of teacher education programmes. First, the practicum needs reconsidering and, second, the place of research in teacher activity becomes important.

The practicum and teacher research
The practicum as it is currently conceived tends simply to reinforce the previous socialisation of students into the conservative, authoritarian culture of traditional schools. This does not help to prepare students for the kind of agenda described above. One possible solution to this is to draw less on a ‘teaching practice’ approach and more on a ‘critical case study’ approach. Here, following MacDonald (2000) and Brennan and Nofke (2000), students would be encouraged to develop materials which document curricular, pedagogical and assessment practices in ways which illustrate the diversity of practice and open it up for analysis in its relationships to social, cultural and economic contexts and subject it to evaluation against the criteria outlined above.

This would lead directly to the engagement of students in research activity and further, allow them to develop links between research and practice that might later be sustained by the networks which have been shown, in a series of recent Australian
studies (DETYA 2000), to enable considerable influence of research on practice. Such impact was, nonetheless, shown to be selective, being greatest where teachers actively sought research relevant to their immediate concerns (a finding which incidentally supports the arguments outlined above). What was described in this study was the way in which teachers actively engaged with the educational research community in seeking solutions to particular problems rather than simply becoming passive recipients of 'evidence-based' policy formation. Indeed the DETYA report *The impact of educational research* demonstrated clearly that where teachers were linked into networks with researchers the impact of research on practice was strong and pervasive.

**Conclusion**

The conclusion of this brief outline is that a defensible theory of teacher education depends upon a defensible theory of teaching which addresses the issues of curriculum focus, pedagogical motivation and the tests for truth in evaluation of knowledge claims. Defensible approaches to these problems have to take account of contemporary social as well as economic contexts rather than seek refuge in the mock heroism of tradition, and they need to take account of increasing awareness of social difference as well as processes of glocalisation. In addition, teacher education students need to engage in critically reflective research through a practicum which links case studies with the broader research and teaching communities as the basis for continuing professional development.

Such an approach to teacher education would not only be more comprehensible to students: it would also allow them some territory on which to build a defensible theory of educational practice within a professional community of teachers.

**References**


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