

ŠVIETIMO POLITIKA IR MOKYTOJŲ RENGIMAS

Changing Policies Changing Times: Teacher Education in England (or Throwing the Baby out with the Bathwater)

Gillian Hilton

Professor

Department of Education, School of Arts and Education

30 Southgate Rd., Potters Bar Herts, England

E-mail: g.hilton@mdx.ac.uk

For many years now, in England the ways to train for the profession of teaching have been varied, but most teachers have been prepared through the Postgraduate Certificate in Education Course. The majority of this course takes place in school (two thirds of the time for secondary trainees, rather less for primary). In their time in university, students are given grounding in education theory, teaching and learning, classroom control and other essential aspects such as teacher professionalism. Much of this is completed with the support of partner schools where trained mentors supervise the practical application of theory. Now, proposals by the Secretary of State for Education are attempting to virtually remove teacher education from universities by giving it into the control of schools, based on the belief that teaching is merely a 'craft' and not an academic discipline. The resistance to this idea from the majority of the profession is huge, but will the practitioners be heard?

Key words: education policy, teacher education policy in England, university teacher education, practical teacher training

Introduction

Olssen et al. (2004: 2-3) state:

“There was a time when educational policy as policy was taken for granted ... Clearly this is no longer the case. Today educational policies are the focus of considerable controversy and public contestation ... Educational policy-making has become highly politicised.”

In the present context of Europe and even in the global situation, education is at the forefront of change and is often seen as the cause of any country's problems and failings. Politicians at the European

and country levels produce reports, call for change and heap blame upon those responsible for the education of our young people. The aftermath of the riots in England in the summer of 2011 resulted in a call to change education and claims that too many schools lacked discipline. This is despite Ofsted reporting positively on the improvement of discipline standards in schools in recent years. An interesting response from Kelly, Editor of the *Times Educational Supplement* (the main education paper for teachers in England), claimed

that ‘when teachers go away for a long break leaving only politicians, parents and police in control – society collapses’ (Kelly, 2011: 4). This response may be somewhat extreme, but it mirrors the frustrations of those in the teaching profession at the habit of our political leaders of too easily blaming educators for the ills of society, with little recourse to research or even debate. Bell and Stevenson (2006) claim that those working in schools are not merely passive receivers of policy but have the power to affect decision making. It is doubtful if many teachers or teacher trainers would heartily agree with this premise. Bombarded from all sides with initiatives designed to improve education, from the EU to national and local government and the media, many in education feel, rightly or wrongly, powerless to affect the current trends and quick solutions so beloved by those not directly involved in the classroom process. Everyone seems to believe that they know how to run education, possibly because they have had one and often feel that the experience could have been better for them. This is not the way to improve educational policy.

Good policy stems from good research produced by independent researchers who do not set out to prove what they believe as being true. Gorard (2010) criticises much educational research in the UK as being flawed and lacking in rigour. Unfortunately therefore, if this claim is to be believed, far too often our politicians base their policies on flawed research, the opinions of like-minded ‘experts’ and even on ideas taken out of context from another society. Good examples of this are the former Labour government’s obsession with the success of Finnish schools in the PISA league tables, resulting in a scramble to bring

all teachers in England to Master’s level qualifications and the present coalition’s determination to open Free Schools, based on the USA Charter schools and the Swedish model, which has not been particularly successful, when the Dutch model was worth examining. Possibly much of this attention to detail arises from other policy initiatives, where the final documentation is so vague that it has little effect in reality. Such is much of the material issued by the EU, for example, *Improving the Quality of Teacher Education* Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament (2007), which is so general as it is designed to fit the situation in all countries. As a result of this vagueness, there is little evidence of its practical use for practitioners in schools and teacher education establishments. Despite many EU countries attempting to adhere to the Commission’s directives, the varying states and situations in which education across the continent exists make universal cohesion very difficult. This is understandable, as countries are at different stages of development in teacher education and, as Olssen et al. (2004) profess, it is essential to base education policy making within national as well as global contexts as policies are able to transform the societies in which they are founded.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the changes taking place in teacher education policy in England. In many cases, countries seem to be on directly opposing pathways, or at least on varying different stages of a journey. The concern here is that those striving to ‘catch up’ with those in the ‘lead’ can often result in the application of half-understood policies and initiatives with correspondingly poor results.

A good example of this is the recent push in some EU countries towards the use of learning outcomes in course planning and provision, where staff involved in teacher education, and in vocational education in general, had little understanding of how these can be applied in a holistic manner across course provision. These difficulties are compounded at national level when individuals with specific agendas come into positions of power and where those working in the profession do not feel that their voices are being heard.

Teacher education policy in England

Policy developments in recent years in the UK, with regard to education, have changed the picture from one where the individual was shielded as far as possible from market forces (Gewirtz, 2002) to a standards-based, accountable, market-led view (Tomlinson, 2001). In this scenario, educational leaders are pressured to ensure that organisations can cope with a competitive rather than a co-operative situation. Recent policies in England (there is no UK standard education system) appear to have been deliberately weighted to stress competition and the failure of those who cannot compete. The league tables, introduced after the 1988 Education Reform Act, which make public the test achievements of schools in national assessments, allow little for differences in intake or social makeup of the student body. Ofsted reports made public on the web set schools up to rejection by parents if they are seen not to reach what is deemed an 'acceptable standard', though this standard appears to change over time with a move to reject satisfactory achievements in favour of an insistence that all should be

good or better. Bell and Stevenson (2006), however, point out that institutions do not implement policies without resistance, but rather change and adapt them subtly or even challenge them outright. This, they believe, tends to occur where the values expressed in the policy are at odds with the values of the institutions and the staff involved. Gewirtz and Ball (2000), however, stress the compulsion of the modern education manager to perform in the market, so performance and high levels of productivity are demanded in the same way as in a commercial company with institutions forced to stand out from their rivals by offering something different and special to add value. Other researches, therefore, doubt the ability of those within institutions to resist the policies of those in control of the education system. Leaders of institutions have to be able to negotiate these policy directives for their staff if the institutions' values are to be maintained (Day et al., 2000). This idea is supported by Gold et al.'s (2003) study of outstanding school leaders, which demonstrated that they were able to retain particular values despite the external pressure they were facing from those who held the power in education. The previous Labour government continued the market forces approach to education, favoured by earlier Conservative administrations but, according to Furlong (2005), changed the idea of how to develop the teacher as a professional from one where this was left to the individual via study during initial teacher training and experience, to one where the state determined what were the effective ways to teach, to learn and to assess. Added to this, he believed, was a removal of professional development away from universities to schools, resulting in a lowering of the importance of

the development of a professional and of initial teacher education itself.

Research (Reynolds et al., 2002) into the effectiveness of schools and teachers has demonstrated that the teacher is at the heart of improving student performance, and successive governments in England have allied their education policies to raising student performance. Many observers believe that this obsession of politicians with standards in tests such as PISA SATs and GCSEs has eroded teachers' professionalism as there is so much imposed outside control. Whether this has resulted in any real improvements in achievement over the last few years is questionable. All agree on the need to produce better teachers, and many in the profession have ideas of how this should be done. However, there is little time it appears for consultation of those really involved, the teachers, teacher educators or even the students, when strong ideologies and media misrepresentations take over. Those involved in teacher education in England have become used to constant change and supervision from political leaders of every colour. This has caused resentment in some quarters due to the perceived overweening power of the inspectorate and the control of the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) with its constant revision of Standards for Teachers. The present government have signalled their intention to change these yet again in 2012 with a simplified set of standards with a more narrow view of the teacher's role, as they believe the present standards lack balance and are overcomplicated. Those in the teacher education profession have, over the last years, done their best to accommodate the ever-changing regulations and hoped with the advent of a new gov-

ernment in 2010 for less interference and a little peace to consolidate the outstanding and good training about which Ofsted was reporting. It was not to be. Once again the Ministry had a name change, and the new Secretary of State for Education produced, after six months of the coalition coming to power, his White Paper '*The Importance of Teaching*' (DfE, 2010).

Governments differ in the types of consultation they undertake when attempting to change policy. This varies from intense to merely paying lip service to the idea. Secretary of State Gove's recent proposal regarding the training of teachers, given in a speech to the National College in June 2010, put forward the views that teacher training should be moved 'out of college into the classroom' and that teaching is not an academic study but a craft that can best be learnt 'as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman' (TES, 2010). In addition, he intends to raise the entry standard to the profession, only allowing those with higher level degree classifications to be admitted and that all prospective teachers pass a maths and English entry test before starting a course. In addition, there is to be an expansion of *Teach First*, the scheme that involves a six-week intensive preparation period, for high-flying graduates from top universities, who after this quick preparation are deployed and paid as untrained teachers in challenging schools. The ideology behind these changes is expressed as being an attempt to free schools from the control of local government education departments and also central government removing the mesh of regulations introduced under the previous Labour administration. The main question which arises from this proposal is:

who will be responsible for developing the professional aspects of a teacher's knowledge? This has in the past been mainly the responsibility of university education departments, with even the school-based routes to teaching (there are a wide variety of these in England) using expertise from university staff to provide theoretical backgrounds on areas such as learning and teaching, behaviour management and professional responsibilities in addition to subject knowledge studies.

Understandably these proposals have received some very negative responses from unions and universities. One teacher writing to the TES online forum said:

I'm hugely insulted by this. I don't trim hair, cut wood or knit! I use an array of methods to accelerate students' learning whilst conducting research into new methods, before disseminating them to the community (TES, 2010).

Moving training almost completely into schools and taking power and money from university education departments to create a learn at the feet of the master apprentice approach has followed what Reid (2010) describes as the normal approach for policy reform, by asking for consultation on the details, but not on the conceptualisation of the ideas put forward. This approach is directly opposed to the ideas of authors such as Fullan (1999, 2001, 2003) who points to the need to involve those implementing change from the outset if the initiative is to be successful, that is, all involved should be able to affect the conceptualisation of the policy. Is then the dominant model of policy, one imposed from above, out of date and unworkable in modern society where rapidly changing contexts may render universality as outdated and inefficient? Following the status quo will not give the inno-

vative, theoretical basis for action so needed by teachers who are preparing children for an uncertain future. We need to change to progress, but then the questions need to be asked: is teaching something that can be learned at the feet of a Master with little recourse to understanding why some ideas succeed and others do not, and is it possible to use policies successful in one context, but in another with little adaptation? Approaches that work in an inner city school with many children who are from ethnic minorities, with parents whose command of the English language is limited, may not be suited to middle class children coming from homes where high aspirations are the norm and books and technological equipment are readily available. So can we learn from one teacher in one school how to approach all children? Is there something more than this in preparing teachers? As Evans et al. (2011) profess, teachers in schools do have professional knowledge developed over years, but some are working in schools where theory is not valued, research is not consulted, and professional discourse on theoretical ideas does not occur. With the day-to-day challenges of teaching, how much attention will be given to the underpinning of actions by knowledge gained from the study of theory and research findings? Furlong's (1990) research with trainees suggests that they do not reject theory, but the only place where this kind of discussion takes place is in the university-based training.

In most countries in the current economic crisis, the need for economy and a cut-back in government spending is essential in all areas, even in education. The proposals for teacher education in England, however, would appear to be less cost-effective and certainly much more difficult

to assure quality than the present Post-graduate Certificate in Education which is used to prepare the majority of teachers. Breaking up provision to be run by a large number of schools (the government is at present developing teaching schools which will be responsible for much teacher education) will certainly cost more than training based in large university departments. There are many routes to teaching in England, some almost totally school-based, but the large majority of teachers in England follow the PGCE (36-week) course in university and school (more school than university) to qualify to teach. The whole is based strongly on close partnerships between schools and universities where schools aid who are mostly responsible for assessment of trainee students in putting into practice what they have learned in theory and support training by the provision of trained mentors. This has been working well according to Ofsted's recent judgements, demonstrating that many more university training courses than school-based ones were judged to be outstanding 47% against 23% (Ofsted, 2010). However, some voices, such as that of Professor Alan Smithers and his co-report writer Pamela Robinson from Buckingham University, claim that the present system is wasteful and that many trainees do not go onto work in schools thus costing the country money it cannot afford, training teachers who do not teach. The report *The Good Teacher Training Guide* (2011) claims that not only there are too many students dropping out of training and failing to join the profession, those trained do not match the needs of schools, blaming university recruitment processes as the cause. Professor Smithers, interviewed for the education press,

wants schools to be more directly involved in recruiting prospective teachers, though already all interviews for prospective students are undertaken using school as well as university staff on the panels. Despite these claims agreeing with government policy, his ideas were challenged by the Department for Education pointing out that his figures were flawed as some teachers delay starting in a job immediately upon qualification, some do supply teaching, some find it difficult to find a job in the areas where they live, and some go onto teach in Further Education Colleges (Stewart, 2011a).

Other complainants are the universities who see their role in teacher education reduced to a minimum and with it the valuable funding they receive (though much of this is already passed onto schools to provide mentors, undertake assessment, etc.). Instead, they will be paid by schools to add whatever theoretical element schools want for the training. This, it is believed by many of the older universities, will lead to the closure of many education departments in universities, with the subsequent reduction of research activity as employing lecturers to work in schools on a limited basis will not be cost-effective. It will also result in redundancy for many teacher educators, very costly for universities already in severe financial straits with government funding changes.

Cunnane(2010)reported in *Times Higher Education* that the University Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) has also expressed fears that schools will not be able to cope with producing the numbers of teachers required as the time needed to undertake the task effectively would be burdensome to schools, especially smaller

ones, and adversely affect quality. They were also concerned with a possible reduction in the quality of the teachers produced if training was put into schools with only minimal impact from universities.

According to Schultz (2011:34), there is a mistaken belief that institutions of Higher Education are not in favour of practice, preferring to adhere to a theoretical approach. He refutes this idea, insisting that teacher education professionals see theory and practice as matching sides of a whole, because excellence in pedagogy has to be firmly based in theory. He also strongly believes that accepting an apprentice sitting at the feet of the Master, the way of education for teachers would be 'turning the wheel one hundred years backwards'. In any case, theory, according to Wilson (2007:16), is '.....merely a way of organising ideas that seem to make sense of the world', nothing that is challenging to most thinking professionals.

Over recent years, school-based training has rapidly increased (Teach First, GTP), but trainees when questioned seem to value the importance of theory (Furlong, 1990; Furlong et al., 2000). These ideas were further confirmed by Williams and Soares (2000), so claims as to the importance of subjects such as philosophy, psychology, the history of education as well as subject knowledge are essential if well related to classroom reality. These subjects are already in scant supply in initial teacher training in England, and to move training mostly into schools would presumably reduce their presence even further.

Most teacher educators in universities strongly support school involvement in the preparation of teachers and the partnerships established between HE and schools

but firmly believe that there is a body of professional knowledge, both theoretical and practical, that is essential for all qualified teachers to know and use. It is essential to realise that not all schools are a hot bed of new knowledge where theory is consulted or discussed, and a student in this type of environment may never move beyond the 'common sense' or 'it's what works approach' often used by stressed, burned out teachers in challenging situations. Can we leave our future teachers to teach themselves the underpinning theory? Some undoubtedly will, others will not and be poorer teachers for it. New standards for teachers, coming into force in 2012, with their narrowed view appear to signal a reduction in what it means to be a teacher.

Conclusions

To produce a professional teacher takes time and can only be achieved if that professionalism is founded on a good understanding of educational theory, not merely subject knowledge, and from then the prospective teacher can also learn how to apply that theory in practice situations. Many teachers and teacher educators in England believe that the proposed policy changes are 'based on a simplistic and narrow view of the role of the school and teaching resulting from politicians' memories of their experiences in what was almost certainly an elitist school experience' (Evans et al., 2011). Teaching is not only a craft but an academic discipline. Doctors, in their preparation to practice, study not only knowledge of the human body but also how to relate to patients, deal with difficult situations and how to apply psychological knowledge in a variety of challenging scenarios.

They do not merely follow a fellow doctor around to learn the craft of ‘doctoring’. To demote either the science of medicine or the science of teaching to this level would be an insult and could only have been proposed by those who have no idea of what teaching and learning entail. Teachers are not merely craftsmen dealing with ‘givens’ but problem solvers, inventors, psychologists, administrators and above all lifelong learners. Without a solid theoretical base dealing with the diversity presented by the children in their care, teachers will flounder, and working in one school does in no way prepare a teacher for the massive variety of approaches, challenges, abilities and personalities that he/she will meet during their teaching career. If more teacher training is given over to schools, who will take over from universities the provision of the knowledge required enabling student teachers to become professionals able to reflect against theory on their own practice? To add to this, how can we produce effective leaders who have no knowledge base of pedagogical or leadership theory? Maybe they can initially flound and by trial and error discover ways to become effective leaders. However, the students and colleagues who are subject to this experiment might wish that prospective leaders have a good grounding in the theories of leadership, its styles, problems and working before using them as ‘guinea pigs’. Will this proposal of craft apprentice type learning eventually apply to learning to be a leader? We know that different types of leadership are effective in different situations and that one size does not fit all. So, basing either learning the science of teaching or leadership skills on following a master will fail to bring the desired outcomes.

As Schulz (2011) maintains, merely learning to repeat habits or activities learned from a variety of other colleagues will not enforce critical thinking about pedagogical practice nor will it prepare students to become effective leaders of the profession. Teaching is not merely a craft as is learning to turn wood or build a wall, it is not training; it is, and should be, an on-going personal education that is life-long. The teachers who stop examining their practice against theory are those who stand still, and this is not what is needed for the education of twenty-first-century children. Training our teachers needs the input of theory from those who have studied and critically analysed it in depth as well as practice of how to apply that theory and see others applying it, followed by a critical analysis of its worth in the current situation. Without this our teacher training will simply not be good enough.

The proposals at present on the table in relation to teacher training in England seem to be based on outdated ideologies left over from the 1980s and bear little relation to what is happening in schools today. The move to create Teaching Schools, one hundred in 2011 with more to follow, will not solve the problem of training the numbers of teachers required. How can hard working teachers take the time to mentor and properly prepare students for classroom work? How can this approach be more cost-effective than training large groups of students together? Who will train those in schools to do the work taken over from the university departments? The present policy suggestions leave so many unanswered questions and appear to refute the work of the government inspection arm Ofsted. Is it right that the ill-founded

beliefs and prejudices of one man and his team in government can overnight turn teacher training on its head?

It is essential, therefore, that politicians whose timespan in a role can be cut short by an election, or more often by promotion or demotion, or a cabinet shuffle, realise that the timespan of their policies is much more than their stay in the power base and that poor policy decisions can affect the education of a generation of children long after they have been removed from office and have been forgotten about. Kozminsky (2011:7) insists that any policy maker who wants a successful implementation of the proposed policy change needs to base that policy on the ideas and 'processes that engage teachers and teacher educators'. Without this, she believes, the professionals will feel that their identity has been challenged and fail to support proposed changes. Maybe this is true across the world, but the beleaguered teachers and teacher educators in England await the next few years with trepidation. This constant policy change is a normal state for us, and whatever policies are presented, teachers and teacher educators as always will sigh and attempt to fulfil the requirements. Maybe that is the problem with policy in England, a too compliant and cowed workforce who bows under the rod of those whose background is not from

education and whose real interests and ambitions generally lie elsewhere.

As Fullan (2008:16) states, 'without a good theory all you can do is acquire techniques' which are only 'surface manifestations' of the thinking that underpins ideas. So do we want our teachers merely to learn techniques but not the theories on which these are grounded? Shultz (2011:33) totally agrees with the need for all preparation of teachers to be firmly set within theory; pedagogy 'cannot be reduced to mere experience and routine'. Concerns amongst teacher educators have been echoed by civil servants working for the Department of Education. Stewart (2011b) describes a culture of fear and that people are being forced to work on changes that they are unhappy with. He writes that the staff believes that evidence-based policy, so essential if change is to work, has been abandoned, and change is being forced through for ideological reasons not ideas based on clear evidence. In fact, if schools had the same satisfaction rating as has been given by workers in the Department about the way it is being run, schools would undoubtedly have by now been put into special measures. Unfortunately for teacher education, the DfE is not inspected, so the cries of its workers against how recent policy initiatives have been introduced are being dismissed.

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KINTANTI POLITIKA, KINTANTYS LAIKAI: MOKYTOJŲ UGDYMAS ANGLIJOJE (ARBA VANDENS IŠ VONELĖS IŠPYLIMAS KARTU SU KŪDIKIU)

Gillian Hilton

S a n t r a u k a

Daug metų Anglijoje egzistavo įvairūs būdai rengti specialistus darbui mokykloje, bet dauguma mokytojų buvo parengiama organizuojant pobakalaurinius pedagoginius kursus. Du trečdaliai visų šių studijų, skirtų vidurinės mokyklos mokytojo profesiniam pažymėjimui įgyti (būsimiems pradinės mokyklos mokytojams gerokai mažiau), vyksta mokyklose, po to kai universitete išklausomi ugdymo teorijos pagrindai, mokymo ir mokymosi, klasės valdymo ir kiti pedagogo profesijai svarbūs dalykai. Ši studijų programa yra įgyvendinama kartu su partnerinėmis mokyklomis, kuriose parengti mentoriai prižiūri, kaip vyksta praktinis stu-

dijuotų teorinių dalykų pritaikymas mokyklose. Šiuo metu valstybės sekretorius, kuruojantis švietimo reikalus, teikia siūlymus perkelti visą mokytojų rengimą iš universitetų į mokyklas ir perduoti visą mokytojų rengimo kontrolę mokykloms. Toks siūlymas remiasi nuostata, kad mokymas – tai „amatas“, o ne akademinė disciplina. Dauguma pedagogų praktikų pasisako prieš tokią idėją ir pameistrystės modelį rengiant mokytojus, bet ar jie bus išgirsti?

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: švietimo politika, mokytojų rengimo švietimo politika Anglijoje, universitetinis mokytojų rengimas, praktinis mokytojų rengimas.

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