Quality education and training: Which policies are best for teachers in a global and changing world?

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Abstract

To teach is a complex and demanding intellectual work, which cannot be accomplished without adequate preparation (Musset, 2010). Research shows that teacher education not only ensures that teachers are - and remain - competent, but it also ensures that they stay motivated over time (Eurydice, 2004). It also shows that the most effective way to raise educational quality is to modify teacher education and to develop the means to train teachers already in-service. It is challenging to devise effective teacher education programs, in part, because there is no single unifying theory of teacher education (Goodlad, 1998; Schwartz, 1996). Teaching styles and methods continue to be ideologically contested (Hargreaves and Jacka, 1995). Theorists and researchers in teacher education disagree about what student teachers need to know, and the best ways to help them develop that knowledge (Jackson and Leroy, 1998). The European Union has stressed the key role of education and training for the future growth, long-term competitiveness and social cohesion of the European Union as a whole. But Europe is just a part of the global world and we probably have a lot to learn from other cultures and experiences from many countries around the world. The focus of this research was to study and compare the different programmes of international organisations on Teacher Education: for example, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UNESCO research and policies, the OECD projects and surveys, such as TALIS Survey on Teachers, Teaching and Learning and Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers (OECD, 2005).

Keywords: quality education and training, international organizations, educational policies

1. Is there anything to learn from international educational organizations?

´It would be impossible (…) to attempt an adequate description of all international educational organizations´ (Wells, 1954, p.1)

Different International Education Organizations have been founded all over the world, during the last century: FIPESO, in Belgium, in 1912. In 1923, the National Education Association (NEA) founded the World Federation of Education Associations (WFEA) in San Francisco, USA; the International Federation of Teachers' Associations (IFTA) was formed in 1926. Most ceased to function during World War II (Towsley, 1991). The World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP) was founded in 1951 and by 1976 it represented more than 20 million members. In 1993, the WCOTP and IFFTU merged to form Education International, located in Brussels, Belgium, with regional offices all over the world. Education International is the voice of

30 million teachers, from early childhood to university in more than 170 countries across the globe. It worked closely with the United Nations and UNESCO to study the problems of teachers throughout the world (Education International, 2011).

In recent years international organizations have shown an increased interest in questions related to teachers, teacher education and teacher policy. For example, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UNESCO undertook research on several issues related to teachers' roles, professional development, work organisation and social dialogue, ICT, open and distance learning as well as developing reports on teacher indicators. In 2002, UNESCO and ILO published the report *A statistical profile of the teaching profession* (Siniscalco, 2002).

The European Commission has adopted a key focus on teachers' skills, changing roles, and developing and attracting teachers. Eurydice has published four reports with result from the project *The teaching profession in Europe: Profile, trends and concerns* (Eurydice 2002-2004). Eurydice has also analysed the existence of quality assurance and evaluation practices for teacher education institutions in European countries (Eurydice, 2004; 2006).

The World Bank organized a series of studies in developing countries across the globe on teacher policy issues. Also the IEA (International Association for the Evaluation on Education Achievement) have been making studies on teachers and teacher education.

The OECD, co-ordinated with other international agencies, has organised various international projects and surveys, such as, for example, *TALIS Survey on Teachers, Teaching and Learning* and *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (OECD, 2005).

The debate on teacher education has gained importance, especially because of its impact upon teacher quality, more and more identified as decisive to student outcomes. In fact, it is acknowledged that teachers are the school variable that influences the most student achievement (OECD, 2005) and that educational reforms, in order to be efficient, must take into account teacher education (OECD, 1998). To teach is a complex and demanding intellectual work, which cannot be accomplished without an adequate preparation (Musset, 2010).

Research shows that teacher education not only ensures that teachers are - and remain - competent, but it also allows assuring that they stay motivated through time (Eurydice, 2004). It also shows that the most effective way to raise educational quality is to modify teacher education and to develop the means to train teachers already in-service. Two main reasons for the interest in teachers is the concern about future supply of teachers and about the quality of teaching (Fredriksson, 2004).

Let us now focus on the specific orientations of the most important international organizations.

2. UNESCO: United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organization

'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed´ (UNESCO Constitution)

The UNESCO Constitution was signed on 16th November 1945 and came into force on 4th November 1946 after ratification by twenty countries. China is one of the founding members of the United Nations. Now UNESCO has 193 Member States and the seven Associate Members.

The right to education has been strongly affirmed in international law, most importantly in the UNESCO *Convention against Discrimination in Education* (1960). Conventions and international treaties form the backbone of international law. Although recommendations and declarations only have moral force, they reflect political commitments of States, and governments are expected to take measures for giving them effect through national legislation (Towsley, 1991).

The *Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers* was adopted by UNESCO on October 5th, 1966. This Recommendation consists of 146 items. It recognizes the essential role of teachers in educational advancement and the importance of their contribution to the development of man and modern society, and is concerned to ensure that teachers enjoy the status commensurate with this role. It expresses the conviction that in spite of the great diversity of the educational laws, regulations and customs in different countries, similar questions arise with regard to the status of teachers which call for the application of common standards and measures.

The guiding principles of this Recommendation state that education should be directed to the all round development of the human personality and to the spiritual, moral, social, cultural and economic progress of the community, as well as to the inculcation of deep respect for human rights, peace and understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and among racial or religious groups. The Recommendation looks at: professionalism - teaching should be regarded as a profession which requires expert knowledge and specialized skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuing study and it calls for a sense of personal and corporate responsibility; co-operation in policy issues; teacher-training at a level equivalent to that of higher education; professional freedom in the discharge of professional duties; responsibilities and professional standards relating to the teacher performance; rights; hours of work and salaries; teacher shortages should not endanger professional standards (UNESCO, 2008).
Later on, the UNESCO *Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel*, adopted 11th November 1997, addressed similar key areas as the 1966 Recommendation, applying it to higher education teachers and research personnel. It also emphasizes important aspects such as academic freedom and institutional autonomy (UNESCO, 2008).

The *Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* was adopted by UNESCO on 19th November 1974. In what regards Teacher preparation (n.33) it affirms that Member States should provide teachers: a) With

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commitment to the ethics of human rights and to the aim of changing society; a grasp of the fundamental unity of mankind; and appreciation of the riches of the diversity of cultures; b) Interdisciplinary knowledge of world problems and international co-operation; c) Ability to take an active part in devising programmes of in international education; d) The use of active methods of education and training and techniques of evaluation; e) Aptitudes and skills such as a desire and ability to make educational innovations and continuous training; experience in teamwork and in interdisciplinary studies; knowledge of group dynamics; ability to create favourable opportunities and take advantage of them; f) The study of experiments in international education and opportunities for direct contact with foreign teachers.

3.   OECD general pointers for policy on teacher education

`Better Policies for Better Lives´ (OECD, 2011)

The mission of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. The OECD provides information, analysis and a setting where governments compare policy experience, seek answers to common problems, and identify good practices and co-ordinate policies. The OECD Directorate for Education focuses on the key challenges facing education systems today, including how to improve the quality of teachers, teaching and learning in order to provide the knowledge and skills needed in the 21st century.

In 2001, Teaching and Learning was considered a key area of work by OECD Education Ministers and the Education Committee agreed to undertake an Activity entitled 'Promoting Quality Teaching and Learning'. The overall purpose of this Activity was to provide policy makers with information and analysis to assist them in formulating and implementing teacher policies leading to quality teaching and learning. This Activity had several objectives: a) make a synthesis of research on issues related to policies concerned with attracting, recruiting, retaining and developing effective teachers; b) to identify innovative and successful policy initiatives and practices; c) to facilitate exchanges of lessons and experiences among countries; and d) to identify policy options. Two complementary approaches were planned: an analytical review; and a thematic country review. All participating countries were invited to prepare a Country Background Report based on a common framework and set of guidelines.

On May 2005, the Directorate for Education, Education and Training Policy Division of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCDE) published some general pointers for policy development on Teacher Policy prepared on base of 25 country reports and presented in *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (2005) and *Developing Teachers' Knowledge and Skills. Pointers for policy development* (2005). In synthesis, the general pointers for policy in Teacher Education are the following:

Develop teacher profiles to anchor teacher development

- Develop a clear and concise statement or profile of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do and use these teacher profiles as a framework to guide initial teacher education, teacher certification, teachers' ongoing professional development and career advancement;
- Base the profile of teacher competencies on a clear statement of objectives for student learning;
- Ensure that the teacher profile encompasses strong subject matter knowledge, pedagogical skills, the capacity to work effectively with a wide range of students and colleagues, contribution to the school and the wider profession and capacity to continue developing;
- Make the profile evidence-based and build on active involvement by the teaching profession in identifying teacher competencies and standards of performance.

View teacher development as a continuum

- View teachers' development as a lifelong learning experience in order to cater for the rapid changes in schools, the potentially long careers of many teachers and the need for updating skills;
- Improve the interconnection of initial teacher education, induction and professional development to create a more coherent learning and development system for teachers;
- Consider using additional resources to improve induction and teacher development throughout the career rather than increasing the length of pre-service education.

Make initial teacher education more flexible and responsive

- Provide consecutive or post-graduate programmes of teacher education to give opportunities to train as a teacher after having completed studies in another field;
- Provide curriculum structures that enable people to enrol part-time or via distance education and to combine teacher education with work or family responsibilities;
- Increase the common components of teacher preparation for different types of school and levels of education to increase opportunities for working in different schools;
- Provide alternative routes into teaching for mid-career changers that combine formal study and on-the-job support with reduced teaching loads;
- Grant credits for qualifications and experience gained outside education to reduce course length and costs;
- Provide retraining and upgrading programmes that enable existing teachers to gain new qualifications to teach in other types of schools or take on high-demand subject areas;
- Develop close relationships with schools, teacher employers and the teaching profession;

- Focus research activities within the teacher education system on the issues facing schools and teachers;
- Provide feedback and evaluation mechanisms to monitor the outcomes of teacher education.

Improve selection into teacher education

- Provide more information and counselling to prospective teacher trainees so that they make better informed enrolment decisions;
- Establish procedures to assess whether individuals wanting to become teachers have the necessary motivation, skills, knowledge, and personal qualities;
- Provide incentive schemes to recruit candidates with high-level competencies;
- Provide flexible programme structures that provide students with school experience early in the course;
- Offer opportunities to move into other courses if trainee teachers' motivation towards teaching changes;
- In countries facing teacher shortages, raise awareness of the attractiveness of teaching as a career choice and use selection criteria that ensure the best possible candidates enter teacher education.

Change the emphasis in initial teacher education

- Ensure that initial teacher education combines strong content knowledge with skills for reflective practice and research on the job;
- View initial teacher education as the entry point for the profession and the platform for teachers' development;
- Improve partnerships between teacher education institutions and schools in order to provide teacher trainees with a more integrated experience;
- Ensure that students' field experiences and academic studies reinforce and complement each other;
- Ensure that mentor teachers receive appropriate training and support, including time allowances.

Accredit teacher education programmes and certify new teachers

- Consider accreditation by an independent agency to assure quality in teacher education;
- Ensure that accreditation criteria focus on the outcomes of programmes rather than on their inputs, curriculum and processes;
- Ensure that certification of teachers includes subject matter knowledge, pedagogical skills, communication skills, experience and personal qualities;
- Establish a mandatory probationary period of one to two years of teaching before full teaching certification or a permanent teaching post is awarded.

Strengthen induction programmes

- Ensure that mentor teachers in schools provide guidance and supervision to new teachers in close collaboration with the initial teacher education institution;
- Monitor carefully the resources dedicated to induction and mentoring programmes and the quality of mentor training.

Integrate professional development throughout the career

- Encourage an approach to professional development encompassing all following three strategies: entitlement-based, providing teachers with agreed levels of time release and/or financial support incentive-based, recognising participation in professional development as a requirement for salary increases or taking on new roles school-based, linking individual teacher development with school improvement needs;
- Find ways for teachers to share their expertise and experience more systematically.

4. European Union policy on education and culture

`In the period up to 2020, the primary goal of European cooperation should be to support the further development of education and training systems´ (Council of Europe, 2009, n.1)

Also in the European Union, Education and Training are recognised as playing an important role in achieving the European Union's Lisbon goals for economic growth, social cohesion and environmental sustainability. The European Council has stressed the key role of education and training for the future growth, long-term competitiveness and social cohesion of the European Union as a whole.

Though the organisation and content of education and training systems are entirely their responsibility, Member States of the European Union increasingly acknowledge the benefits of policy co-operation to address common challenges in these fields. For example, in the Education and Training Work Programme, Member States set themselves common objectives to improve education and training systems and to improve the quality of teacher education.

A programme was implemented to support evidence-based policy making and to monitor progress. As a fruit of this work, the Education Council has adopted conclusions, such as: *Improving the Efficiency and Equity of Education and Training Systems* (2006), *Improving the Quality of Teacher Education* (2007) and *Preparing Young People for the 21st Century: an Agenda for European Co-operation on Schools* (2008).

The proposals to improve the quality of teacher education include:
- Ensuring that all teachers have the knowledge, attitudes and pedagogic skills that they require to be effective;

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- Ensuring that teachers' education and professional development is coordinated, coherent, and adequately resourced;
- Promoting a culture of reflective practice and research among teachers;
- Promoting the status and recognition of the teaching profession;
- Supporting the professionalization of teaching.

In 2007 all education and training programmes were brought together in one single programme: the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013; and in 2009, the Council of Europe conclusions provided for a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training up until 2020, with broad common objectives for the education and training systems of the EU till 2020 for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The aims of the education and training systems of European countries were: to ensure the personal, social and professional fulfilment of all citizens; sustainable economic prosperity and employability, whilst promoting democratic values, social cohesion, active citizenship, and intercultural dialogue (n.1). Such aims should be viewed in a worldwide and in a lifelong learning perspective (n.2, 3). The *Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training* (ET 2020) set out four strategic objectives:

Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality

- Progress is needed in the implementation of lifelong learning strategies, the development of national qualifications frameworks linked to the European Qualifications Framework and more flexible learning pathways.
- Mobility should be expanded and the European Quality Charter for Mobility should be applied;

Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training

- All citizens need to be able to acquire key competencies and all levels of education and training need to be made more attractive and efficient.

Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship

- Education and training should enable all citizens to acquire and develop skills and competencies needed for their employability and foster further learning, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue. Educational disadvantage should be addressed through high quality inclusive and early education.

Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

- The acquisition of transversal competences by all citizens should be promoted and the functioning of the knowledge triangle (education-research-innovation) should be ensured. Partnerships between enterprises and educational institutions

as well as broader learning communities with civil society and other stakeholders should be promoted (Council of Europe, 2009).

5. Conclusions

´The cultural wealth of the world is its diversity in dialogue (…) all persons are entitled to quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity` (UNESCO, 2001, 5).

It is challenging to devise effective teacher education programs, in part, because there is no single unifying theory of teacher education (Goodlad, 1998; Schwartz, 1996). Teaching styles and methods continue to be ideologically contested (Hargreaves and Jacka, 1995).

Theorists and researchers in teacher education disagree about what student teachers need to know, and the best ways to help them develop that knowledge (Jackson and Leroy, 1998).

The relevance and seriousness of work on teacher policy is evident in the programmes of international organisations. Teacher education is recognized as having a significant impact on teachers 'competences and skills, and on the student outcomes. The ILO/UNESCO documents are focused more on the interests and defence of teachers and teachers' conditions, salaries, etc. With the economic crisis, and to counteract it, the more recent documents of the European Union and of OCDE seem more concerned with economic conditions and future employment and turned to a new focus on competitive skills, innovation and creativity, links between University and Enterprise… Teachers are expected to prepare young people with the competences they need to enter a world that is in rapid evolution and curricula and education need to adapt very rapidly to the changing needs of society and the economy (European Commission, 2010; Van Den Dries, 2010).

Of course, many different challenges have to be dealt with in different countries, and policy on teacher education has to respond to the specific needs of each system and country. In fact, the situation can vary a lot from country to country: some countries experience teacher surplus and others have to cope with teacher shortage. Teachers face the challenge to improve teacher quality, in a socio-economic context of broader expectations toward them. Policy makers should have knowledge of many different good practices, in order to reflect on how to design policies that fit the specific needs of a particular educational system. There is no magical solution that can be applied in each and every situation (Musset, 2010).

Conferences like this create conditions for learning from each other, in a climate of mutual trust, understanding and cooperation. As the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* affirms: `Aspiring to greater solidarity on the basis of recognition of cultural diversity, of awareness of the unity of humankind, and of the development of intercultural exchanges, the process of globalization (…) creates the conditions for renewed dialogue among cultures and civilizations´ (UNESCO, 2001, a.1). This also

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applies to teacher education. I really think that Europe has a lot to learn from other cultures and other world practices.

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