

# Teacher Quality, Teacher Effectiveness and the Diminishing Returns of Current Education Policy Expressions

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## **Abstract**

*This paper engages with an overt policy storyline, namely that the effective classroom teaching practice(s) of quality teachers not only corrects for but overcomes post-Fordist capital insecurities. Increasingly considered the sole and only solid foundations needed to enhance student achievement as preparation for twenty-first century economic intricacies, notions of teacher quality and teacher effectiveness specifically target classroom instruction as the encounter of influence ripe for change singling out teacher education for policy action. In using aspects of critical theory, the paper explores how contemporary education policy discourse treats notions of teacher quality and teacher effectiveness. The paper situates its argument within a critical framework, bordered by the reference points of “governmentalization” and a “logic(s) of practice”. In doing so, the paper canvasses the two major discourses of reform in education policy, highlighting the dominant influence of technocratic conceptions of “the teacher” and their role in a nation’s economy. An upshot is the resultant attenuation of complexity in matters related to teacher quality, teacher effectiveness, student achievement and the part they all play in a new world of economic instability.*

**Keywords:** *teacher quality, teacher effectiveness, teaching practice, education policy, economy, complexity*

## **Introduction**

The major question under investigation in this paper is what theorisation(s) of teaching practice personify the effective and quality teacher in an era of education policy transition one marked increasingly by the enforced global economic pressure points of school performance and accountability? A research methodology informed by the perspective of critical theory is used to explore the research question posed. Critical theory encompasses a broad theoretical domain and as such is useful in helping to uncover the intentions of dominant and technocratic policy discourses. Critical theory helps to problematize education related issues by focusing attention on complex systems. A methodology informed by critical theory facilitates the exploration of education policy by interrogating ‘how policies presented as reality are

often political rhetoric' (Diem, Young, Welton, Mansfield & Lee 2014, 1072) accompanied by focused economic intentions.

The paper takes as its case two policy documents, the first a document produced for the European Union (EU) by the European Commission (EC) (Education and Training), *Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes (2013)* and the second from Australia, *the Students First Strategy (2015)*, hereafter referred to as the *SFS*. The investigation draws on the theoretical frameworks of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu by framing the exploration on "governmentalization" (Foucault, 1997) and a "logic(s) of practice" (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990) to critically examine how notions of *teacher quality* and *teacher effectiveness* are articulated from within the policy documents chosen for this case study.

The paper embarks on a policy analysis that engages with an overt policy storyline, namely that effective classroom teaching practice(s) as trademarks of *teacher quality* not only correct for but overcome post-Fordist capital insecurities. By post-Fordist, I mean an approach to policy analysis that acknowledges the dominant system of economic production and consumption. Economic activity in a post-Fordist framework is defined by 'flexible specialization' (Kanuka and Brooks 2010,73) and a shift from 'manufacturing and production of physical goods to information handling, knowledge accumulation, and production of knowledge goods' (Burton-Jones 1999,12). The post-Fordist economy depends upon human capital, high skills and a flexible approach to labour processes and labour markets situating the education system including school education and the policies that delineate it to the national competitiveness of nation states and the interconnections of a global economy. As an educational response to (1) a new world order of work in the form of rising casualization and (2) the broader tasks of capital, precise teaching practice(s) as a distinguishing hallmark of *teacher quality* and *teacher effectiveness* are increasingly considered the sole and only solid foundations/responses needed from schools to enhance student achievement.

The paper will argue that a polarization is emerging between two competing conceptual discourses describing the research constructs, *teacher quality* and *teacher effectiveness*. The first has a positivist foundation and is assertive and popular although narrow and reductive with respect to the claims it makes about effectiveness and quality. The second and broader 'comprehensivist inclusivist' (Hill 2001,136) social-class social justice discourse believes that educational issues must account for the upheavals connected to a precarious capitalist existence. While this shift in emphasis for some is hardly novel, it does point to the deepening drift towards a *teacher effectiveness* notion of student achievement. This then potentially sweeps

aside or at a minimum trims how the field of teacher education treats (i) issues and questions of student learning and achievement and (ii) the preparation of teachers. It also has far reaching implications for education policy as policy-makers tend to draw on a diminishing pool of new thinking about how to address inequity and social disadvantage in school education.

The research locates current education policy transitions towards exacting theorisations of teaching practice as indicative of a particular evaluative mindset, one that in policy terms and on the whole, champions quantitative appraisal systems as major drivers of educational change. These drivers over-managerialize and over-systematize teaching and learning destabilizing conceptions of the teacher as embodied change agent. Education policy is then increasingly a product of global and networked actions with a strong and compelling technocratic/economic agenda. The essential distinctions for education policy now where what matters equates to what works (see Biesta, 2007), permits a moral exemption so that the only evaluative imperative is of an instrumentalist use values kind, usually one of constant economic reform (see Bauman & Bordoni, 2014). Terms such as *competences, practical skills, instruction, pedagogical approaches and ways of teaching and learning* and discursive policy statements comprising these terms declare objectives sought that in many cases frame classroom teaching practice(s) as the focal point of action. An effect of these communicative exchanges is to re-formulate teaching recasting it so that the experiential messiness often accompanying learning, namely its contradictions, nuances and complexities no longer matter. The inconsistencies and peculiarities of contingency are removed so that what remains is a generalized framework of invariance. In other words, teaching and learning becomes a manageable scientific problem with rational discoverable truths that are veridical in nature.

The research methodology employed in this paper uses Critical Policy Analysis (CPA), to understand distributions of power within inequitable education systems (see Diem, Young, Welton, Mansfield & Lee 2014). In using CPA as its methodological orientation, the paper situates an analytics of teaching practice within a broader interpretivist and critical articulation of social, economic and political realities. A methodology of this kind frames the problematic conditions of education policy while offering a means for highlighting the importance of re-orientations in teaching practice beyond the sensibilities of the Global Education Reform Movement—GERM (see Sahlberg 2011). Complementing the research methodology is the paper's use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse the conceptual theorisation of teaching practice from the policy documents chosen. While there is 'no set procedure for doing discourse analysis; people approach it in different ways according to the specific nature of the project as well as their own views of discourse' (Fairclough 1992, 225),

the paper is motivated to examine and describe education policy theorizations of *teacher quality* and *teacher effectiveness* as they currently stand in education policy, and then outline what this may mean for current conceptualizations of “the teacher”.

The paper begins in part one by acknowledging that the transition towards *teacher quality* and *teacher effectiveness* is an aspect of policy enactment occurring within a performance oriented milieu. Governmentalization and a logic of practice are the conceptual markers characterizing the governing mechanisms inherent in *teacher quality* and *teacher effectiveness* configurations. In part two, the paper deals with the competing discourses that define the reform agenda in teacher education, one linked to the insecurities of current capitalism. The suggestion is made that a dominant technicist discourse has policy favour at present regarding conceptualizations of *teacher quality* and *teacher effectiveness* blunting the potential contributions of a more expansive discourse. Part three considers the case of *teacher quality* and *teacher effectiveness* from within two policy documents, one from Australia and one written for the EU by the EC. The paper then turns to considerations of complexity in matters concerning teaching and learning before finishing by outlining a way forward beyond the ontological strangleholds of a fashionable audit agenda in classroom teaching and learning.

### **Governmentalization and a logic(s) of practice**

The governmentalization of teaching and learning is representative of a concern with managing the outcomes and outputs of education. Michel Foucault coined the term governmentalization as a way of describing the modern administrative rationalities linked to political governance, namely that the rule based governmentality of living populations is framed by a distinctive collection of ‘apparatuses’ and ‘series of knowledges (*savoirs*)’ (Foucault 2009,8). The governmentality of teaching and learning is made possible by the set of reflections that once ratified, self-administer the regulating mechanisms of modern education systems. These include the dominating frameworks of accountability discernible as standards and codes of conduct. They, for teachers manifest as an ‘apparatus of certification and regulation’ (Connell 2009,214) defining minimum criteria for entry into teaching and also for how teaching is enacted within classrooms and for the outcomes that “good teaching” derives. Marked by a unique discursive tag, notably that of teacher quality, the governmentalization of teaching and learning tapers towards a common format of descriptions detailing the actions that quality and effective teaching entails and moreover what it yields. But, ‘such benefits come at a price... What teachers do is decomposed into specific, auditable competencies and performances’ and the managerialist language used ‘embeds an individualized model of the teacher that is deeply problematic’ (Connell 2009, 220).

The cost-benefit calculations of managed populations and the market rationalities that now frame modern productive existence finds expression in the form of education policy as a ‘source of truth production’ (Villadsen 2015, 152). An implication is the codification of the everyday activities of schools and the people that work and study in them signalling the basic tempo of institutionalised existence viewed as the rituals of teaching and learning occurring in classrooms. A great deal of what schools now do is underpinned by the discourses of economic competitiveness and globalization. The pronouncements of school leaders and the necessities of national and international accountability regimes frame educational choices and decisions as investments to be made. The rationalities of self-regulating economic markets is also evident in the transformations of calculation that teachers are exposed to, the emphasis now one of production in the form of tangible outputs. A development of this kind accords with the “government of self” proclivities expressed upon individuals to influence behaviour. In teaching, self-regulating technologies are exhibited by the mandated professional standards frameworks operating within various national and state jurisdictions. These are often defined by codifying parameters, for example, *Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Engagement*. They are also circumscribed by specific declarations. In the Australian case and by way of example, teachers ‘*know the content and how to teach it; know students and how they learn; plan for and implement effective teaching and learning; create and support safe learning environments; assess, provide feedback and report on student learning; engage in professional learning; engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community*’ (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2011, 3). The EC example provides us with teacher competences which allegedly describe ‘*knowledge, skills and attitudes (or values)* [sic]’ (*Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes* 2013, 30).

Bordered then by constraining and disciplining modes of regulation, specifically the methods (administrative and/or research) that circumscribe practice, teaching becomes dominated by an assenting series of discourses that organizes knowledge and behaviour. Teaching performance, packaged by the standards and codes of professional practice can be named and measured so that a systematic and calculated audit of accomplishments including of future accomplishments can be made. Constituted by “technologies of power”, namely the optimizing and normalizing frameworks of performance management, detailed quantifiable representations of classroom actions and activities are partitioned into predictable sections. The emphasis then is of maximum efficiency deployed through the agentic performance orientations of individuals. Governmentalization fulfils the programmatic objectives of a self-regulating autonomization best pronounced as the setting in which ‘selves are

allowed to unfold their potentials and entrepreneurial creativity within a specific frame' (Weiskopf and Munro 2012, 696).

Conversely a great deal of the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1990) concerns the nature of a pure objectivism and centres on what produces particular (governmentalizing) practices and why. The analytics that Bourdieu brings to education research extends towards a scrutiny of practice so that it identifies inter-connected and associative contextual information that on first inspection is concealed yet is central to the outcomes(s) attained. His work attests to the complexities involved in forms of practice suggesting as Swartz states that 'practices are constitutive of structures as well as determined by them' (1997,58). In other words, the constraining features or structures situated for instance within education are socially constructed by the daily practices of agents. Implicit in particular practices are economies of exchange that sustain them. Invariably an analysis of the exchange involves an elaborate examination of interrelationships generally between the set of relations constituted between the habitus, capital and field (see Swartz, 1997).

The field of school education is strongly organised around the 'fundamental presuppositions' (Bourdieu 1990,68) that define it. This often includes a strong sense of the practical particularly practicalities connected to the effects and actions of teaching practices on student achievement. Evaluations of practice based on theoretic models adopt an economy of logic that in turn shift and distort the moments and conditions of classroom life. A science and logic of practice detemporalizes what occurs in classrooms segmenting the knowledge that it provides. Consequently, a logic of practice that privileges and selects only what it deems relevant, misses broader macro influences so that the exertions of more dominant social, political, historical and economic aspects, discounted by the needs of an enforced practical logic are made redundant.

There are significant consequences for teaching and learning when the governmentalization of an instituted policy defined logic(s) of practice prevails. First and foremost is the import of struggle, namely the struggle over definition. In *defining teacher quality* and the characteristics of effective teaching, control and influence is gained and legitimacy is bestowed over how teachers are prepared for the rigours of the classroom. An imposed 'representation means imposing reality when a reality has to be made' and further by making the 'unnameable nameable means acquiring the possibility of making it exist' (Bourdieu 2014, 331) thereby authenticating it. Secondly, the import of concealment arises. The governmentalization of an instituted policy defined logic(s) of practice implies that there are rules, hypothetically objective and neutral that are adhered to in order to detect the quality and effective teacher.

Interest then in notions of *teacher quality* and *teacher effectiveness* are purely noble and good—ideal—and are not in any way serving some political or economic agenda. Third and finally is investment, a buying in to the “game” of reform on the part of all agents/players. The aim here is one of positioning, centring reform and change, making it appear necessary and expected so that all affected by it cannot help but join in (see Bourdieu 2014).

### **Competing discourses of reform**

The reform of teacher education is typified by three unique and connected elements. First, that teacher education is now a policy problem necessitating policy responses, secondly that it must be research driven and thirdly that it be outcomes based (see Cochran-Smith, 2005). These aforementioned elements compose the “new teacher education”, attuning it to notions of *teacher quality* and *teacher effectiveness* and the economic potentials of nation states. A set of policy programmes work in tandem with the elements of reform encompassing a series of typical agendas involving professionalization, deregulation and social justice (see Zeichner 2009). Tangible economic benefit to the nation counts and student achievement measures increasingly circumscribe the value of teacher education. A contemporary precondition is precision, one based firmly in the cause-effect modelling of the psychology field and its associated evidence based research techniques directed towards investigations of effective teaching practice(s) that work in enhancing student achievement (see Friedrich 2015).

In the transition towards pragmatic (concrete) reconfiguration there exists contrasting discursive positions on conceptualizations of teaching and learning and associated interactions and the effects on student achievement. The reform elements of the “new teacher education” that Cochran-Smith outlines indicate the controlling representations that now demarcate it. A technical systematization is attached to how teacher education is encouraged (forced?) to examine issues of teaching and learning, so that inquiries into student achievement are now often accompanied by the expressive power of formalized statistical evaluations and “best case” practice scenarios. In other words, a formal validity is conveyed by the normalizing orthodox “evidence-based” judgements provided and defined by the research criteria of “numbers” that is often quite one-dimensional and lacking in qualitative richness. Thus in Australia as elsewhere the call for the preparation of “effective teachers” based on an integration of theory and practice informed by “evidence” (see Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group 2015) depicting and involving best case teaching practice(s).

Relying on pre-ordered classifications of what are taken to be classroom norms, technical ascriptions symbolize effective teaching. Constituted by the governmentalization accompanying the formulaic frameworks that inform on the work of teachers the “new teacher education” is bordered by an apparent common sense basics, namely that the teaching practices of high-quality effective teachers can be condensed into transferable mechanized techniques. Another way of thinking about this governmentalization is to consider Foucault’s reference to a set of ‘discursive practices as regulated forms of veridiction’ (2011, 4) where a series of norm-referenced postulates about teaching and learning arrived at through experiment, govern how teaching is conceptualized. Friedrich (2015) provides two examples to illustrate this point, namely that teaching practices can be broken down into methods that should be distinguished from content and that teachers need to experience rather than simply theorize the diversity they will encounter in classrooms.

In contrast, Hill in his critique of what he terms the ‘neo-liberal reconstruction of schooling and teacher education’ (2001,135) suggests that education policy, eschews structuralist theoretical educational approaches and analyses. The structuralist-materialist theoretical approach uses the broader plan of capital in its examinations of education and the policy reforms connected to it and often gives ‘greater weight in broad social explanation to the economic contra the political and the ideological’ (Hill 2001,146-147). While there is a place for the ‘local, the specific, the contingent and the micro-level’, these according to Hill represent the “small scale” in educational inquiry, and though arguably not totally a poor substitute for serious analysis they may diminish the ‘significance of the capital state government relationship in the implementation of policy’ (2001, 139). Likewise, Friedrich argues against the imposed limitations of a “psychologising” teacher education preferring teaching approaches that supposedly ‘work anytime, anywhere’ (2015, 63). With attention to studying the contradictory machinations inherent in capital ‘an analysis of the reason of teacher education reform’ can fully display the ‘restraints that particular ways of thinking put on the reinvention of teacher education’ (Friedrich 2015,65) exposing in many cases, the technical and methodological assumptions of a refined reductionism. This is especially helpful when considering the complexities involved in the relationships between teaching practice and student achievement that often symbolically at least, and within policy text fall under the banner of *teacher quality*.

### **The case of teacher quality and teacher effectiveness**

The backdrop to the work contained within the EC’s *Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes (2013)* and the Australian Department of Education and Training’s (ADET) *SFS (2015)* is reform. The former highlights an essential need for reforms to education and training systems so as to achieve ‘higher



productivity’ and maintain and increase the ‘supply of highly skilled workers’ (*Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes* 2013,5). The latter identifies the overriding contribution to the exclusion of other influences that teachers make to the achievement and development of pupils and by implication Australia’s economic competitiveness:

We know that within a school, teacher quality is the single biggest influence on student engagement and achievement and that improving teacher effectiveness is the best method of improving student performance. (*SFS*, ‘Teacher Quality’, 2015:1)

The obvious supposition is that there is some ‘thing’, or entity that is ‘teacher quality’ and ‘teacher effectiveness’ and that it can be captured, measured and documented and put to work ultimately for national economic benefit. Both policy documents signal the dominant effects that teachers have on student outcomes. While the *SFS* outlines a series of student achievement impacts, for example, *curriculum, parental engagement and school autonomy*, it nominates *teacher quality* as the ‘first step to achieving a quality education’ which can only happen if the ‘quality, professionalisation and status of the teaching profession’ (*SFS* 2015, ‘Teacher Quality’, para 1) is raised. The EC document targets the essential characteristics or ‘competences’ of quality teachers stating that reforms must identify ‘what it takes to be a high quality teacher: what competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) they need, how these can be understood, described and deployed’ (*Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes* 2013,5).

*Teacher quality* in these documents is a term that encapsulates the essential characteristics of the “good teacher” and with what can be identified as “good effective teaching”. Specific *teacher quality* characteristics includes the knowledge that a teacher possesses including of a series of best or effective teaching practices; skill development; teacher evaluation and teacher preparation (see Gottlieb 2015). The specification of performance oriented attributes as teachers gradually acquire experience and knowledge as part of their pre-service preparation is accompanied by the targeted application of best practice (effective) teaching methods. The primary motivation for the term’s inception is twofold and connects to the reform appeals mentioned in the policy documents under consideration. First, that education systems and the teachers that work in them are at worst either in a state of disrepair, are fumbling about or are at the mercy of major economic change and so do not meet the needs of a broader mix of young people and currently are not adequately coping with the demands of a twenty first century economy. Secondly, that a stronger education system and more adept teaching force will meet the economic challenges of a rapidly changing and diverse world (see Gottlieb 2015; Ravitch 2013). A significant component of the imperative for *teacher quality* centres on the classroom readiness of

teacher graduates. Given that economic necessities direct education reforms there is a desire to shake-up teacher education to better reflect changes needed. The quality of preparation (teacher education) that a teacher receives becomes a matter of policy importance. The goal then is to ‘determine which of the broad parameters that can be controlled by policy-makers (e.g. teacher testing, subject matter requirements, alternate entry pathways) is most likely to enhance teacher quality’ (Cochran-Smith 2008, 273). This accords with the agenda of change and improvement in school systems across Europe and Australia.

The importance of these developments is emblematic of the control now permeating teacher education where markers of effectiveness and competence containing their own unique logic and reason, progressively regulate conceptions of teaching practice. Examples of this are found in both of the policy documents that comprise this particular case study and are provided here. Generally speaking, examples are discursive/ descriptive in form, for instance:

...teachers should have a specialist knowledge of the subject(s) they teach, plus the necessary pedagogical skills to teach them, including teaching to heterogeneous classes, making effective use of ICT, and helping pupils to acquire transversal competences. (*Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes* 2013, 8)

With Explicit Instruction teachers focus on explanations, demonstrations, feedback and practice until the skill is mastered. (*SFS* 2015, ‘Teacher Quality’, para. 4)

The above, apart from perhaps the allusion to ‘teaching to heterogeneous classes’ which addresses diversity and the obvious eclecticism that a statement such as this brings are suggestive of an approach and conceptualisation of teaching that is clear-cut promising definitive and causative syntheses of schooling. In other words, there is a confident self-assured logic and structure to a framework describing the competence and/or effectiveness of a classroom teacher that in addition testifies to a set of requisite capacities that leads to a designated product. In the former statement, the product is a set of student ‘transversal competences’ brought about through an application of best-practice teaching that is itself transportable and in the latter, after a period of explicit instruction, a ‘skill is mastered’.

### *The SFS*

*Teacher quality* in the *SFS* is addressed in five sections incorporating a series of specific government supported initiatives or programmes. These include: the implementation of Literacy and Numeracy Tests for Initial Teacher Education Students; an Agriculture in Education Programme; a Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools Programme; the Teach For Australia Programme and the formation

of a Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (see *SFS2015*, ‘Teacher Quality’). While all of the initiatives outlined address teaching, two focus directly on the classroom practices of teachers. The first of these, the Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools Programme advocates for direct and explicit instruction implying that teaching practices of this kind bring desired outcomes. The second, an Agriculture in Education Programme is also a curriculum linked initiative in that it focuses on heightening awareness of the agriculture industry to the Australian economy to help teachers ‘better understand the products and processes associated with food and fibre production’ (*SFS 2015*, ‘Teacher Quality’, para 6). The Teach for Australia programme promotes the fast-tracking of motivated ‘high-calibre’ (*SFS2015*, ‘Teacher Quality’, para 4) pre-service students into disadvantaged schools and communities sidestepping conventional teacher preparation. The programme is promoted as an alternative entry and pathway into teacher education where highly motivated pre-service students are specifically chosen to work in disadvantaged schools/communities.

A core development in the area of *teacher quality* in Australia is the implementation of a literacy and numeracy test for all graduating teachers upon completion of their respective teacher education courses. The aim of ‘The Test’ as it is known (see *SFS 2015*, ‘Teacher Quality’) is to ‘assist higher education providers, teacher employers and the general public to have increased confidence in the skills of graduating teachers’ (*SFS 2015*, ‘Teacher Quality’, para 5). Accompanying this reform is an Australia wide review of all teacher education courses, conducted by the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG), the aim of which is focused on improvement ‘to better prepare new teachers with the right mix of academic and practical skills needed for the classroom’ (*SFS 2015*, ‘Teacher Quality’, para 9). Developments of this kind not only imply present deficits in individual teacher quality, particularly of those teachers currently teaching, they also hint at supposed deficiencies in the nature and organisation of current teacher education/training courses.

#### *Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes*

*Teacher quality* in the EC’s *Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes* document is depicted in performance oriented ways. The document relies upon a chain of academic research reports, mainly from the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) and articles focusing on issues linked to teachers, their practices, performance, preparation and professionalization. In its opening the document highlights the staples of the new expectations expected of teachers and schools. These include: the necessity to teach in increasingly multicultural and diverse classrooms integrating students of all backgrounds and being

inclusive of those with special needs; using ICT in effective and engaging ways; a preparedness to engage in on-going evaluations and accountability processes and an openness to involve parents in the education of their children (see *Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes* 2013). There are two obvious reference points that announce the importance of *teacher quality* for the EU. The first borrows from the OECD's report of 2011, *Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21st Century - Lessons from around the world*. The key point from this report and adopted by the EC in their document emphasizes that teachers are to assist students not only with the 'skills that are easiest to teach and easiest to test' but more importantly, teachers are to cultivate 'ways of thinking (creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making and learning); ways of working (communication and collaboration); tools for working (including information and communications technologies); and skills around citizenship, life and career and personal and social responsibility for success in modern democracies' (*Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes* 2013,7). In simple terms, expectations are amplified towards a host of student outcomes deemed essential for a new world. Secondly, in the EU much like Australia there is a concern with the preparation that teachers receive. If a more diverse and enlarged set of student educational outcomes are expected so too must there be a concomitant change in the education and training that teachers receive.

When many teachers undertook their initial education, knowledge about learning and teaching was less developed, many teaching tools were not available and the role of education and training was more narrowly conceived ... So teaching staff nowadays also need the competences to constantly innovate and adapt; this includes having critical, evidence-based attitudes, enabling them to respond to students' outcomes, new evidence from inside and outside the classroom, and professional dialogue, in order to adapt their own practices (*Supporting teacher competence development, for better learning outcomes* 2013,7).

*Teacher quality* is then about a demonstrable "ability to" and competence is conceptualized in praxis orientated terms. Teaching competence and, in particular its praxis orientations is a multi-dimensional trait encompassing 'complex combinations of knowledge, skills, understanding, values and attitudes, leading to effective action in situation' (*Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes* 2013, 8).

### **Complexity**

Less clear in either of the policy documents that comprise this case study is an account of exactly how and why the various *teacher quality* elements mentioned produce the outcomes stipulated. The *EC* document for instance quotes research recognising that

teaching is often ‘characterised by uncertainty’ (2013, 11), and so to deal with this teachers require “adaptive expertise” (see *Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes* 2013) which is the ability to change plans and teaching approaches accordingly depending upon student needs. Likewise, much that is in the *SFS* exhibits a self-assured tone with teacher quality nominated as one of ‘four key areas’ that will ‘make a difference’ (*SFS* 2015, ‘Teacher Quality’, para 1).

Complexity if not discounted altogether, can be explained and indeed ordered as there is a self-evident logic that accompanies a systematic inquiry into teaching and learning that dispenses with the contingent. As a result, researchers have ‘...turned to teacher behaviours as predictors of student achievement in order to build up a knowledge base on effective teaching, while over time incorporating newer learning theories into their models’ (Muijs, Kyriakides, van der Werf, Creemers, Timperley and Earl 2014, 232). The highly economical process of evaluation that “models” offer while unveiling the approximate are often devoid of their own internalized set of arbitrary contingencies. The self-evident findings that “models” often provide simply accord with the particular and objective modes of inquiry that hold to an established research tradition. Reduction for the sake of simplicity dominates. So, for example, while consistent ‘replicated findings of teacher effectiveness’, an element of teacher quality ‘link student achievement to the quantity and pacing of instruction’, amount learnt is simply ‘related to opportunity to learn, and achievement is maximized when teachers prioritize academic instruction and allocate available time to curriculum-related activities’ (Muijs et al. 2014, 232).

In truncating the exigencies connected to teaching and learning from aspects of the social, historical, political and economic an inexact and at times false analysis of what is the case in education prevails. Core information is often masked in the reified analyses that eventually report on the quality and effective teacher so that what actually is documented is the statistical regularities of arithmetic multi-variate effect sizes, generally portraying simple mathematical variations deputizing instead for the complexity involved in teaching and learning. There are problems with eventualities of this kind and Bourdieu and Passeron in their work on the reproductive nature of schooling are at pains to highlight them.

If all the variations observed can be interpreted in terms of a single principle having different effects depending on the structure of the complete system of relations within which and through which it operates, this is because these variations express, not a sum of partial relations, but a structure in which the complete system of relations governs the meaning of each of them. (1990, 86-87)

To put it another way, purely statistical logic of practice evaluations of teaching distort representations of *teacher quality* and effectiveness and they also distort the complexity not only of teaching and learning, but of education systems. Links to the broader structural aspects of the social world which if used provide for completer explanations. Indeed, the centre-point of theoretic constructions of teaching inasmuch as they aim to capture isolable singularities of *teacher quality* defer to their own techniques or mechanisms of evaluation. The theoretical and practical are then conflated without a requisite understanding or account of either in terms of their own logic.

So, what begins as a search for firmness, degenerates into the hunt for rules based only on objectified regularities. Pre-specified conditions circumscribe the focus of inquiry making the techniques or mechanisms inherent in the analytical process also the centrepiece of interest. A shift has occurred from the 'practical scheme to the theoretical schema...from practical sense to the theoretical model...reconstructed by the analyst' (Bourdieu 1990,81). There is in this shift a privileging, presupposing the absolute capture of a set of practical teaching functions and thus a suspension of time immobilizing therefore all that has either taken time to build or that fully makes sense only in the completeness of time. Bourdieu reminds us that science has a 'time which is not that of practice' (2004,9) and to 'restore to practice its practical truth'(Bourdieu 2004, 8) requires a reintroduction of time. Complexity, especially that emanating from practical information requires a considered judiciousness. Understanding the complexities of teaching and what makes for *teacher quality* and effectiveness signals an excursus into the important links between two co-existing elements of the social world, time and space. The search for linearity in relationships where student achievement (Y) is a function of time (T) and teaching practice (P) such that  $Y = T + P$ , is in effect only a formalized predictive representation of what may be the case. If as Byrne suggests we can 'establish the relationships so that our formalised linear mathematical models are indeed isomorphic with the real world, and our ideal method for doing this is usually thought to be the controlled experiment' (1998, 19) then predicting what will happen given a set of known circumstances is assured. In reality, 'much, and probably most, of the world doesn't work in this way' (Byrne 1998,19). This is to be expected as there are obvious impediments to research of the kind that purports to report on a specific practice of the social world, namely teaching and learning (see Barrow 1984).

### **Concluding remarks**

There is an incongruity at work in policy deliberations about *teacher quality* and *teacher effectiveness*, namely at one level, a minimum set of "best practices" geared towards specific universal achievement standards of literacy and numeracy that will

on another level, yield broader multi-tasked policy-designated educational outcomes geared towards the needs of post-Fordist economies, for example, creativity, innovation, imagination and so on. In other words, notions of *teacher quality* and *teacher effectiveness* are predicated on minimum refinements focusing mainly on the type of teacher now needed and these same set of minimum refinements, precisely defined teaching practices for instance serving basic curriculum and policy goals, form the cornerstone of broader policy elected twenty-first century student functionings. So, while the focus is on the type of teacher, their quality and effectiveness, more pressing issues from within education that work towards actively engaging with the complexities of the twenty-first century are given insufficient attention.

The role of *teacher quality* as set down in the policy documents that forms this case study is to provide the necessary amount of complexity reduction needed so that uncertainty is reduced. This is the dominant theorisation of teaching that is currently favoured by education policy. Learning then is no longer represented by the collaboration and co-operation of experience that brings with it its own ‘contingent sets of relations to cope with uncertainty’ (Olssen 2010, 85). The interactions of learning narrow, no longer dynamic, interdependent instead on an insufficient linear reasoning concerned more about meeting external markers of achievement that are tied to the vicissitudes of hyper-economies.

With this in mind, current reform efforts in teacher education and preparation that seek to address issues of *teacher quality* and effectiveness need to also deal with their inherent limitations principal of which arguably is an unrestrained confidence in cause-effect investigative techniques. While teaching and learning is a complicated activity, recognising and indeed understanding the complexities involved in capturing the effective and quality teacher is difficult, made even more so when a key aim of much that is the educational effectiveness literature that seeks a causal nexus between teaching and student achievement evades or passes over the relational in education. The education system and the teaching and learning that occurs in it is complex and in a complex system, the ‘...interaction constituents of the system, and the interaction between the system and its environment, are of such a nature that the system as a whole cannot be fully understood simply by analysing its components’ (Cilliers 1998,viii). Furthermore, coping with the instabilities of today demands more than what the reforms linked to *teacher quality* profess. Consequently, a relational re-affirmation is needed about the particulars of teaching and learning, one that focuses on education as an outlook akin to the process perspective of education privileging the core concepts of (1) becoming; (2) creativity; (3) interconnectedness; (4) emotional experience and (5) internal relations (see Evans 2006).

While not seeking an in-depth exploration of the aforementioned concepts here, it is worth noting and suffice it to say that they all re-inforce relational aspects of teaching and learning. They imply that the pedagogical encounter is composed of relational complexities and further that the complex is also revealed in the contextual—usually economic—features encroaching on the pedagogic. If teaching and learning is about attempting to influence, then only focusing on learning and the achievement derived from it ‘...at the expense of the conditions that drive teaching opens the door for ignoring how hierarchies and dynamics yield the desire to influence another and the conditions that enable whether and how pedagogy occurs’ (Gaztambide-Fernandez and Matute 2013,56). Then again, many of the policy induced changes shaping current teacher education including conceptualizations of *teacher quality* and *teacher effectiveness* are about ignoring dominant hierarchies and dynamics in education systems and their deteriorating influence on teachers.

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