



# Changing teacher education in Sweden: Using meta-ethnographic analysis to understand and describe policy making and educational changes



Dennis Beach<sup>a,\*</sup>, Carl Bagley<sup>b</sup>, Anita Eriksson<sup>c</sup>, Catarina Player-Koro<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Education and Special Education, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

<sup>b</sup> School of Education, Durham University, UK

<sup>c</sup> Department of Education and Behavioural Sciences, University of Borås, Sweden

## HIGHLIGHTS

- The value of meta-ethnographic analyses for the study of teacher education policy is demonstrated.
- New policy is shown to be formed as a reaction to previous policy formulations rather than empirical research evidence.
- Governments allow ideological interests to predominate over scientific knowledge when making new policies.
- The government license to influence teacher education policy may need to be reconsidered.

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 27 February 2014

Received in revised form

28 June 2014

Accepted 26 August 2014

Available online 19 September 2014

### Keywords:

Bernstein

Meta-ethnography

Policy

## ABSTRACT

This article derives from policy ethnographic research on teacher-education change in Sweden concerning the development of a unified profession with a common professional-knowledge base. This was a social democratic government policy for teacher education from the 1950s up until 2007, when the newly elected right wing government turned away from unification and toward re-traditionalisation. Based on a meta-ethnographic analysis of the policy ethnographies the article illustrates resistance toward unification and raises critical questions concerning the intellectual foundations and integrity of reform processes. Attempts are also made to locate the disclosures in relation to international research.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Teacher education policy change has been extensively discussed in international research journals like *Teaching and Teacher Education* (Adamson, 2012; Beach & Bagley, 2012, 2013; Delandshere & Petrosky, 2004; Erixon Arreman, 2005; Popkewitz, 1985). The mediating constructions operating at curriculum level between society and teacher educators (Hökkä, Eteläpelto, & Rasku-Puttonen, 2010), ideology and social formation (Popkewitz, 1994), the capacity of teacher education to educate critically conscious professionals (Reid & O'Donoghue, 2004; Zeichner, 2010) and how teacher education operates as academic work (Ellis, McNicholl, & Pender, 2012) have been focused on, and similar policy developments have been described in many countries (see e.g. Garm & Karlsen, 2004; Karras & Wolhuter's, 2010; Sleeter, 2008). They

suggest that over the course of the past fifty years national policies for teacher education have moved from emphasizing a dualist to a more unitary professional perspective, founded on a research-based knowledge about teaching, learning and education conditions (Beach & Bagley, 2012, 2013), but have then begun to swing back again, with a convergence toward global neo-liberal and new-managerial ideas (Apple, 2001; Garm & Karlsen, 2004; Zeichner, 2010). Critical questions have been raised concerning this convergence (Adamson, 2012; Delandshere & Petrosky, 2004). It is said for instance to have had negative consequences for teacher knowledge and decision-making (Reid & O'Donoghue, 2004; Sleeter, 2008) and for the possibilities of educating teachers as professionals who can critically reflect over, and control their educational practices through a research-based and shared scientific professional knowledge foundation (Apple, 2001; Beach & Bagley, 2012, 2013; Zeichner, 2010).

In the article we are concerned with changes in teacher education in one particular country, Sweden. The two policy tendencies

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [dennis.beach@ped.gu.se](mailto:dennis.beach@ped.gu.se) (D. Beach).

discussed above (i.e. the development of a unified profession with a common research based professional knowledge foundation followed by a return to a dualist knowledge base and age/grade-specific forms of professionalism) are shown to apply there. The article uses a meta-analysis of three long term ethnographic studies to explore this further. A systematic literature review of teacher education policy research as described by Depaepe, Verschaffel, and Kelchtermans (2013) was added to enable a comparison of international findings with our own and to draw out potentially trans-local and transnational tendencies and explore and highlight the complex ways in which international ideas and discourses for framing policy may play out. We have tried to establish if there are clear common paths, threads and/or conjunctions between different policy studies that could help form the foundations for an explicitly posited logic of association. Basil Bernstein's theories and concepts have been used in this analysis. We suggest and hopefully demonstrate the theoretical and analytical value of his work, not only for what is happening in Sweden, but also internationally.

## 2. The research context: teacher education in Sweden

Up until the mid-1980s teacher education in Sweden (Åstrand, 2006), as elsewhere (Karras & Wolhuter, 2010), primarily comprised two parallel traditions from the early part of the previous century: the elementary teacher education seminaries and grammar school teacher education (läroverkslärare). They created a divided profession (Jedemark, 2006) that recruited from different social classes and genders and formed different professional agendas and relations to State bureaucracy. Grammar school teachers taught older, middle and upper-middle class pupils. They had an occupational affiliation to both schools and universities and a dominant position in the education field based on cultural capital (Lindström-Nilsson & Beach, 2013), as is also described in international research (Karras & Wolhuter, 2010).

There had been several calls to reduce the divisions between the two professions in Sweden prior to the 1980s. One example was the 1948 School Commission Report (SOU 1948:27, 36) concerning the possibilities for a common unitary comprehensive school. This report identified the organizational and personal barriers created by teacher education as one of several obstacles for the comprehensive school project. The Commission therefore established a sub-committee called the Teachers College Delegation for investigating teacher education. The Delegation outlined a reorientation of teacher education in joint institutions for all categories of teachers, called Teacher Colleges. The example of school policy leading the development of teacher education policy is an international historical trend across all continents (Karras & Wolhuter, 2010).

Although many of the recommendations made by the Teacher College Delegation were instated by the government, many of the more radical of them, particularly those pertaining to unification through a unitary research-based professional knowledge foundation for all teacher categories, were not (Beach, 2011). These aims were instead strongly opposed, particularly by the Grammar School Teacher Association and right-wing political parties. Their assertion was that subject expertise formed the cognitive base for professional action and that a common professional education based on studies in subjects like psychology and pedagogy should only ever be a secondary factor, which should not be taught at the expense of subject knowledge as this risked watering down the academic content of teacher education and would be hazardous for quality and recruitment, as would any attempt to lengthen teacher training to incorporate this knowledge. The grammar school seemed to be trying to protect a knowledge monopoly and advantaged position in the education field (Lindström-Nilsson & Beach, 2013). The

support of comprehensive education and teacher education from the political left and its associates, and opposition to such projects from the right, seems to be both a national and an international policy conjuncture (Beach, 2011; Erixon Arreman, 2005; Karras & Wolhuter, 2010; Sjöberg, 2011).

Two later Inquiry Commissions (the 1960 *Teacher Education Expert Committee* and the 1974 *Teacher Education Inquiry*) followed up on how the recommendations from the Teacher College Delegation had developed in the Teacher Colleges (SOU 1965:29, 1978:86). They came with further suggestions regarding the development of a unitary profession, but it was first through the 1984 Teacher Education Reform Bill (Government Bill 1984/85:122) that a structure that included common courses for a unified profession was formally recommended (Beach, 1995, 2000; Eriksson, 2009). This was followed later by the report of the 1997 Teacher Education Committee (SOU 1999:63), which identified how the lack of a shared professional knowledge foundation (a shared cognitive base of professionalism) remained as a barrier to implementing scientifically based practices (Lindqvist, Nordängér & Carlsson, 2014). The subsequent Unitary Teacher Education Bill (Bill 2000/01:3) attempted to finally cement the notion of a unitary profession and common teacher education as official State policy.

The 2001 Bill concluded a 60 year long policy trajectory toward unification. It was broken in 2007 (Beach & Bagley, 2012, 2013) when the newly elected right-wing coalition government (from Sept 2006) commissioned a new teacher education inquiry called The Sustainable Teacher Education Commission (HUT 07: SOU, 2008:109), with a strict mandate to assess the viability of the unitary organisation of teacher education and suggest sustainable alternatives. Government Bill 2009/10:89 was developed from these main recommendations (Beach & Bagley, 2012; Player-Koro, 2012b; Sjöberg, 2011), which included a dual curriculum (Ahlström, 2008; Beach, 2011; Kallós, 2009). Professional unification was thus a very short-lived and contested political project (Lindström-Nilsson & Beach, 2013).

## 3. The research focus

We have been involved in ethnographic research about unification and its challenges for almost thirty years and the present article has developed from this research. Three academic theses have been important (Beach, 1995, 1997; Eriksson, 2009; Player-Koro, 2012b) but we have also drawn on other national and international studies. Nationally these include policy studies (Beach, 2011; Beach & Bagley, 2012, 2013), ethnographic articles (Beach, 1996, 1999, 2000; Beach & Player-Koro, 2012) and research by Åstrand (2006), Ahlström (2008), Erixon Arreman (2005), Jedemark (2006), Kallós (2009) and Sjöberg (2011). International research similar to our own was identified through systematic search procedures as described by Depaepe et al. (2013). Work by Adamson (2012), Delandshere and Petrosky (2004), Ellis et al. (2012), Sleeter (2008), Zeichner (2010) was identified. It suggested similar ideas, that certain common policy presuppositions can be identified regarding teacher education programmes in advanced knowledge-based economies and at the level of institutions (Hökkä et al., 2010) and that a recent ideological and rather unscientific policy process had emerged challenging these intentions (Reid & O'Donoghue, 2004) and the development of critically conscious and creative teaching professionals (Garm & Karlsen, 2004; Zeichner, 2010). This problem has also been discussed in other Scandinavian countries by Garm and Karlsen (2004), Rasmussen (2008) and Niemi (2008) and elsewhere by e.g. Apple (2001), Darling-Hammond (2006), Furlong (2005), Gore, Griffiths, and Ladvig (2004), Gore and Morrison (2001), Lauder, Brown, and Halsey (2009) and Lawn and Furlong (2009).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/373916>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/373916>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)