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**COMMON PRESSURES, SAME RESULTS?  
RECENT REFORMS IN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND  
COMPETENCES IN TEACHER EDUCATION FOR SECONDARY  
TEACHERS IN ENGLAND, FRANCE, AND GERMANY.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Over the last decade the introduction of professional standards and competences in Initial Teacher Education for Secondary teachers in England, France, and Germany has provided the cornerstone of education reform in all three countries. The precise number and specific content of a measurable set of skills for teachers has offered challenges for policy makers, teacher educators, student teachers, and teachers alike. The concept of standardised teacher education feeds into the idea that there is some convergence towards a uniform teacher ideal. An examination of the skills required of teachers in each of the three countries in this study reveals distinct education systems where path divergence is more evident.

**Key words:** teacher training, professionalisation, standards, competences, performance, England, France, Germany

## **INTRODUCTION**

It would be hard nowadays to imagine a teacher education system in England without a set of standards by which to measure teacher competence, as teacher trainers have had nearly a quarter of a century to become accustomed to its usage. Professional standards and competences for teachers are now at the core of teacher education reform in England, France, and Germany. This does not appear to have reduced or modified their distinctive teacher education systems, with each country providing an interesting picture of teacher education systems geared to their own national requirements, but it does raise at least three key questions:

Which common pressures related to teacher education have led to education reform?

Has each country reacted to the common pressures in a similar way?

Have education reforms in each country imposed similar constraints in the delivery of professional standards and competences for teachers?

France and Germany with their very different approaches to education rarely feature in current educational debates on new models of teacher education in England, as those found in Finland, Singapore and Shanghai seem to be the preferred comparators. However, they certainly merit our consideration (Whitty, 2014, p.479), and this paper sets out to correct that omission.

‘Reform’ of teacher education in this study is understood as Hall’s “second order” change beyond the marginal adjustment of existing measures (first order) but short of the “paradigm shift” fundamentally changing the design and philosophy (third order). He describes second order change as ‘altering the instruments of ...policy without radically altering the hierarchy of goals behind policy (Hall, 1993, pp. 281-2) and so it is this kind of reform that will be examined in this paper.

According to Groundwater-Smith, teachers’ standards are a ‘global phenomenon in Western societies in recent years,’ and a ‘physical manifestation of the managerial discourses which have infiltrated education in the past decade’. England is one of three national contexts (with the U.S.A, and Australia) in Groundwater-Smith’s study of how professional standards, linked to performance based pay for outstanding teachers, are part of a drive to ‘cure an ailing profession’ (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2009, pp.6 – 8). Whitty also sees the new teaching standards in England as a more prescribed part of an “official ‘national’ professionalism”. (Whitty, 2014, p.471). In Australia, Mayer refers to a ‘standards quagmire’, where

teaching standards created by Australia's state and territory education systems, and jurisdictions can 'buy in' to the national standards framework set up by Central Government (2003), resulting in a lack of alignment and coordination (Mayer, 2014, p. 468). As part of Groundwater-Smith's global phenomenon, in Finland Tirri argues that one of the professional challenges for Finnish teachers is the need for a set of 'competencies' for 'professional and ethical' teachers tailored to the moral dimension of their work in dealing with a rising number of immigrant students and children with learning difficulties (Tirri, 2014, p.15). Scotland's new independent General Teaching Council for Scotland (2012) has introduced three sets of new standards, one of which is for initial teacher education and induction, one for registered teachers so that they maintain their registration throughout their teaching career, and one for those who are in or wish to be in leadership positions. The Council has also introduced 'Professional Update' from 2014 to ensure 'professional learning and capability' and this includes teacher educators (Gray and Weir, 2014, p.580). In this way reforming teacher professionalism and development has been high on the agenda in Scotland (Kennedy et al., 2007, p. 60). These examples indicate the worldwide nature of the changes alluded to by Groundwater-Smith.

The European Commission's communication *Rethinking Education* (2012a) invited its Member States to review the academic and pedagogical quality of Initial Teacher Education as a priority (European Commission 2012a, p. 15). A framework of 'standards' for teaching is in keeping with the European Commission's concerns for all citizens to have the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Education Council of Ministers of Education in Europe is committed to improving teacher education, with ministers rec-

ognise that defining the profile of prospective teachers and school leaders is of paramount importance (European Commission, 2007, 2008, 2009). Reforming teacher education, according to the European Commission, needs to be:

founded upon a shared agreement in each education system about 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 – and what policies and practical provisions can support teachers to acquire and develop them throughout their careers (European Commission, 2013, p.5).

Throughout Europe teacher training systems are experiencing reform (Bauer and Prenzel 2012), driven by similar concerns: attracting teachers to the profession, student performance in global league tables of pupils' attainment, (OECD, 2000, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2013a, 2013b), and the impact of 'neo-managerialism' on education. Major reforms to Initial Teacher Training in secondary education have been introduced in England, France, and Germany over the last ten years. These can be seen, for example, in England, 'The Importance of Teaching' (DfE, 2010, pp.1-91), 'Training the Next Generation of Outstanding Teachers Implementation Plan', (DfE, 2011a, pp.3-17); in France, 'La Réfondation de l'École', (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale de l'Enseignement Supérieure et de la Recherche, MENE, 2013a); and in Germany, Standards für dieLehrerbildung: Bildungswissenschaften, (KMK, 2004).

The main influence on teacher training reform in the countries in this study have been the change in Government in England (2010), and in France (2012). Legislative changes to teacher education in England date back to 1984 with an emphasis which continues to be firmly placed on the practical side of the training. The striking feature of current teacher

education policy is the speed with which the English school system is being deregulated and the introduction of the School Direct programme (Beauchamp et al., 2013, p. 7). Similarly, since the Socialist Government took office in France a set of ‘micro reforms’ in education have been made, not all of which are progressive, in contrast to what could be best termed ‘macro reforms’ in other European countries (Collas, 2014a).

The Bologna Process, coupled with government concerns over the attainment levels of pupils in each country indicated by their place in global league tables of attainment, have influenced teacher education reform, particularly in France and Germany. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2000 to PISA 2006) published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2007), revealed that the United Kingdom, France, and Germany were among the countries scoring around the OECD average, with Korea and Finland outperforming all countries in reading and mathematics. The power of the results to drive through educational reforms is noted by Baird et al. (2011, p.3) in their report of the policy effects of PISA in one case-country region, and five case countries, including England and France.

The higher country-specific problem pressure (for example, demographic change, globalisation, and marketization) the more likely the convergence towards a recognised international model (Bieber & Martens, 2011, p.103). Loomis et al. refer to a 21<sup>st</sup> century process that includes standardisation, which results in systems of teacher education in the European Union (EU), and the United States of America (USA), converging into a model with ‘fewer qualitative distinctions’ (Loomis et al, 2008, p.233). Evidence of this underlies the way in which each country has responded to a pressing need for ‘quality’ teachers. Terms such as ‘high quality’, ‘quality’, ‘of the highest calibre’ pepper the recommendations of the

Education Council of Ministers of Education, who committed themselves on three occasions (European Union 2007, 2008, 2009) to high quality educational outcomes.

‘Quality’ here seems to have a specific meaning, as set out by The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) in 2008, when they described quality teachers as ‘equipped with the ability to integrate knowledge, handle complexity, and adapt to the needs of individual learners as well as groups’ (European Commission, 2013, p.7). The ‘quality’ of initial teacher education is seen as based on teachers’ knowledge, skills and commitment, and the quality of school leadership (European Commission, 2013, p. 8). The complexity of teaching appears to be lacking in such simplistic definitions, so creating more scope for cross national difference as they reflect different education traditions.

Raising the profile of the teaching profession through the introduction of a specified list of requirements for teaching may be an example of ‘cross-national’ similarity of education policies resulting from each country’s policy makers’ reacting to similar problems. On closer examination the introduction of teachers’ standards and competences in England, France, and Germany, shows that fundamental divergences are replicated. This ‘path divergence’ in educational reform is explained in Powell and Solga’s research as follows:

Instead of accepting the omnipresent convergence hypothesis, we follow Campbell, (2004) in understanding institutional change as ‘constrained innovation’ on the ground. Historically-evolved national educational and training systems will most likely react to exogenous pressures in ways largely consistent with their specific cultural and structural characteristics (Powell & Solga, 2010, p.711).

The concern of this paper is to examine how such cultural influences have characterised the ‘reforms’ in each of the three countries identified above.

## **METHOD**

The research in this study draws on documentary analysis, and relevant commentary on recent teacher education reform in England, France, and Germany. The data are drawn from publicly available documents on teacher education, professional standards and competences from respective government education departments, in addition to relevant documentation from the European Union, European Commission, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. The analysis has a two-fold purpose: first to provide an overview of common pressures identified in each country which have led to teacher education reform, and second, to provide a national context for the introduction of professional standards and competences, one of which selected from each country, as a ‘lens’ through which to consider constraints in teacher education reform.

In order to consider the ‘path divergence’ evidenced in teacher education reform in each of the three countries this study is divided into four sections: (1) Common pressures in each country influencing teacher education reform (2) The reaction of each country to common pressures resulting in teacher education reform in England, France, and Germany (3) The third section is further divided into two parts: (a) the national context for the introduction of the professional standards and competences, and (b) One standard or competence from each country to serve as an illustration with which to consider its effectiveness in mirroring constraints in the delivery of the standard or competence, and

providing evidence of ‘path divergence’. (4) Conclusion. Four common pressures leading to the reform of teacher education in England, France, and Germany are identified as professionalisation, the Bologna Process, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and teacher recruitment.

## ***1. Common Pressures***

### *Professionalisation*

According to Musset, in her study on current teacher education practices in OECD countries, the emergence of teacher professionalisation arose as a response to the short-comings of traditional teacher education courses. Teacher preparation must take into account the changing role of the teacher, and the emphasis placed on new technologies. A set of standards for professional practice is one of the main components in a teacher education model which ‘reinforces education as a real career and to assure the preparation of academic leaders’. Globally, ‘professionalisation’, according to Musset, has had a positive effect on teacher education due to among other factors, tighter entry requirements for initial teacher education, extended duration and transfer of initial education to higher education. In Europe this has been supported by The Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications (European Commission, 2005) created to aid the development of policies in teacher education at a national or regional level (Blandford, 2014). According to Loomis et al., these Principles’ emphasis on coherence, continuity and alignment has led to the loss of ‘certain principles, freedoms, preferences and convictions that individual colleges, universities and their faculties may find important’ (Loomis et al., 2008, p.237).

This loss of autonomy is referred to in Evans' study on teacher professionalism in England, and is equated with a dilution of professionalism. Evans defines a 'lop-sided' professionalism in England, shaped by central government and mainly focused on what teachers do, not on how they think. Skills and competences are key to this 'performative' professionalism (Evans, 2011, p. 861), with Alexander pointing to the nonsensical nature of trying to use a reductionist measure of children's creative and emotional development in terms of skills, by asking 'through the shedding of precisely how many tears for a suffering fellow-human is the emotional 'skill' of empathy measured and judged satisfactory?' (Alexander, 2008, p. 7)

The concept of competency is open to interpretation: De Juanas Oliva et al. in their comparative study of the evaluation of professional competencies by experienced and trainee Spanish primary teachers highlighted the difficulty in understanding and assessing the 'task characteristic' of the competency (knowledge and skills) and the 'personal characteristics' of the competency (motives or attitudes), and the strategies or 'sub-competencies' required to be prove competence in 'increasingly complex contexts' (De Juanas Oliva et al., 2009, p. 439). The limitations of a competency or standards-based model in evaluating the complexity of teacher education are raised in a study of teacher educators' perspectives of the standards for trainee teachers in Physical Education in Ireland. Quality assurance, compliance, and the elimination of 'poor practice' are some of the key issues linked to the positive or negative impact, or both, on the implementation of the Beginning Teacher Standards for Physical Education (BTSfPE) in Ireland, and whether the standards can 'serve a developmental and regulatory function simultaneously' (Ni Chróinín et al., 2012, pp 262,269).

Despite these problems standards, skills, and competences are an integral part of the ‘professionalisation’ of teaching in England, France, and Germany. According to Lipsky’s study on the place of the individual in public services such as schools, termed ‘street-level bureaucracies’, standards of performance are directly influenced by public policy which pays higher salaries to make the job more attractive ‘to a more educated class of people, improving and subsidizing pre-professional training through universities, overseeing certification through professional boards to insure minimum standards, and making promotion and advancement dependent, at least superficially, on meeting professional standards of performance’ (Lipsky, 1980, p. 202). For Whitty this notion dates back to the 1950s, rooted in sociological discourse on professionalism and what it means for a job to be described as a profession, in that ‘Moving to ‘full’ professional status was seen as part of an aspiring occupation’s ‘professional project’ and this has been applied to the strategy of teachers in many countries’ (Whitty, 2006, p.3).

In France ‘Professionalisation’ has been criticised for its emphasis on skills and performance. According to Stroobants, professionalism used to be defined by the accumulation of knowledge which conferred the right to exercise a profession. It is now defined by a set of competences with defined objectives and an anticipated performance in the skill areas. Losego terms this ‘un genre de kan-ban des savoirs professionnels...’ (*a kind of ‘kan-ban’ of professional knowledge*) using the Japanese industrial concept of ‘kan-ban’ to compare this approach with the Toyota management model based on the principle of piloting production using controls aimed at reducing waste (Stroobants, 1993a cited in Losego, 1999, p. 142). Professionalisation has not led to ‘substantial structural modifications in the teacher education context’. As teacher education programmes have become more flexible with the possibility of training to be a teacher on a part-time course, or on a short intensive

programme, there is an increasing demand for professionalization and a higher level of teacher quality. (Musset, 2009, pp. 18-19, p. 36).

England, France, and Germany have adopted a teacher education model designed for teacher professionalisation, which generally incorporates between one and two and half years of practical training post-university degree. The Teachers' Standards for use in schools in England from September 2012 defines the minimum level of practice expected of trainees and teachers from the point of being awarded qualified teacher status (QTS), (DfE, 2011, pp. 3-14). In France the 'Référentiel des compétences professionnelles des métiers du professorat et de l'éducation' provides a list of competences expected of teachers at the point of their training and throughout their career. (MENE, 2013b, pp.1-7). In Germany the standards (KMK, 2004, pp.1-14) are defined as 'a hierarchy of competences' at the end of the first university-based study phase and at the end of the second primarily school-based preparatory and induction phase. The standards result from a 'comprehensive picture of the central duties and necessary competences of teachers and describe, in concrete terms, which competences and skills are expected from qualified teachers.' (Kotthoff and Terhart, 2013, p.84). Redefining the teaching profession in France, and Germany in particular has been heavily influenced by the Bologna Process, and the introduction of the Bologna degree structure.

### *The Bologna Process*

In 1998 France, Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany signed the Sorbonne Declaration on the harmonisation of the architecture of the European Higher Education System. In 1999 Ministers of Education from 29 European countries signed the Bologna Declaration which aimed to create a coherent and cohesive European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010.

The introduction of the recommended Bologna degree structure: Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate (the UK model) was not straightforward.

According to Furlong, the European Union's (EU) 'big four' played an important role in the follow-up to the signed intergovernmental agreement. To a considerable extent the Bologna Process was 'dominated by French and German concerns', one of which was, as Furlong states, UK quality assurance mechanisms, relying on the 'reporting and inspection of teaching and learning output'. Europe on the other hand relies on 'measurement of student learning hours and staff teaching hours'. (Furlong, 2005, p.60). Despite the lack of alignment within different education systems, Sursock & Smidt's report on a decade of change in European Higher Education highlights the fact that a majority of institutions have implemented the Bologna degree structure: Bachelor level, masters level, and doctoral level, from 53% of institutions in 2003 to 95% of institutions in 2010. (Sursock & Smidt, 2010, p.35).

The harmonisation of higher education and the Bologna Process impacted on teacher education with the introduction of a masters degree as part of a teacher's qualification, and 'professionalising' the training with the introduction of teaching 'Standards'. The introduction of a masters degree to the teaching qualification in England, France and Germany is different in each country: In England, New Labour's plan to make teaching a masters level profession has not been implemented under the Coalition Government which took office in 2010. Most teaching courses, school, or 'other provider' based provision have masters level modules providing credits towards a masters degree, but this higher qualification is optional. However, in France a masters degree is an integral part of the qualification for teaching ( Lapostolle & Chevaillier, p. 453, 2011).

In Germany, most of the sixteen 'Laender' have moved to the consecutive model of teacher education: BA followed by MA courses, or they are in a process of change (Kotthoff & Terhart, 2013, p.83). The 'upgrading' of the teaching profession with the introduction of a masters degree (in France and Germany) and masters level modules with credits towards a masters degree (England) has contributed to the notion of teachers needing to be highly qualified, with excellent teaching skills for their changing roles and expectations of them.

High on the agenda of recent guidance and advice from the European Commission is teacher 'quality' which recognises the complex tasks of teaching in multicultural classrooms, using ICT effectively in their lessons, integrating pupils with special needs, engaging in accountability and evaluation procedures, and involving parents in schools. For the OECD, Europe's six million teachers must have the essential competences to teach effectively in the classroom and to continue to develop them during their teaching careers in a fast-changing world. An important addition to this list of abilities is a guarantee of their students' progress and performance in the league tables (European Commission, 2013, p.7).

### *PISA*

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is part of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). PISA has been conducted every three years in all OECD countries and beyond to test scientific, reading, and mathematical literacy, and problem solving abilities. The OECD recommendations for secondary education policy-making are drawn from the PISA results, concentrating on factors that were positively correlated with student performance in the PISA studies. High quality teacher training (*sic*) is one of eight core aims for countries to achieve in order to optimise their education systems:

for example, one recommendation supports more rigorous procedures for the selection of trainee teachers in order to increase teachers' qualifications and social status (OECD, 2009, in Bieber & Martens, 2011, pp.101-104).

The influence of PISA on education reform is demonstrated in the reaction of the German government to the results of the student assessment in 2000 which showed that the performance of the German school system was significantly lower than that of other OECD countries. This raised serious public concerns about pupils' attainment in German schools. PISA helped to accelerate the pace of a reform backed by politicians, educational experts, and industrial leaders in Germany calling for a radical redefinition of the profile of the teaching profession (Halász et al., 2004, p.7).

PISA 2012 is the programme's fifth survey. Competences of 15 year-olds in reading, mathematics and science (with a focus on mathematics) in 65 countries and economies were assessed. Around 510,000 students participated in PISA 2012 representing about 28 million 15 year-olds globally ([www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results.htm](http://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results.htm) accessed online 31/1/14). In 2012 PISA results for Germany showed its multi-tiered secondary school system gives rise to variation in performance between schools, which is higher than the OECD average. Despite extensive education reforms since 2002 performance variation between and within schools has not changed significantly since 2003. PISA data for France shows an education system which is more unequal in 2012 than it was nine years earlier. Performance in mathematics varies in each country participating in PISA according to the students' socio-economic background, and France shows the widest variation of results. Similarly the PISA results for the UK in 2012 show the influence of socio-economic status on student performance has not been as successfully reduced as in other participating countries (OECD,

2013a, 2013b, BBC, 2013). A serious concern for government education departments continues to be a shortage of teachers in some subject areas.

### *Teacher Recruitment*

Attracting more people into teaching has been a major concern for all three countries in this study where the teaching workforce is ageing, and where there are shortages in core subject areas. The OECD report by Halász et al. in 2004 on teacher recruitment and retention in Germany states that the call for a radical redefinition of the teaching profession in Germany was backed by the German organisation of employers (Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände – BDA) desiring a teaching profession to be made more attractive to ‘creative, highly motivated and enterprising people’. This report also highlights the contrast between the teaching needs of the sixteen ‘Laender’ which constitute the German federation. The new Laender, for example, Brandenburg, had a surplus of teachers as a result of a fall in birth rates and migration to the western Laender.

Key data on Education in Europe published in 2012 highlights a lack of teachers for core subjects and other school subjects in Germany, with the most strongly represented age group in teaching being over 50 years. In Germany more than 5% of teachers continue to work beyond the official retirement age (Eurydice, 2012, p.14). Since 2001/02 the official retirement age and/or the minimum retirement age with full pension entitlement has increased in around a third of all European countries. In France the Government promised 40,000 new teaching posts in 2013, 13,000 more than in 2012. This was in part related to the Socialist Government’s electoral promise of 60,000 posts, and in part, completely, rather than partially (as happened under the former Government led by Nicolas Sarkozy), to cover the loss of teachers retiring from the profession (Baumard, 2012).

To attract teachers to shortage subject areas in England there are generous financial incentives. For those who train in 2015-16 in shortage subject areas, depending on degree classification, this ranges between £25,000 and £12,000 (DfE, 2014b, p.1). In addition there are salaried school-based training courses with the possibility for trainees in maths, physics and computing to earn between £21,000 and £25,000 (DfE, 2014b, p.1).

The problems associated with an ageing teaching profession are common in all three countries: Halász et al. reported large numbers of teachers in Germany recruited during the great expansion period of the 1960s and 1970s were close to retirement. The School Workforce Census data published in April 2011 shows the teaching profession in England is predominantly female, white, and aged over 50. Although women also make up the majority of teachers in France they count for just under three out of every five teachers at secondary level, and in most of the ninety-six 'départements' of metropolitan France, make up over half of the secondary workforce (Page, 2012, p.2).

Mass demonstrations in England and France over teachers' pay and conditions took place in 2011. In England teachers protested at the Government's proposal that teachers should pay more into their pension scheme and work for longer and the effect this would have on teacher recruitment (Shepherd, 2011). In France teachers protested at the 16,000 job cuts in education written into the Government's budget (Bossard et Descamps, 2011).

## **2. The Reaction to the Common Pressures Which Resulted in Teacher Education Reform**

Reactions of the three countries to the common pressures identified above have resulted in education reform, centred on teacher education. Major differences in the political landscape in each country and its impact on teacher education reform merit a brief explanation. In May 2010 a Coalition Government took office in the United Kingdom (UK). In their 'Programme for Government' this coalition led by the Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron, and the Liberal Democrat Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, stated their intention to tackle educational inequality by improving the quality of the teaching profession. The Schools White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching* (2010) set out the Government's plan for teacher education with a clear emphasis on school-based training, with the strongest schools taking the lead, based on the model of best hospitals training new doctors and nurses (DfE, 2010, p.3). 'School direct' was launched by the Government in 2012, a new system allowing schools to control access to funding for ITE, placing schools in the 'driving seat' and universities were encouraged to participate in ever more integrated, university-school partnerships (DfE, 2011, p.11).

In May 2012, a Socialist Government took office in France. François Hollande became the first Socialist President in twenty years. In his letter (26 June 2012) to all those involved in education, Vincent Peillon, Minister for Education 2012-2014, at the time, set out the aims of the new education reform which would include improving educational attainment, success for all pupils, and reducing the number of students leaving school with no qualifications. This major reform, drawing on examples of successful training systems from other countries, would address the number of posts in education cut by the previous government and totally reform teacher education. Education reform would be the cornerstone of socialist reform in France (MENE, 2012a).

There have been fewer education reforms in Germany and this can be attributed to the relative stability of its institutions and its high economic performance until the early 1990s. In West Germany the education system remained more or less the same for a long period. Re-unification of the country reinforced this stability as the eastern Laender adopted the western model of education. Teacher policy in Germany is determined by the governance of its education system and linked to the organisation and structure of the school systems in the different 'Laender'. Germany is a federal country with teacher education not a federal issue as it is organised and controlled by the sixteen 'Laender'. The 'Basic Law' in the German Constitution provides the 'Laender' with almost full jurisdiction in educational matters (Halász et al., 2004, p.10; Kotthoff & Terhart, 2013, p.75).

The heterogeneity of teacher education programmes within the sixteen 'Laender' led to the development of the teachers' standards first introduced in 2000 by the 'Mixed Commission for Teacher Education' and passed by the Kulturministerkonferenz, the 'Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs' (KMK, 2004). One of the most remarkable reforms of teacher education in Germany has been the introduction of the standards for teaching in 2004, a 'hierarchy of competences' linking the university-based study phase, the school-based preparatory phase, and the induction phase (Kotthoff & Terhart, 2013, p.76).

*Teacher Education Reform in England (2011), France (2013), and Germany (2004)*

### *England*

The Coalition Government's plans for education reform in the Schools' White Paper (2010), *The Importance of Teaching*, places the teacher 'at the heart' of reform. The 'fierce urgency'

of the reform is based on the Government's vision of the teacher 'as our society's most valuable asset'. The Government planned to reform teacher education by increasing the proportion of time trainees spend in the classroom, focusing on core teaching skills (DfE, 2010, p.9). The following year Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, at the time stated in the implementation plan for 'Training our next generation of outstanding teachers':

In the initial teacher training strategy we cited the strong evidence that links teacher quality above all other factors to pupils' attainment. We set an ambition that England should match the best performing countries in the world in the quality of teachers that it recruits. (DfE, 2011a, p.4)

Effective practice in teacher education and development would require a strong focus on school-based training, working with other teachers to develop effective practice, to be observed, reflect and teach with other teachers. A review of the thirty-three standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) to ensure a stronger focus on key elements of teaching were central to the Government's plan for reform, in addition to introducing Training and Teaching Schools, and more school-based training (DfE, 2010, pp.26–27). The revised Teachers' Standards was published by the Department for Education, 2011 (DfE, 2011b, pp.3-14). Beauchamp et al., view English Standards and current Government policy as part of a major shift away from the idea of teaching as a research-based profession and towards the 'construction of teaching as a craft', influenced by ideological agendas. According to these authors, in England, there is a marked divergence from the rest of the UK with the ITE Standards from 2012 being predominantly skills-based, and less of an intellectual pursuit. This contrasts with teacher education systems in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales, where issues surrounding devolved governments and national identity have influenced the balance between research-informed and practical knowledge in ITE policy (Beauchamp et al.,

2013, pp.1-8). Given this variety it is not surprising that Kennedy, for example, in referring to the different priorities in the professional standards in each of the four jurisdictions of the UK, should identify a need for a more precise, detailed definition of their value (Kennedy, 2013).

### *France*

Recent reform set out to redress criticism levelled at education over a number of years, a loss of confidence in the education system, and the swingeing job cuts under the former conservative government. The main objective of the reform was to address inequalities in the education system to enable all pupils to succeed. Teacher education is one of the key changes in this reform taking place in the newly established École Supérieures du Professor et de l'Éducation (ESPE) which replace the Institut Universitaire de Formation Maître (IUFM). The introduction of a new masters level qualification for teachers, the Métiers de l'Enseignement, de l'Éducation et de la Formation (MEEF) has a strong emphasis on a coherent programme of theory and practice in both years of training. Its importance to pupil attainment and success at school is exemplified in the following statement:

*La formation des enseignants est un facteur déterminant de la réussite éducative et scolaire. Toutes les études montrent en effet que les progrès d'un élève dépendent de manière significative de la qualité de la formation reçue par le professeur auquel il est confié (MENE, 2012a). (The training of teachers is a determining factor in being successful at school. All the studies show that a pupil's progress depends to a significant degree on the quality of the training the pupil's teacher received)*

The government's promise in enabling all pupils to succeed is backed by their quality guarantee of a revised set of teacher competences ensuring the teaching profession concur with a set of common objectives (MENE, 2013b).

### *Germany*

PISA helped to accelerate the pace of reform backed by politicians, educational experts, and industrial leaders in Germany calling for a radical redefinition of the profile of the teaching profession (Halász et al 2004, p. 7). Teacher education reform has been high on the education agenda for over a decade driven by the Bologna Process, and the introduction of a ‘consecutive’ model in Higher Education, ‘standardisation’ reforms (KMK, 2004, 2008), and a commitment to graduate employment. The advantages of a new teacher education programme for Vocational Education (TVET) are identified in one German University as new opportunities for flexibility in considering career options, shorter study periods, in addition to the enhancement of practical training and internationalisation of degree programmes (Bünning & Shilela, 2006, p.22).

One of the main advantages of the introduction of the standards for teaching in Germany has been the inclusion of school development and self-evaluation in teacher education. Linking the University based study part of teacher education with the school-based practical elements resulted in each of the sixteen ‘Laender’ having the same set of Teacher Standards as part of a drive to harmonize teacher education across all the ‘Laender’ (Kotthoff and Terhart, 2013, p.84).

### **3 (a) Standards and Competences in England, France, and Germany: National Context**

The following sets of standards are referred to in this section: England, the *Teachers’ Standards Guidance for school leaders, school staff and governing bodies July 2011*

(introduction updated June 2013) (HMSO, 2003, DfE, 2011). France : the *Référentiel des compétences professionnelles des métiers du professorat et de l'éducation BO No. 30 du 25 juillet 2013*. This 'référentiel' is based on the definition of the notion of 'competence' and this is contained in the European Parliament's recommendation 2006/962/CE, applicable from 1 September 2013. In Germany, they are the *Standards Lehrerbildung 12.12.04 Resolution of the Standing Conference of 16.12.2004*. The Federation of Germany has sixteen regions which are self-governing, called 'Laender' in the plural, 'Land' in the singular. The 'Standards' define the requirements of the Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (KMK) which teachers have to meet in each 'Land'.

In England and Germany, the introduction of teachers' standards, and in France the introduction of teachers' competences, was founded on each country's commitment to improving education for all pupils and the firm belief that this would be created by a 'quality' teaching force, whose teaching ability could be measured and assessed throughout a professional career. The standards in each country are statutory. They mirror their respective education systems, and are bound by them, culturally and structurally. For example, in England, student teachers and teachers are required by law to promote British values (DfE, 2014c); in France one of the responsibilities of teacher trainers in the IUFM, now ESPE, is to ensure future teachers master the teaching skills required by the Ministry of Education in France (Lapostolle et al., 2009, p.210). This duty is bound by the requirements of teachers in France, as civil servants, actively to promote the values of the French Republic: Liberty, Fraternity, Equality, and 'laïcité': the refusal of all discrimination, in their teaching career. The first 'compétence' for all education personnel in France, is 'Faire partager les valeurs de la République' (*Stand by the values of the Republic*) (MENE, 2013b, p.2).

In Germany, the drive for more harmonisation in teacher education between the sixteen Laender produced the introduction of teachers' standards applicable for all student teachers and teachers (KMK, 2004). In Germany the Standards *Lehrerbildung* 12.12.04 Resolution of the Standing Conference of 16.12.2004 define the KMK requirements which all teachers have to meet in each 'Land', relating to skills, abilities, and attitudes required for the job of being a teacher. Four years after the introduction of the teachers' standards, the 'German Society of Education' published an obligatory core curriculum for educational studies within teacher education, followed by the KMK document on subjects and subject didactics which consists of definitions of obligatory contents which apply to teacher education in all sixteen 'Laender'. (KMK, 2008, cited in Kotthoff & Terhart, 2013, p. 85)

In England student teacher competences were replaced with the *Standards for Qualified Teacher Status* in 1998. In 2003 the 'Standards' set out in Circular 4/98 were replaced with a new set of rigorous expectations termed 'Standards' which set out the minimum legal requirement expected of those training to be teachers (Schedule 2 of The Education (School Teachers' Qualifications) (England) Regulations 2003). These Standards replaced the standards for qualified teacher status (QTS) and the core professional standards published by the former Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA); and the General Teaching Council for England's Code of Conduct and Practice for Registered Teachers. Following the recommendations in the reports of the independent Review of Teachers' Standards the Department for Education has produced a revised set of Teachers' Standards used to assess all trainees working towards QTS and those completing their statutory induction period, in addition to teachers in post (DfE, 2011, pp. 3-14).

In France the content and structure of teacher training came under review in 1989 when Daniel Bancel, Recteur d'Académie, presented his proposal for a new teacher education system to Lionel Jospin, the Minister for Education (Ministère d'État, Ministère d'Éducation Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports). Bancel set out recommendations for a new kind of teacher education institution, integrated into the universities, and one of the key features of the proposal was the introduction of a set of six teacher competences directly related to the practice of teaching. The competences were intended to be used as a guide not as a constraint by teacher trainers, so as to avoid exclusive methodological approaches (Bancel, 1989, Chap. 1).

The language of the teachers' standards or competences in the three countries in this study exemplify a 'plain language' approach in their descriptors and follow the European Commission's guidance on 'putting teacher competences into words' using language 'in which teachers can recognise themselves and their school reality (European Commission, 2013, p. 30). They are essentially statements of what must be known, understood, and 'do-able' in order to be a teacher, which might appear to be straightforward. Given the mixture of task-related and person-related items within them, their assessment, according to Harrison who examined the language of one of the English Standards, can be inconsistent. For example, how can professional judgements be made consistently on how gentle, sympathetic, responsible, and socially aware a teacher is? This may depend on the school in which a trainee teacher is placed as part of their training, and on the judgements of a number of people responsible for the training received (Harrison, 2006, pp. 449-450).

### **3 (b) Constraints considered through the ‘lens’ of one selected standard and competence from each country**

In this section major constraints on meeting one of the set of professional standards and competencies for teacher education in England, France, and Germany, respectively, are considered. Selecting one standard, skill or competence from each country provides a ‘lens’ with which to consider their implications in the context of teacher education in each of the three countries. Standard 3, (England), Competence 3, (France), and Kompetenz 4, (Germany) are similar in their focus on the importance of the job of teaching, and knowing how pupils learn; success in demonstrating proficiency in the standard or competence for a student teacher is predicated on the quality of initial teacher education. In this respect they provide a ‘snapshot’ of the current teacher education landscape in each country, and a view of the impact of the ‘national variable’ on ‘teaching to’ and ‘meeting’ the standard or competence.

All three countries demonstrate a variety of approaches in defining their requirements for teaching and this appears to be in keeping with the European Commission’s guidance and advice for Member States on supporting teacher competence development (European Commission, 2013, pp 21-23). In Germany the ‘Standards Lehrerbildung’ are specifically for student teachers: They are divided into three parts: the standards for teacher education, areas of expertise, and the competences or skills required of a teacher which have theoretical and practical elements. In France the ‘competences’ set out in the ‘Référentiel’ have fourteen competences common for all teachers including student teachers, and a set of five specific competences for references to primary school teachers, and secondary school teachers in different types of schools providing academic education or technical or vocational education. In England the Teachers’ Standards Guidance for school leaders, school staff and governing

bodies July 2011 and updated June 2013, comprises eight Standards: Part One comprises the standards for Teaching, Part Two comprises the Standards for Personal and Professional Conduct.

### ***England***

*Standard 3 (Part One) of the Standards for teachers in England ‘ Teaching, A teacher must (3) demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge’ (DfE, 2011, p.11).*

The language in each Standard and each bulleted subsection of the Standard is that of a manual, or a set of instructions. The vocabulary used in the Standards is not technical although some words are better understood by those involved in education, for example, 'curriculum areas', systematic synthetic phonics', 'out-of-class activities', 'English as an Additional Language'. Standard 3 in Part One of the Standards for Teachers in England, has five subsections which serve to ‘amplify’ this Standard, three of which apply to Secondary teachers, and two to Primary teachers. Teachers must ‘have a secure knowledge of the relevant subject(s) and curriculum areas, foster and maintain pupils’ interest in the subject and address misunderstandings’, be able to develop ‘a critical understanding of developments in the subject and curriculum areas’ and promote ‘the value of scholarship’.

To a large extent a secondary teacher’s subject knowledge is determined by their ‘degree’ classification: The academic qualification required to apply for teacher education (secondary) in England which is either University-led or school-led, is a degree awarded by a UK Higher Education provider or recognised equivalent qualification. The minimum requirement for teaching is a 2:2 (the highest degree classification is a ‘first’, and the lowest, a ‘third’; the second degree classification is either a 2 :1 or 2 :2). According to Childs, a key

feature of the Coalition Government's education policies is the need to attract a more diverse applicants into teaching with higher levels of subject knowledge and to provide teachers, and teacher educators with opportunities to pursue masters and doctorates in their chosen subject to deepen their subject knowledge. One of the main constraints for this initiative is that there is no clear explanation of how this will be achieved (Childs, 2013, p. 320).

A high level of subject knowledge is fundamental to promoting 'the value of scholarship' and gaps in subject knowledge are currently filled by 'Subject Knowledge Enhancement' courses: The Department for Education in England recognises that applicants for teaching may not have sufficient subject knowledge to begin their teacher education course for a number of reasons, which include studying for a degree related to the subject they will teach but not an exact match, and having a languages degree but needing a second language at an acceptable level for schools. The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) fund 'Subject Knowledge Enhancement' (SKE) courses in maths, physics, chemistry, computing, design and technology, and languages (NCTL, 2014, p.1). The annual report on the evaluation of SKE courses for 2011 to 2012 reveals that the majority of students who had completed SKE courses are confident teaching pupils up to the age of 16 and less confident teaching post-16 (Gibson et al., DfE, 2013, p.12). The new national curriculum, which came into effect in September 2014 will create demands on teachers' subject knowledge as its focus is to improve pupils' learning in core subjects, and across the curriculum (DfE, 2014a, p.4, DfE, 2014d, 3:3.1).

### ***France***

*Competence 3: 'Connaître les élèves et les processus d'apprentissage' (MENE, 2013b, p.2).  
(teachers) know their pupils and understand how pupils' learning takes place*

'Competence 3' has for its focus the skills and attributes required of all teachers including student teachers in understanding process of learning, the fundamental concepts of child psychology, the adolescent, and the young adult, the process and mechanisms of learning, taking into account its links with the cognitive, affective, and relational dimensions of education and teaching. (MENE, 2013b, p.2 accessed online [www.education.gouv.fr](http://www.education.gouv.fr) 6/5/14). The language is concrete, and the phrases are short and concise.

One of the major constraints in the most recent education reform is the intensity of the teacher education programme: The cornerstone of a teaching qualification in France is the competitive examination, the 'concours', which serves to select and recruit trainee teachers. This examination coupled with the introduction of a masters programme, and a research requirement, all of which must be delivered by a range of education specialists with diverse sets of interests has contributed to a complex system of teacher training and an intense two year training period.

The theoretical and practical elements of 'Competence 3' are delivered by the training provider, the ESPE, and the school in which the trainee teacher is placed. To understand how student teachers 'meet' 'Competence 3', merits an explanation. The introduction of the IUFM in 1991 and its masters qualification, according to a damning report in *Le Monde* did not produce better teachers or raise pupil attainment. The impact of 'masterisation' showed an expenditure of 369.7 million euros with around 24% of trainee teacher teachers placed in schools without a supervising tutor, and 73% judging their training to be unsuited to their needs. The IUFM was blamed for France's mediocre performance in international league

tables of pupil performance, for recruiting fewer teachers and a lowering of standards in trainee teacher examinations, calling France's teacher training system a complete failure (Baumard, 2012).

In order to exercise 'Competence 3' a trainee teacher needs to demonstrate professional knowledge, teaching skills, an understanding of child psychology and development, and the ability to link research to practice, an element introduced into teacher training when teacher training institutions joined the universities in the early 1990s. The professional knowledge required for classroom practice which includes an understanding of child psychology and development is not related to the subjects taught at secondary school. This 'transversal training' is multidisciplinary, drawing on sociology, psychology, history and philosophy (Lapostolle et al., 2009, p.208). Trainee teachers must prepare for the 'concours', a competitive examination for recruitment to teaching, in addition to studying for their professional training, and their training in research in order to qualify. (Lapostolle et Chevaillier, 2011, p.457).

The inequalities of France's education system highlighted in the most recent PISA data have led to the re-introduction of new education action zones from September 2015 to reduce the wide variations in scholarly success. One of France's national priorities is tackling the problem of students who have disengaged from school. Nearly 140,000 young people leave school each year without a qualification. Deficiencies identified in the French education system include fewer teachers than in other countries varying their teaching according to their students' abilities, trainee teachers more expert in theory than in practice, a lack of collegiality within schools, and no in-depth education reforms (Collas, 2014).

A national strategy set up by the Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, and the Minister for Education, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, which is already in place, requires a concerted effort and joined-up approach from all staff involved in teaching at secondary level for the next three years. This includes a raft of measures to support disengaged students who return to school, and raising awareness of the benefits of career guidance programmes within school. Disengagement from learning has been blamed on assessment which is currently one of the major education debates in France (MENE, 2014). A recent study on assessment indicates that more coherent links between assessment and teaching, and instruments for assessment and assessment objectives are required in primary and secondary education in France (Houchot et al., 2013, p.31). Students' personal record of achievement in a prescribed set of competencies throughout compulsory schooling has also been held up for scrutiny (Hazard et al., 2012, p.7).

Since 2012 student teachers, and teachers in France have experienced a wide range of government directives which include measures to support transition from primary to secondary school, using differentiation in teaching to support less able students, and inclusion (MENE, 2012b). Constraints on meeting required standards in teacher education have already arisen from the organisation of school-based elements of the training, and insufficient placements (Lapostolle et Chevaillier, 2011, p.455). A recent national report from the French inspectorate (8 October, 2014) in *Le Monde* highlights further constraints with the real lack of partnership between school and university tutors, terming it 'un choc de cultures' (*cultural shock*) (Collas, *Le Monde*, 2014).

### ***Germany***

Kompetenz 4:Lehrerinnen und Lehrer kennen die sozialen und kulturellen Lebensbedingungen von Schülerinnen und Schülern und nehmen im Rahmen der Schule Einfluss auf deren individuelle Entwicklung (KMK, 2004, p.9) (*Standard: Teachers practice their job of teaching. Competence 4: Teachers know the social and cultural backgrounds of their pupils and have an understanding of the influence of school context on their pupils' development*).

The 'Standards Lehrerbildung' defines the KMK requirements for all teachers in all sixteen German 'Laender'. The standards are regarded as a key element in securing the development and the quality of the education system. Within the standards are eleven sets of competences divided into theoretical and practical skills and headed by four 'areas of competence':

Teaching; Educating; Assessing; Innovating. Teacher training in Germany is in two phases, the first geared to the acquisition of academic subject knowledge, and subject methodology, and the second, more practical with an emphasis on preparation for teaching. This second phase lasts between one and a half and two years when future teachers' competences are evaluated by teacher trainers or head teachers in training schools. A distinction is made between standards, and skills or competences, the language is concrete and easily understood, sentences are short, and the examples are concise. The theoretical requirement for this competence is to know the pedagogical, sociological, and psychological theories of child development, how children are socialised, and the measures that can be taken to support disadvantaged pupils. Teachers should also know of the impact of gender on educational outcomes and child development. The practical elements of 'Kompetenz' 4 require future teachers to be able to identify discrimination, know of the available educational support and preventative measures. Teachers should also know how to provide individual support and consider cultural and social diversity in any class. Chambers' study of two German trainees' reflections on teacher education in England highlights the difference in approach to

assessment: in England it takes the form of continuous assessment, in Germany, the weight of assessment is on the written examination (Chambers, 2007, p. 13), and in this respect, it is similar to France.

Constraints in teacher education in Germany arise from the tensions that exist between the University and Teaching School, and the demands of social integration policies: Student teachers in Germany during their University-based training take classes in educational studies and this includes school pedagogy, educational psychology, philosophy and/or sociology of education). The ‘professionalisation’ of teacher education according to Kotthoff and Terhart

presents a challenge of the self-image of German Universities, traditionally focused on the transmission of academic subject knowledge (science) rather than the direct and practical preparation for a professional career. (Kotthoff & Terhart, 2013, p.85)

This view is reinforced by Bosse who indicates that a ‘high-quality, university-based’ teacher education must accumulate ‘knowledge for storage’ and ‘well-dosed’ action situations to develop professional competences (Bosse, 2012: 22, cited in Kotthoff & Terhart, 2013, p. 85). The link between theory and praxis was expected to be stronger post Bologna in teacher training for Vocational Education. According to one study this development was not being evidenced (Bünning & Shilela, 2006, p.22). The importance of subject knowledge specialization over teaching skills is reported in a study by Schwille and Dembélé: ‘secondary school teachers are prepared to think of themselves as ‘mathematicians’, i.e. as people who do mathematics, and do not identify themselves as teachers different from ‘real’ mathematicians’ (Sigrid Bloemeke, 2004 cited in Schwille and Dembélé, 2007, p.63).

Social integration has posed challenges for German schools and teachers. One of the questions raised by PISA reported in one OECD report was the capacity of the school system to respond to the needs of a very diverse school population. In this 2004 report there were 7.3 million foreign-born people living in Germany. A mother tongue which was not German coupled with comparatively low educational attainment for the children born to foreign born parents led to key policies aimed at fighting social exclusion (National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion 2003-5, 2003). As the authors of the report point out: 'The nature and scope of any educational change may be directly influenced by the increasing fragility of social peace' (Halász et al., 2004, p.9). According to recent PISA data, between 2003 and 2012, differences in socio-economic status between disadvantaged and advantaged students, and between students with an immigrant background and non-immigrants, relating to mean performance in mathematics, has narrowed, and may be partly due to students' changing social and demographic profile. However Germany does have one of the highest rates of grade repetition which means providing an extra year of education to help students achieve, among OECD countries, and the gender gap in among other things, perceived success in learning mathematics, is wider than the OECD average (OECD, 2013a, OECD, 2013b). Germany might be said to be in a state of 'rolling reform' ...torn between the sometimes rather exaggerated and even contradictory demands of the different professional and non-professional actors involved (e.g. teachers, universities, ministries of education, teacher unions, parents, students etc.), but also between the various interests on local (e.g. institutional), regional (e.g. Laender), national (e.g. KMK) and European (e.g. European Commission) levels (Kotthoff & Terhart, 2013, p. 86).

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This paper has argued that path divergence is evident in teacher education reform in England, France, and Germany. In England, teacher education is noticeably different from that of its neighbours in the UK (Beauchamp et al., 2013). France and Germany, although they are neighbouring countries, as with England have very different, distinctive education systems. They come from 'largely divergent intellectual worlds' and 'divergent intellectual spheres of reference' (Schriewer & Keiner, 1992, p.51).

Teacher education remains at the heart of education reform, and each country has reacted to common pressures identified in this study in a similar way through their introduction of a set of standards, and competencies to ensure a continuous production of quality teachers. The professionalisation of the teaching profession has resulted in new teacher education programmes which emphasise practical skills as the key measure of teacher effectiveness and on which judgments of competence can be made. The Bologna Process has highlighted how each country, to some extent, has experienced problems with alignment and with mapping new structures on to old structures. The three-yearly PISA assessment tests for 15 year old pupils with its league table of results, continues to have a marked impact on education reform in each country. Teacher recruitment is an area of concern for each country, with shortage subject areas persisting in England and in Germany, and an ageing teaching workforce in each of the three countries examined here.

Major constraints in the teacher education systems in England, France, and Germany have been identified in this study: the move towards 'the construction of teaching as a craft' (Beauchamp et al., 2013, p.8), and teaching as a research-based profession with opportunities for teachers to further their knowledge has yet to be resolved in England. The duration and

intensity of the teacher education programme in France with its traditional competitive public examination, coupled to the French Government's key education priority for reducing inequality, creates unresolved tensions between the demands of an academic programme, and those of training in school. There are also unresolved tensions between universities and training schools in Germany which impact on teachers training to work with a diverse school population within a large multi-cultural society.

Each of these constraints is mirrored in this paper's selection and description of one standard and one competence, serving to demonstrate how path divergence is replicated in each country's teacher education system. One selected standard and competence, which centre on the importance of knowing how pupils learn, has served to illustrate constraints in the way in which student teachers navigate their way through new teacher education programmes. They do this to meet the requirements of a set of prescribed standards and competences on which their suitability as beginning teachers can be measured, and which are inexorably bound to their national, political, and cultural contexts.

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