

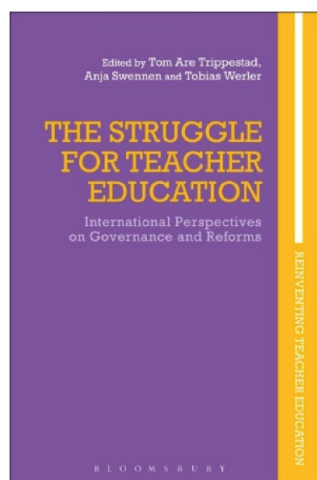
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Tom Are Trippestad, Anja Swennen and Tobias Werler (Eds.), *The Struggle for Teacher Education. International Perspectives on Governance and Reforms*, Bloomsbury Publishing: London and New York, 2017; 224 pp.: ISBN: 978-1-47428-554-4

Reviewed by ŽIVA KOS¹

The editors and authors of this monograph establish compelling arguments regarding conceptualisations of teacher education on a global as well as an international level. Teacher education is thematised as a site of complex power relations and as a critique of a type of rationality that narrows the regulative idea of reform to successive instrumental² attempts to structure teacher education in line with the constantly changing needs of market societies. Insights into policy and practice in different national and cultural contexts show the limits of such reforms and of the prevailing type of rationality, which is embedded not only in the economic field, as we would like to believe, but also successfully structured and accepted in the field of education through a set of thoughts and beliefs about the power of education.

The ten chapters of the monograph offer an insight into the field of teacher education from different standpoints of teacher educators themselves. Addressing the different national contexts and national challenges covered in the monograph (Finland, Australia, England, South Africa and South America), the authors use conceptualisations of K. Popper, M. Foucault, P. Bourdieu, G. Biesta and many others and enable productive continuity of the discussions put forth in the monograph. This additionally emphasises one of the leading arguments of the book: the need to strengthen cooperation between the field of teacher education and policy concerning teacher education reforms as part of wider social processes with political, economic and social implications.



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2 The term is used in line with M. Weber.

In the introductory chapter, the editors outline some of the dominant discourses framing the field of education in contemporary society. They show the axes of struggles for teacher education by analysing shifts in governance of education and the emergence of reform as the dominant mechanism of political rationality. Three waves of teacher education reform are outlined. The first two, the editors find, dealt mainly with issues of content and teaching methods, covering debates ranging from the academic status of teacher education, to assessment of educational results (IEA, OECD) in the 1980s, the latter giving rise to accountability, competitiveness, standardisation, etc. “The political discourse gained privilege of defining the problem” (p. 7). The third wave, or the millennium shift, influenced by comparative pupil assessments (PISA, TIMS, PRILS) and educational resource expenditure, explicitly linked poor pupil performance with teacher education and marked the shift in debates to emphasise the effectiveness of teacher preparation in the light of the rationality based on achievements, standards and outcomes. Increasing the ambitions of governments to control the preparation of teachers offers an entry point to different problematisations of teacher education by the authors of the monograph in their specific national contexts. The following chapters are therefore conceptualisations of struggles with teacher education reforms in different national contexts. T. A. Trippestad analyses the management of objectives as a master idea of reform in the Norwegian national context. He critically addresses “key rhetorical formulas and social-epistemological construction in this hegemonic reasoning” (18) and discusses them in the light of conflicts, problems and critical factors in and for educational governance. He uncovers some of the dominant regulative mechanisms in teacher education; for example, the mythology of the knowledge society, and with this the use of education as a tool for improving all other social fields. This, he warns, makes education responsible for (too) many problems in and of other social fields, which places education under constant social critique. This further strengthens the need for the logic of reform as both a tool and a goal. B. Green, J. Reid and M. Brennan contribute to the discussion by making their own argument emphasising the problems associated with the subject of teacher education. They address the global trend of improving teacher education through mechanisms such as accreditation, standards and international benchmarks, and uncover the dominant policy focus on the “logic of practice”³ in the Australian national context. The authors explore the possibilities of reconceptualisations of professional practice as a mechanism for teacher formation away from hyperactivity, expanding measurement, reporting, etc., and advocate scholarly thinking in teacher education practice. M. Maguire and R. George

3 The authors use the concept following Bourdieu.

address initial education in England in line with the set of popular truths, policy representations and their circulation regarding how best to prepare people to become teachers, again emphasising the dichotomy of theory and practice in ITE. The authors shed light on policy problems as being socially constructed and governed by the rationality of consumer choice in ITE. P. R. Dickinson and J. I. Silvennoinen continue the discussion by exploring secondary ITE in Finland and England. Addressing national differences in educational outcomes and the structuring of comparisons of national educational approaches, they add another aspect to the dominant rationality of “fixing teacher education will fix other educational problems” (69). The following chapters explore the consequences and possibilities of the expansion of higher education into teacher education. M. Robinson addresses the possibilities and challenges of education as a dominant field of social reconstruction in South Africa, with an emphasis on social justice. A. Swennen and M. Volman proceed with some of the challenges and possible limits to academic freedom, authority and autonomy in academic teacher education in the Netherlands. Their research interestingly shows that teacher educators recognise governmental interference and the erosion of their autonomy, but nevertheless accept it. The monograph continues by addressing the global mechanism of outcome-based rationality (OECD, Bologna Process, etc.) as a challenge to the autonomy of teacher educators with regard to curriculum, content and methods. In this context, T. Werler explores teacher education reform in Norway and sheds light on the way a particular understanding of the sciences is used as a governing tool in teacher education. B. Avalos-Bevan continues by describing the development of the outcome-oriented teacher education system in South American countries and its implications for institutional changes and teacher education programmes. Her comparison of different South American countries shows that the different teacher education systems respond to a uniform impulse in which QAA mechanisms play a decisive role. The struggle for a “good teacher” is therefore complex, and the ideas behind good teacher education/preparation are challenging. K. Vincent and J. Brant explore some of the basic ideas in the context of changes in initial teacher education in England.

In the final chapter, the editors sum up by rethinking the consequences of what they call “decades of economic emergencies” and the economic narrative that has affected teacher education and the work of teachers. Political-economic primacy over defining and regulating problems in education and teacher education seems to be a global phenomenon with different national outcomes. One of the common ideas of the monograph⁴ is rethinking the problems and

4 The reviewer recognises the arbitrary choice of emphases in reviewing the monograph and the individual contributions.

possibilities of teacher education as a field and in relation to the much needed shifts in what still seems to be the dominant rationality of policy formation and implementation in education.