Teacher Education Research across the four nations

Ian Menter looks at the way in which the TEG bibliography, not only offers an extremely valuable resource to teachers across the UK but also indicates the differing approaches to research between the four nations.

The TEG bibliography
In an earlier ESCalate news (no. 11, http://escalate.ac.uk/4914), I wrote about some of the issues that emerge when undertaking comparisons between teacher education systems in each of the four UK jurisdictions. There was evidence of both convergence and divergence in policy developments, with England often appearing to be the ‘odd one out’. In this article I want to focus on research in teacher education across the four nations and in doing so demonstrate the usage of a unique resource which is publicly available.

ESCalate was one of four UK organisations (the others were TLRP, BERA and UCET1) that supported the development of the ‘TEG bibliography’. TEG, the Teacher Education Group, was established in 2006 with a view to providing specialist teacher education input to the preparation of ‘capacity building’ resources for education researchers, that were being developed as part of the TLRP.

1 TLRP – the Teaching and Learning Research Programme of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC); BERA – the British Educational Research Association; UCET – the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers.

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The abstracts have been coded in two ways, by research method and by substantive focus or topic of the research (see Table 1).

The purpose of the database is to provide teacher education researchers, including novice researchers and research students, with a simple way of locating published work that may relate to their own field of enquiry or demonstrate the application of a particular method or approach – that they may be considering using themselves – within teacher education. In addition to searching the database by these two categories (topic, method), it is also possible to search by author’s name, date of publication or journal of publication. The group is in the process (again with ESCalate support) of preparing a number of pedagogical ‘walkthroughs’ that provide the user with guidance on key overarching topics and also provide linkage to other relevant websites. Two such walkthroughs already exist, one on ethics and one on professional learning.

There are several limitations to the bibliography, including of course the fact that the articles have been selected from what could be a potentially much greater range; for example, we have not included articles that are focused on a particular curriculum area. The resource only includes journal articles at present, with no research reports or books.

What does the database tell us about the four nations?
Before looking at research that specifically focuses on national contexts in the UK, it is interesting to see how many articles there are on each nation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National context</th>
<th>Number of items included (367)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland (NI/RoI)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>374**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* about half of these show up as Welsh because they refer to ‘England and Wales’
** this suggests that seven articles (374 minus 367) refer to more than one national context.
to note that there are country specific education research journals in each of the three smaller nations, but none that are specifically English in their focus. So, Scotland has two journals – *The Scottish Educational Review* (from which 23 articles have been included) and *Education in the North* (at this stage EiTN has not been reviewed for the database); Wales has *Welsh Education Journal* (two2 items included) and Ireland – combining the Republic and Northern Ireland – has *Irish Educational Studies* (five5). Of these journals only *IES* is published by a mainstream publisher and therefore readily available through institutions; *SER* has recently become available on-line.

367 of the 466 articles, 367 have been coded as relating to one or more particular national contexts in the UK, demonstrating perhaps how much teacher education research in the UK is concerned with particular professional challenges within specific regulatory frameworks. The breakdown in relation to particular contexts in the UK is shown in Table 2.

It is difficult to draw any clear conclusions form from these figures, other than to note that in each of the three smaller jurisdictions there is some significant research activity. In England there are 76 HE institutions providing teacher education. One measure of productivity might be the ratio between outputs and number of institutions – in the case of England, 264:76, a ratio of 3.47.

In Scotland there are just seven institutions involved in teacher education, so the ratio would be 62:7, that is 8. .86. But, perhaps a more meaningful measure would be based on the numbers of people working in education departments — the Scottish departments are on average larger than the English ones. When thinking about Ireland and Wales there are even more complicating factors. In Northern Ireland there are just four teacher education institutions, but the figures above include outputs from the Republic. In Wales, seven institutions have been providing initial teacher training, but the most research productive one, Cardiff, only offers FE initial training.

We may conclude that it is not possible to offer simple measures of productivity for each nation. What is surely more valuable is to be able to locate nation specific research easily through the bibliography in order to find out what is known about each country, but also perhaps to develop further the so-called ‘home international’ comparative agenda more systematically. This is still seriously under developed – the number of four-way comparative journal articles in the bibliography can be counted in on one hand, although there are a few more two-way comparative studies — and yet the potential for new insights and understandings from such work is enormous.

References
More details of the development of the resource and its use may be found in the following articles.2


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2 All of these articles are co-authored by the Teacher Education Group: Anne Campbell (Leeds Metropolitan University), Ian Hextall (Roehampton University), Moira Hulme (University of Glasgow), Marion Jones (Liverpool John Moores University), Pat Mahony (Roehampton University), Ian Menter (University of Glasgow), Jean Murray (University of East London), Richard Procter (independent consultant) and Karl Wall (University of London Institute of Education).

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