

# DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL TEACHER QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS ACROSS FIVE BALKAN COUNTRIES

## Introduction

The wider ATEPI Project (Advancing teacher professionalism for inclusive, quality and relevant education) follows the report of an earlier ETF development<sup>1</sup> which identified teacher quality and professional growth as key factors in addressing the need for improvement in educational policy and practice in the Balkans. The Project proposal<sup>2</sup> therefore provides the context for this paper. On page 10 it says:

“Currently there are numerous national initiatives to develop national standards for the teaching profession, develop teacher licensing procedures, define learning outcomes for teacher education and training, set entry standards for the profession and career progression, and introduce quality assurance mechanisms for teacher education and training. Different countries in South East Europe are at different stages of developing different elements of the teacher specific reforms. However, all of the countries are facing a common challenge. How to build a coherent set of policies that will guide the changes, as well as create a space for all of different stakeholders to interact in building the new policies is not an easy task. Nevertheless, **one instrument in particular has a potential to bring different initiatives and different stakeholders under one umbrella – national qualification framework for teachers. National qualification frameworks bring together learning outcomes, profession specific standards, entry standards to the profession and elements of profession related progression, as well as imply a clear development of quality assurance procedures for teacher education and training providers.** Building a national qualification framework requires collaborative efforts of education policy decision makers, teacher educators and trainers, teachers and teacher education experts and researchers, in other words the state, the universities and teacher training providers, professionals and researchers.”

This paper focuses on the rationale and methodology which should underpin the development of national teacher qualification frameworks. It draws on a wide range of international evidence and includes individual examples from Scotland and Australia in particular. Although, the precise nature of frameworks will depend crucially on present and future educational policy and practice in each country, the underlying principles and structures can be common.

## Implications of Significant Trends in Education

The forces which are shaping twenty-first century economies and societies in turn pose significant and sustained challenges for school education. The impact of globalisation, for example, is thrown into stark relief in the current financial environment where weaknesses in one part of the world impact directly on the lives of individuals, communities and countries as a whole. Just as countries have to deal with the complexities of globalisation, so global citizens need to understand the ethical and practical issues associated with sustainability, scarcity, poverty and independence. Technological advances are changing fundamentally the nature of both work and leisure and contributing to societal shifts already affected by migration and demographic change. In turn, the skills required of the twenty-first century workforce are

---

<sup>1</sup> Teachers for the Future – Teacher Development for Inclusive Education in the Western Balkans, Pantic, Closs, Ivosevic, 2011

<sup>2</sup> Advancing teacher professionalism for inclusive, quality and relevant education, Centre for Education Policy, 2011

changing and increasingly associated with the creative use of technology. Far from being immune from such forces, education lies at the heart of any response to this challenging context. It must both ensure that it is equipping future generations to thrive in an environment of fast, continuous and fundamental change and itself respond to implications for the way in which it goes about its own business.

At the same time, across the world, there has been a growing acceptance of the importance of school education for individual and collective wellbeing, social cohesion and economic success. The politics of education have moved centre stage and governments now seek and promote the kind of innovations in education which will give them competitive advantage and meet the twenty-first century needs and challenges of their citizens.

Expectations of what schools can and should do have grown considerably. Politicians have intervened directly in areas which had hitherto been seen as the province of professional educators. The drive to raise standards has been fuelled by an increasing focus on international comparisons such as the OECD's PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) work and other major studies of comparative performance across countries. The 'standards movement' has spread from the USA to Europe and beyond, becoming a worldwide pursuit of higher and higher quality in school performance. A key feature of this drive has been a shift in focus from inputs associated with the amount or nature of education to the outcomes which schools are achieving. This has opened up the hitherto 'secret garden' of the teaching and learning process and engendered an increasing body of research about school effectiveness.

During the latter part of the twentieth century much of the policy focus was on factors associated with governance and structures within which target-setting, student outcomes, testing, self evaluation, accountability and competition were seen as drivers of school improvement. Curriculum specification, class size, school culture and leadership were identified as key variables associated with successful schools. Decentralisation, for example, emerged as one of the strategic shifts thought to improve efficiency. Rado<sup>3</sup> describes decentralisation as a form of power sharing and argues that centralised management is seen as potentially having weak political and professional legitimacy. He dates initial moves towards decentralisation in the Balkan area from around the turn of the century and elaborates the implications of decentralisation in terms of better organisational learning which in turn requires the professionalisation of school management and of teachers. Rado goes on to identify, "...the mainstream direction of international trends in education is curricular decentralisation and extensive use of output regulation instruments".<sup>4</sup>

In analysing the impact of the standards movement on traditional educational structures and practices, Richard Elmore describes what he calls 'loose-coupling'<sup>5</sup> within which the administrative superstructure acts as a buffer, protecting the 'technical core' of teaching from outside pressure. He argues that in the last twenty years, and particularly in the first decade of this century, this tension has helped to shift the focus of policy onto the quality of teaching and learning itself, and that in turn has led to a focus on teachers and the teaching profession.

'Teachers Matter'<sup>6</sup>, a 2005 report from the OECD, drew together a wide body of research evidence which suggested that teacher quality was one of the most significant factors affecting successful student learning and is perhaps the policy direction most likely to lead to substantial gains in school performance. Earlier research, such as that by Sanders and Rivers in 1996, concluded that the students of the most

---

<sup>3</sup> Governing Decentralised Education Systems, Systemic Change in South Eastern Europe, Peter Rado, Open Society Foundations 2010

<sup>4</sup> Rado, op cit page 270

<sup>5</sup> School Reform from the Inside Out, Richard F Elmore, Harvard Educational Press 2007

<sup>6</sup> Teachers Matter, OECD 2005

effective teachers have learning gains four times greater than the learning gains of the least effective teachers. Similarly, in 2007 the McKinsey Corporation published a highly influential report<sup>7</sup> which reinforced the centrality of teacher quality in the world's best performing school systems. It claimed that, over 3 yrs, learning with a high performing teacher instead of a low performing teacher can make a 53 percentile difference. That report memorably concluded that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.

The increasingly strong body of evidence about the importance of teacher quality has influenced education policy both nationally and internationally. The report<sup>8</sup> of an OECD International Summit on the Teaching Profession in New York in 2011 said "...teachers are the single most important in-school ingredient when it comes to student achievement and that the quality of an education system rests on the quality of its teachers". At the same event, OECD Director for Education Barbara Ischinger said, "...we need to rethink how teachers are recruited, re-examine teacher preparation and induction, support teachers in meeting new challenges, and look at how teachers' careers and compensation are structured". Similarly in 2007, Jan Figel the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth said, "I believe we need to ensure that the EU has high-quality teachers if the Member States' education reforms are to be a success".

It is clear that the focus internationally is increasingly on the quality of teaching and thus of teachers. The report of the OECD cited above makes clear that initial teacher preparation in high performing countries starts with "...clear standards that define what teachers are expected to know and to be able to do upon graduation...teachers are seen as part of knowledge-generation process, rather than as simply recipients of research. A strong ethical foundation and a commitment to equality through education also undergird the teacher-preparation programs in high-performing countries".<sup>9</sup>

The EU in a variety of contributions has made it clear that it sees teachers as central to future educational success. In a Green Paper on teacher education in Europe its thematic network suggests that "...teaching as knowledge transmission or teaching as a craft may well have become obsolete. There are many cogent arguments that these new conceptions will have to be replaced by more dynamic conceptions oriented on a new professionalism in general and pedagogical professionalism in particular"<sup>10</sup> The same publication talks about the need for "state of the art" knowledge as part of more dynamic career-long teacher education.

The evidence and argument above establishes the centrality of quality teaching to successful learning and this in turn requires skilled and well-educated teachers who continue to grow and develop professionally throughout their careers. The challenge is to define what we mean by good teaching and good teachers.

The need for a stronger focus on teacher qualities, values and dispositions is a feature of developing thinking in many countries across the world and of the views of international organisations such as the EU and the OECD. The European Commission, for example, in a 2004 statement<sup>11</sup> says that, "...teachers...are key players in how education systems evolve and in the implementation of the reforms which can make the European Union the highest performing knowledge-driven economy in the world...Their profession, which is inspired by values of inclusiveness and the need to nurture the potential of all learners, has a strong influence on society and has a vital role in advancing human potential and shaping future generations...the European Union views the role of teachers and their lifelong learning and

---

<sup>7</sup> World's Best Performing Education Systems, McKinsey Corporation 2007

<sup>8</sup> International Summit on the Teaching Profession, OECD 2011

<sup>9</sup> OECD Teachers Matter, op cit

<sup>10</sup> Green Paper on Teacher Education in Europe, Thematic Network on Teacher Education in Europe, 2000

<sup>11</sup> Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications, European Commission 2004

career development as key priorities". It goes on to identify the need for teachers to have extensive subject knowledge, a good knowledge of pedagogy, the skills and competences required to guide and support learners, and an understanding of the social and cultural dimension of education.

Ingvarson and Rowe<sup>12</sup> say that, taking account of recent research, "...standards are emerging as a sound basis for defining levels of expertise in teaching and assessing teacher performance". At the same time, work is increasingly international and mobility of labour is one of the cornerstones of European policy. A generic framework may, therefore, help enhance flexibility in the teaching workforce across the five countries engaged in this project and establish a wider platform for cooperation across Europe and beyond.

### **The Role of National Qualification Frameworks**

Taken together, these developments point a clear way forward for the teaching profession and have direct implications for the selection, initial education and career-long learning of potential and serving teachers. Teaching should be recognised as both complex and challenging, requiring high standards of professional competence and commitment. That in turn requires a clear understanding of the kind of teachers who will thrive in the complexities of twenty-first century learning. Well-judged and clear standards can help to align policy and practice and provide the basis for the formation and career-long growth of such teachers.

Viewing teacher development as a continuum is seen by Duthilleul, in a paper delivered to a seminar in Malaysia,<sup>13</sup> as possibly one of the most important policy development trends and one of the most difficult to implement, given structural and historical legacies. This in turn requires detailed consideration of the characteristics of an effective teacher as key points of reference for evaluation and professional development. A key component in establishing a sustained and strategic approach to teacher quality can be seen in the moves across the world to develop national teacher qualification frameworks which set standards for entry to teaching as well as providing a strong basis for the nature of initial teacher education, induction and career-long learning.

The growing recognition of the potential contribution of competence frameworks begs the question as to what is meant by the concept of 'competence'. This is a complex and contested question which reflects wider views about the role of the teacher and his or her place in educational decision making. Pantic and Wubbels<sup>14</sup> highlight the risks to teacher identity, motivation and commitment associated with too specific a definition of competence. They summarise a wide range of evidence which gives rise to concerns about the use of tight behavioural competences in terms of their implications for the teacher's role. Early moves in the development of a competence approach drew on approaches associated with training or instruction and sought to deconstruct the act of teaching into a defined set of behaviours which could be taught and assessed. This technicist view downplays the dynamic nature of education and assumes a relatively static context to which a predetermined set of actions can be applied. Any framework must do much more than specify a range of specified teaching methods which ignores the complexity and value-laden nature of the human interactions in education. The Green Paper from the EU Thematic Network quoted earlier also highlights the danger that minimum competency models might in fact lead to a deprofessionalisation of teaching and teacher education. Such models have limited potential for the development of problem solving, critical thinking and proactivity.

---

<sup>12</sup> Conceptualising and Evaluating Teacher Quality, Lawrence Ingvarson and Ken Rowe, Paper presented at the Economics of Teacher Quality Conference (2007)

<sup>13</sup> Developing Teachers' Knowledge and Skills – Policy trends in OECD countries, Yael Duthilleul, International Institute for Education and Planning, 2005

<sup>14</sup> Competence-based teacher education: a change from Didactic to Curriculum culture? (in press) Pantic and Wubbels, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*

The powerful arguments outlined earlier about the importance of the teacher and the need to be clear about teacher quality suggest that cautions about deprofessionalisation should not lead to the idea of a framework of expectations about twenty-first century teaching being abandoned. However, they do require us to give very careful consideration about what should be the scope and nature of such a framework. The definition quoted in Pantic and Wubbels<sup>15</sup> provides a helpful way forward. They draw on examples of existing practice and suggest that the concept of competence should be defined as '*an integrated set of personal characteristics, knowledge, skills and attitudes that are needed for effective performance in various teaching contexts*' (Stoof, Martens, & Van Merriënboer. & Bastiens 2002; Koestewr et al., 2005). This more integrated approach to competence fits well with the broader concept of 'standards' which are more generic and can encompass a range of attributes. It is important, therefore, that National Teacher Qualification Frameworks (NTQF) should focus on such broader standards which are framed in ways which promote reflection and growth rather than to seek to create a tight specification of behaviours which carry the risk of restricting creativity and becoming obsolete over time.

National Teacher Qualification Frameworks typically embody the characteristics of high-quality teaching for the twenty-first century, including subject knowledge, pedagogical expertise, ethical values and wider understanding of the systemic issues in education and teacher professionalism. While the specific content of any given NTQF will vary with the characteristics and policies of the country itself, it is important that the standards themselves are clear and are 'owned' by teachers and the wider academic world as well as their employers, national policy-makers and the communities within which they work. Such frameworks, by making explicit the values and complexities which underpin quality teaching, can also enhance the perception of teaching as a learned profession in the eyes of the wider public.

More specifically, a NTQF can embody separate standards for different career stages.

- In initial teacher education, standards can act as a guide both to the content to be covered and to criteria for assessment. This does not imply a uniform approach across teacher education providers but does establish a clear expectation that the pre-service degree course will equip students with the knowledge, skills and dispositions which the standards require. The standards can signal expectations about the complex and reflexive relationship between theory and practice and encourage intelligent engagement with theory in classroom settings.
- In induction, the standards can define the further reinforcement and extension of learning which will be required for the achievement of full teacher status. In addition to their key role in providing common criteria for assessment, they provide common points of reference for everyone involved in the novice teacher's development. They can thus help to prompt and support necessary breadth in the learning of prospective teachers while establishing greater rigour in assessment. They should act as a bridge between the initial phase of learning and subsequent career-long learning.
- Thereafter, as part of career-long learning, standards provide an ongoing frame of reference for professional growth. They provide clear signposts for the individual teacher as to how they should develop and grow throughout their careers, guarding against the kind of complacency which can follow from having met the basic requirements for the job. They can also act as a reference point for more formal professional review arrangements, allowing self-reflection, school-based coaching and local or wider external review to be combined to shape the next stages in a teacher's personal development.

In Scotland, for example, there are separate standards for initial teacher education, full registration conferring qualified teacher status, chartered (accomplished) teacher status and for headship. In Northern Ireland a single set of standards is elaborated through exemplification of what they would mean

---

<sup>15</sup> Teacher competencies as a basis for teacher education – Views of Serbian teachers and teacher educators, *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26, 2010

in relation to three phases in a career. The three phases cover initial teacher education, induction and early professional development through to the third year of teaching. The EU Tuning Project<sup>16</sup> relates generic and subject-specific competences to degree cycles covering initial, Masters and Doctoral expectations. Other frameworks have different approaches to differentiating the application of standards for different purposes but they all serve the same broad purposes of signaling what twenty-first century teachers should look like and providing criteria for assessing professional and personal growth.

A well-designed NTQF should provide necessary alignment amongst different aspects of teacher policy and practice. It can ensure that the full continuum of a teacher's career has a consistent frame of reference, linking policy and practice and providing transparent and consistent criteria for external and internal evaluation. The task of achieving that quality of design is far from straightforward and will inevitably challenge existing vested interests. However, there is an increasing view internationally that success in that task is central to achieving the kind of dynamic and inclusive school systems which the future will require.

### **Content of National Teacher Qualification Frameworks**

National Teacher Qualification Frameworks (NTQF) must embody the knowledge, skills and values which not only characterise high-quality teaching now but also act as a spur to future professional growth. Learning to teach is not a one-off activity but should be a career-long process. Today's new teachers will in many cases still be teaching well into the second half of this century. Although this is a highly complex field, there is a wealth of research and practical exemplification which can guide development.

Danielson<sup>17</sup> describes a "...long and highly respected tradition of attempting to definitively describe good practice..." in frameworks for teaching. She sees the origins of the approach lying in the view that teaching is both an art and a science and describes early approaches as focusing on specific teacher behaviours. Subsequent frameworks became more sophisticated, "reflecting an increasing recognition of the complexity of teaching and the role of professional autonomy". More recently, as in other professions, teaching frameworks have been associated with gaining and retaining a 'licence to teach'.

The OECD describes a general trend towards "...changing requirements for teacher certification from input measures (such as number of courses taken or credit points) to output criteria, namely knowledge, skills and competences measured in multiple ways, including portfolios".<sup>18</sup>

A necessary precondition for the development of any framework of teaching standards is clarity about the **characteristics of high-quality education which a country is seeking to promote**. The approach needs to be forward-looking, taking account of the ways in which education will have to change if all young people are to be included and equipped to thrive in the uncertain future of the twenty-first century world. That will require an educational process which addresses dynamic social and economic forces within which knowledge itself is constantly changing and issues of change, sustainability, scarcity, diversity and choice are likely to be dominant concerns of responsible citizenship. Debates about what should be taught and how have given rise to major curriculum reform in almost every country in the world. International bodies like the OECD have produced a substantial body of analysis and advice informed by PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Study). Educational innovation is now the norm internationally.

---

<sup>16</sup> Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Education, Tuning Project, 2009

<sup>17</sup> Enhancing Professional Practice: a framework for teaching– 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Charlotte Danielson (ACSD, 2007)

<sup>18</sup> Teachers Matter, op cit

Establishing the points of reference for NTQ Frameworks is, therefore, not a straightforward task. Education policy is a highly contested area and it is likely that the powerful forces of inertia allied to vested interests in the status quo will seek to entrench existing practices in any new framework. The challenge is to use evidence about the best of current practice as a platform upon which the future can be built. Although there can be no template of the model teacher, there is emerging evidence about the kind of teachers needed for twenty-first century education.

In 'Teaching Scotland's Future'<sup>19</sup>, the findings of a range of research have been brought together to suggest the characteristics of high-quality teachers in the future. In responding to this report, the Scottish Government has accepted the view that successful education in the future will depend on versatile teachers who -

- have high-levels of expertise – subject, pedagogy and theory
- have secure values – taking personal and professional responsibility for the wellbeing of all young people
- take prime responsibility for their own development
- use and contribute to the collective understanding of successful teaching and learning
- see professional learning as an integral part of educational change
- engage in well-planned and well-researched innovation.

If we are clear about educational policy aspirations and their implications for the teaching profession, the next major task in creating a NTQF is to determine the **domains within which standards will be developed**. It is important that standards cover significant areas of knowledge, activity or values which relate directly and indirectly to the learning of the young people being taught and have clear face validity for those to whom they apply. They must also be generic in that they can apply fairly to the breadth of contexts within which teaching occurs and are not overly specific or prescriptive in their expectations. A good framework is easily understood and acts as an engine of professional growth and innovation and not simply as a static fence to be jumped.

The EU has made a number of important contributions on the subject of teacher competences or standards. The Commission has put forward common principles relating to a well-qualified and mobile profession which is committed to lifelong learning and partnership working. More specifically, the Conclusions of the Council on improving the quality of teacher education in 2007<sup>20</sup> include the following-

"Promote during initial teacher education, early career support and through continuous professional development the acquisition of competences which will enable teachers to:

- teach transversal competences such as learning to learn, entrepreneurship, or social skills
- create a safe and attractive school environment which is based on mutual respect and cooperation,
- teach effectively in heterogeneous classes of pupils from diverse social and cultural backgrounds and with a wide range of abilities and needs, including special education needs,
- work in close collaboration with colleagues, parents and the wider community,

---

<sup>19</sup> Teaching Scotland's Future, Graham Donaldson, Scottish Government 2010

<sup>20</sup> Conclusions of the Council, Official Journal of the EU Note 6, Notice from European Union Institutions and Bodies (2007/C 300/7)

- participate in the development of the school or training centre in which they are employed,
- develop new knowledge and be innovative through engagement in reflective practice and research,
- make use of ICT in their various tasks, as well as in their own continuing professional development,
- become autonomous learners in their own career-long professional development.”

Danielson<sup>21</sup> divides the “..complex activity of teaching...into 4 domains of teaching responsibility”. The domains are-

- Planning and Preparation
- The Classroom Environment
- Instruction
- Professional Responsibilities

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) in the USA was formed in 1987 and has developed standards in 26 different teaching fields. Their framework of components<sup>22</sup> is similar to Danielson and covers 4 broad domains.

- Preparing for productive student learning
- Establishing a favourable context for learning
- Advancing student learning
- Supporting teaching and learning

Other approaches adopt slightly different approaches which focus more broadly on the nature of teacher professionalism. The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)<sup>23</sup> identifies 3 inter-related domains or categories which are in turn divided into standards, elements of the standard, and illustrations of professional practice. The 3 domains are-

- Professional Knowledge and Understanding
- Professional Skills and Abilities
- Professional Values and Personal Commitment

Similarly, in England, Qualified Teacher Status is based on a set of outcome standards organised within three inter-related domains.

- Professional values and practice – covering the attitudes and commitment expected of a qualified teacher
- Knowledge and understanding - covering subject knowledge and pupil progression in those subjects
- Teaching – covering classroom management, planning, monitoring and assessment

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)<sup>24</sup> also has three domains or categories-

---

<sup>21</sup> Danielson, op cit

<sup>22</sup> National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, [www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org)

<sup>23</sup> Standard for Full Registration, GTCS

<sup>24</sup> National Professional Standards for Teachers, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2010)

- Professional Knowledge
- Professional Practice
- Professional Engagement

These domains encompass 7 standards which are in turn each separated into a number of “points of focus”.

These examples are illustrative of the many variants of domain categorisation across different jurisdictions. They each represent a view of the characteristics of high-quality teaching based on relevant research and practice. In one form or another, they cover following areas.

- Knowledge of the subject matter to be taught
- Informed understanding of teaching and learning and of barriers to learning
- Commitment to the learning and wellbeing of all young people, irrespective of their needs
- Knowledge of the ‘signature’ or distinct pedagogies which characterise particular areas of knowledge
- Professional practice
- Professional relationships including leadership
- Professional beliefs and values
- Commitment to ongoing professional reflection and development

Beyond an organizing set of domains, frameworks require to be **elaborated in ways which identify the key elements underpinning each domain**. Two examples, from Australia and Scotland, can serve as illustrations of what this might mean in practice and are attached in full as appendixes to this paper.

In the Australian Framework, each domain is elaborated in terms of ‘Standards’. For example, within the domain ‘Professional Practice’ there are three standards:

- Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning
- Create and maintain supportive learning environments
- Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning

For each Standard a number of points of ‘Focus’ are detailed, totaling 17 in all. Each point of focus contains a descriptor which outlines the kind of behaviour which would characterise qualities needed in high-quality teachers. Thus for the Standard ‘Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning’, the first point of focus is, ‘Establish challenging learning goals’.

Professional Practice Domain

<u>Standard</u>	<u>Focus</u>	<u>Descriptor</u>
Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning	Establish challenging learning goals	Set learning goals that provide achievable challenges for students of varying abilities and characteristics

The equivalent domain in the Scottish framework would be 'Professional Skills and Abilities' which is sub-divided into 'Teaching and Learning'. Five standards are described in this category, each accompanied by 'Illustrations of professional Practice'.

### Professional Skills and Abilities Domain

#### Teaching and Learning

##### The Professional Standard

Plan coherent, progressive and stimulating teaching programmes which match their pupils' needs and abilities

##### Illustrations of Professional Practice

Devise and successfully implement plans for effective teaching and learning in the area(s) of the curriculum to be taught

Both examples demonstrate the broad approach to be followed in elaborating a framework. Essentially, the steps to be followed are –

1. Establish a small number of overarching domains and sub-domains if appropriate
2. Determine the standards which define good quality practice in each domain
3. Describe what that standard would look like in ways which allow consistent analysis and evaluation.

### **The Balkans Context**

The original ETF Regional Report<sup>25</sup> together with a companion paper for the project from Natasa Pantic<sup>26</sup> draw on a wide body of research evidence to identify a number of features of current policy and practice in the Balkans.

The picture which emerges is of an individualistic teacher culture within which the focus is on subject knowledge and expertise. Teachers have a prime commitment to their work in the classroom, strongly influenced by didactic traditions. Depth of subject knowledge is highly valued and the prescribed curriculum operates largely as a frame of reference within which teachers exercise their own judgment about what should be taught. The result tends towards expository teaching which does not take sufficient account of the students' background or needs or of the wider context of the school. Participation in wider school or system development is voluntary and rare; the expectation is of change which is top-down and which, despite legal requirements, may well fail to penetrate to the classroom. Teachers' initial education, in-service training and continuing professional development are also relatively narrow with a strong bias towards the development of subject knowledge. Much of their formal education operates at a distance from the realities of teaching in an increasingly diverse and demanding social context. Evaluation of teachers' work is rare, other than personal reflection or exchanges with colleagues which are entirely discretionary.

---

<sup>25</sup> Teachers for the Future – Teacher Development for Inclusive Education in the Western Balkans, Pantic, Closs, Ivosevic, 2011

<sup>26</sup> Regional research findings for developing National Qualifications Frameworks for teachers within ATEPIE project, Natasa Pantic, 2011

In many ways, the description of practice described above is also characteristic to varying degrees of the situation, now or in the recent past, in many countries across the world. Indeed, the post-Sputnik approach to educational reform in the USA and the UK in particular was partly a reaction to the perception that there was a need to modernise the curriculum and to make a much more positive impact on the learning of all young people. School education was faced with the goals of: raising standards, particularly in mathematics and science; of being much more inclusive by addressing directly the learning of the high percentage of young people who were not currently succeeding at school; and of broadening its mission to encompass social goals much more directly.

The explosion of curriculum development projects and related teacher training in the second half of the last century was a clear response by governments to perceived weaknesses in school education. That process moved from input to outcome: beginning with the development of resources which exemplified good practice; through improved external and internal evaluation and attempts to set targets and define standards; to the current focus on the quality and role of the teaching profession itself. Elements of each of these phases coexist in much of current education policy. The opportunity for the Balkan countries is to learn from this experience and create their own educational reform programme, a significant part of which should be the establishment of national teacher qualification frameworks which embody the knowledge, qualities and values which teachers should have if all of their pupils are to be equipped for life in the twenty-first century.

### **Implications for the Project**

In considering the approach to be adopted in the Balkans Project, therefore, it will be important to draw on international research and experience to develop a classification system for each country's NTQF which:

- reflects educational policy and aspirations in each of the five countries;
- is developed in ways which command the confidence of politicians, academics, the wider public and, critically, the teachers themselves;
- is categorised in ways which signal clearly the essential characteristics of a high-quality teacher;
- describe expected competence in ways which allow consistent analysis and evaluation, including descriptions of acceptable performance; and
- can serve as a consistent point of reference for initial teacher education, induction and career-long learning.

That means in practice establishing an inclusive process for defining a set of domains within which standards can be described and performance criteria set. In particular, the available evidence suggests that any NTQF in Balkan countries should pay particular attention to the following aspects of the formation and growth of the teaching profession.

- The need to include an understanding of the **value-laden nature of education** in general and teaching in particular. The nature of the curriculum and of approaches to education more widely will inevitably and properly reflect the traditions and hence the implicit or explicit value base of the country concerned. This is a complex and sensitive area but is one which teachers should understand and be able to respond to. While much of the work of a teacher will be governed by the overarching values embedded in national policy, the diversity of the societies served by schools will give rise to value issues which teachers should understand and respond to.
- The need to establish the responsibility of each and every teacher to promote the learning of **all pupils**. That has major implications for the entire set of teaching standards and should not be confined to particular aspects which can in turn be pushed to the margins of a teacher's work. The issue is not simply those who have defined special educational needs but the broad mass of young people whose social and economic inheritance makes them destined to fail. If a teacher in

effect shares the responsibility for learning with the young person then the teacher is obliged to understand the background and needs of that young person and to relate their teaching to overcoming barriers to learning which are subject to influence by the school or the other agencies that support young people and their families. That in turn will require a more outward focus, relating to parents and working with specialists who can offer additional support. The key lies in the continuing responsibility of the teacher for all young people in their charge rather than seeing some individuals as being the responsibility of someone else.

- The need to establish responsibilities for teachers which go beyond specific teaching duties. In particular, teachers should see themselves as contributing to the **development of the curriculum**, going well beyond implementing predefined curriculum content. As the focus shifts from an input-specification of the curriculum to one based more on expected outcomes, so there will be an increased need for teachers to develop relevant curriculum content themselves.
- The need to build on the strengths of the didactic to establish an understanding not only of the signature pedagogies which underpin a subject but to ensure that **teaching does in fact lead to learning**. Thus the focus has to go beyond well-thought-through inputs by the teacher and encompass the kind of activities which will actively engage each young person in learning. The aim is to create successful outcomes which also establish a desire in the young person to continue learning and a belief that they can succeed. Current practice in the Balkans has the strength that teachers are steeped in their subject and, in Bruner's terms<sup>27</sup>, have that fundamental understanding of the structure of a discipline which allows them to present it in an intellectually honest form to all pupils at any stage in their development. The challenge is to know how to use that knowledge in ways which achieve the desired outcome and to see that task as central to the teacher's role. That implies an ability to use theory to inform practice, to work beyond your subject, and to have a greater focus on some of the craft skills of the teacher relating to methods, behaviour management, interpersonal communication and assessment.
- A corollary to a focus on impact is the predisposition and ability to **reflect and self-evaluate**. Professional growth and educational improvement need to be based on the capacity to identify the strengths and weaknesses of current practice and to build new ways of working where that may be necessary.
- The need to establish the conditions for **career-long learning**. The standards should be dynamic, not static. That means that they should be written or be seen as a fence to be jumped but as an ongoing frame of reference for professional growth and development throughout a career. In that way they can be used for personal reflection and self-evaluation as well as the basis for any formal system of professional review and development which may be established.
- They need to make clear the increasingly **collaborative nature of teaching and learning**. Classrooms should not be closed boxes within which the teacher reigns supreme. Rather the educational process in a school should be conceptualised as a team endeavour within which teachers learn from each other and from other professionals that support young people and their families. All involved should work jointly to ensure high quality education for all children.
- Similarly, the standards have to signal the need to keep abreast of research evidence about effective teaching and learning. That includes teachers themselves engaging in the kind of **action research** which takes forward our understanding of effective practice. The teacher is not the implementer of someone else's good practice but the creator of the conditions for learning in their own individual and unique context. The task is to look outwards for inspiration and ideas but to retain the responsibility for creating the unique learning conditions for the young people in their charge. Thus the school culture is characterised by **initiative and team working** and teacher standards should seek to make this an expectation for all teachers.

---

<sup>27</sup> The Process of Education, Jerome Bruner, Vintage Books, 1963

Pantic<sup>28</sup> draws out existing evidence about the development of teacher competences in the region. Her paper suggests that teachers, teacher educators and student teachers from the participating countries perceive teacher competence to involve four components in the following order of importance:

1. Knowledge of subject matter, pedagogy and curricular areas
2. Dealing with values and child development
3. Self-evaluation and professional development
4. Understanding the education system and contributing to its development

### **How might the NTQF be developed?**

Ingvarson and Rowe<sup>29</sup> identify trends in the development of teaching standards. This analysis suggests that standards are best developed by teachers themselves; that they should capture substantive knowledge about teaching and learning; that they should be performance-based, ie focus on what teachers should know and be able to do rather than what courses they should have taken; and that they should conceive of teachers' work as the application of expertise and values to non-routine tasks. Ingvarson and Rowe go on to describe three essential steps in the development of standards: defining what is to be assessed; developing methods for gathering evidence about performance; and setting criteria for success. They believe that a set of standards needs all three of these components.

It is essential that the development of a NTQF has political support from national governments but, at the same time, it should not be seen as an imposition on teachers from above. To be successful, it needs the active engagement of the teaching profession and of the wider group of stakeholders. The process needs to evolve in stages which are not necessarily sequential but which will, as a whole, secure the broad level of support which will be vital if the process is take root and to become institutionalised.

Step 1 is to develop an **overview paper** which is customized for the country but which draws on the thinking of the project as a whole. The overview paper should follow the broad lines of argument outlined above, establishing the educational vision upon which the NTQF will be based. It must present a compelling case for the benefits of a national framework. Those benefits are for teachers as well as students – potentially enhancing their status and providing reference points for providing ongoing support and development. The essential message is that the approach empowers the teaching profession and recognizes its unique contribution to ensuring high-quality education for all young people. It should build from where teachers are and signal ways forward which have authenticity in the jurisdictions involved.

Step 2 is to develop a **generic standards framework** drawing on examples from countries which are already well advanced in the field, for example Scotland and Australia. It should also take account of the evidence from international entities such as the EU and the OECD about the kind of qualities and competences which are emerging as essential for high-quality twenty-first century education. The frameworks can take different forms but needs to clearly signal the domains and associated behaviours and illustrations which can be populated with reference to research evidence and best practice internationally allied to a clear understanding of educational aspirations and current strengths and weakness in each of the countries involved. Further decisions will be required about the ways in which the framework will be elaborated for different career stages.

---

<sup>28</sup> Pantic, 2011 op cit

<sup>29</sup> Lawrence Ingvarson and Ken Rowe, op cit

Step 3 requires careful **systems-analysis** of the dependencies and consequential which must be considered. Precisely because of the scope and power of national teacher qualification frameworks, any such development will have wide implications for policy and practice across education.

Step 4 is to engage in a sustained approach to **winning the 'hearts and minds'** of the profession. The precise nature of this stage will depend very much on the nature of the country concerned but should clearly include wide consultation which should involve the major representative organisations such as teacher unions and parent forums. The aim must be to ensure that any set of standards is written in language which communicates directly to teachers and which builds from activities which they recognise.

Step 5 will involve a careful **strategy for implementation**. The need to explain and illustrate the implications and expected approaches should not be underestimated. This later step has often been the point at which educational innovation has so often failed to become institutionalised.

## **Conclusion**

The development of national teacher qualification frameworks is becoming an essential tool in the wider reform of education internationally. By focusing on the values, qualities and skills of teachers a NTQF can provide a stronger point of traction on learning than more traditional research, development and dissemination approaches to educational improvement. The approach addresses the challenge which has continually confounded educational innovation – how to penetrate the classroom and influence the realities of teaching and learning. Top-down strategies alone have only limited success in realizing their original ambitions in terms of the actual experience and learning of young people. A combination of external impetus with the clear involvement of teachers themselves as innovators rather than as the implementers of pre-determined change, stands a much better chance of having direct traction at the point of learning itself. However, achieving those synergies requires well-judged standards which are authentic and which are expressed in language which communicates directly to those involved.

Current practice in the Balkan countries involved in the ETF Project will inevitably vary. There are real strengths in existing practice which can provide the basis of some of the standards, thus establishing present strength as a springboard for change while not allowing areas of weakness to become entrenched. The process of development and implementation will have to be seen to be inclusive while remaining ambitious and aspirational. That will require a clear strategic understanding of what is to be achieved and how to get there, including the unifying role of a national teacher qualifications framework.

**Professor Graham Donaldson CB**

**University of Glasgow**

**January 2012**

