

The global vision of teachers as agents in a top tier profession: how establishing teacher status through models of expert teaching bridges cultures

Research overview

This paper examines the significant relationship between models of expert teaching and the status of the teaching profession, arguing that teaching needs to become a top tier profession. Treating the models, as a global phenomenon and sharing knowledge of successful examples can benefit teachers in every country.

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The teaching profession around the world has experienced significant diminishment over the last two decades. However, there are now established models of expert teaching in many high performing jurisdictions, some with long histories, others relatively new but adapted from previous configurations. Can such models restore the status of teaching and align it with top tier professions?

This research defines and analyses the predominant global models. The most robust model is arguably from the US, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards [NBPTS] which was established in 1987 and its model of expert teaching, The Highly Accomplished Teacher [HAT]. In England there is a relatively new institution, The Chartered College of Teaching, established in 2016 with its model the Chartered Teacher. This English model fills a kind of gap left by the abolition of The Advanced Skills Teacher [AST] which existed from 1997-2013. Another, more robust example is Singapore, which has a very well established career structure for its teachers with several levels for expert teachers. The English Chartered Teacher has some relationship to the experiment in Scotland of the Chartered Teacher which only lasted a few years and was abolished. The demise of the AST and the Chartered Teacher in Scotland underscore how vulnerable these models can be if their governance is political and not professional – both the NBPTS and the Chartered College are independent bodies with no political interference. Norway had a short lived experiment with its ‘Specialist teacher’ – 2015-23, a perfect example of a model that had not had time to prove its value before it was abolished on political, not achievement, grounds. England has a developing hybrid model called the Lead Practitioner – this is not a ‘true’ model of expert teaching – as it is not a national systemic approach, it is development supported by groups of schools [Multi Academy Trusts] that are focused on identifying certain teachers to direct pedagogy across a number of schools. Research into the effectiveness of this role will be considered in relation to the more established models and whether it offers a valuable alternative or, in fact, might undermine the credibility of existing models.

The conceptual framework for this research is Critical Realist, the perspective examines the structural dimensions of expert teacher models and the agentive position of the teacher. There is also a structural dimension in relation to the profession of teaching in comparison to other professions and their organisations and societal positions, teaching tending to be viewed as a second tier group. Certain models aim for their expert teachers to be both role models and professional advocates.

These models strongly influence each other, for example the Australian Institute for Teaching and Leadership, established in 2017 has ‘borrowed’ the term Highly Accomplished Teacher from the US, the AST mentioned above, was borrowed by England from its use in some states in Australia. These borrowings are often much more substantial than just a name and these international influences illustrate that the models are now increasingly a permanent part of the education systems, the question is less whether to have a model but which model and what kind. For example, a very

significant questions is whether it is better to develop an elite model which only certain teachers can achieve e.g. the US HAT or an inclusive model, the Chartered Teacher in Scotland – and now England.

This paper presents research that has led to the creation of an original typology of models of expert teaching, analysing them for their purpose, comprehensiveness and significance. There are many basic features in common for example, concern with attracting and retaining very good graduates who remain classroom teachers. However, some models have highly sophisticated designations others are much simpler and focus on increased pay and retention. These models are potentially dynamic and innovative, for example, the NBPTS model was the first to use video technology as part of teachers' evidence base. One of the more complex elements relates to the significance of the model and whether it is designed to identify exemplary professionals whose recognition can extend beyond the profession itself to becoming public advocates. The NBPTS refreshed its approach in 2016 and significantly enhanced its emphasis on Highly Accomplished Teachers as 'Teacher advocates', is this the way forward?

The typology analyses a number of these models to place them at different levels of sophistication and significance. This research will demonstrate how such models can add status to the teaching profession and make it more credibly comparable to other top tier professions.

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