

Teacher education for vocational education and training: a comparative study of the Scottish and English systems set within a European context

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ABSTRACT

The paper develops a comparative analysis of teacher education for vocational education and training in Scotland and England, which is set within a European context. A 'home international' intra-comparative framework is used for the study, identifying both strengths and weaknesses within both systems. A number of themes are identified and discussed within the study including the issues of governance, regulation, pedagogy and professionalisation. The findings indicate that both countries have responded in different ways to the pressures of neo-liberal competitiveness and globalisation, in particular by adopting different systems of governance and regulation. However, it is argued that although these differences are significant when viewed within a 'cross-border' setting, they also underline how both countries have by and large disengaged from European policy making in vocational education teacher training.

INTRODUCTION

There have been a number of comparative studies of teacher education in the compulsory years in Scotland and England (Menter et al 2006; Brisard et al, 2007; Planel 2008), but much less attention has been directed to comparative analyses of vocational education teacher training (VETT)¹. This is surprising given the prioritisation of vocational education and training by UK governments. Raffe et al (1999) have previously argued the case for undertaking 'home international' comparative studies in order to inform policy. Similarly, Menter et al (2006) claim a comparison between the two nations would produce an informed understanding of the similarities and differences within the systems. Whilst Grollmann and Rauner (2007) have claimed intra-national differences within the UK are less significant than international comparisons, this needs to be set against the danger of paying insufficient attention to emerging policy pluralism in the UK (Bell and Grant 1977). A comparative analysis of VETT in the two nations can inform wider educational debates and serve to illustrate the deployment of differing governmental strategies to address similar problems.

The paper sets out to provide a comparative analysis of VETT within England and Scotland. The overall aim is to identify the similarities and difference between both VETT systems. Although this is a UK 'home international' comparison the discussion is set within a wider European context. In methodological terms the study is based upon a review of documentary evidence from within the general VETT literature. Our intention was to provide 'thick descriptions' of the development of policy in VETT and then to compare this secondary

¹ In both nations Vocational Education and Training (VET) is delivered in Colleges of Further Education (FE). In England private training providers are more significant than in Scotland. For simplicity we refer to Teacher Education for Vocational Education and Training as VETT (Vocational education teacher training)

data through the use of a conceptual framework that explores four specific sub-categories of policy-making; curriculum, pedagogy, regulation and professionalism. We recognise that such comparative studies do have their limitations and that there is a danger of over-emphasising the importance of what may in effect be minor differences between the systems. In order to counter such tendencies we have located the study within a European context. The paper begins with an overview of both VETT systems, setting each within its own policy framework. We then undertake a comparative study of the systems using the conceptual framework. Finally, we discuss our main findings and set out the limitations of the study. We will argue that both countries have responded in different ways to the pressures of neo-liberal competitiveness and globalisation, in particular by adopting different systems of governance and regulation. However, it will be argued that although these differences are significant when viewed within a 'cross-border' setting, they also highlight how both countries have by and large disengaged from European policy making in vocational education teacher training.

INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION IN VET (VETT)

Arguably, neo-liberal policy formation and the pursuit of competitiveness lie behind the development of VETT systems in England and Scotland. Scotland represents a market-led approach to teacher training, but this has been imposed on what is a long and distinguished history of democratic comprehensive education. Approximately 12,900 teaching staff are working in Scottish Further Education colleges. Of these, 37 per cent are full-time employees, the remainder being part-time. Although, there are many more teachers in English FE colleges (138,000), there are some similarities in the composition of the two workforces: around 39 per cent of FE teachers in England are full-time staff, with the remainder being part-time (LLUK 2010, 18). In both countries the proportion of part-time and temporary staff has grown since the early-1990s and many colleges now rely upon a significantly casualised workforce (Gleeson et al 2005; Lucas and Unwin 2009). These changes are symptomatic of the marketisation of FE, with colleges often in competition with one another. College principals, under considerable budgetary pressures, are often demanding VETT clients, and in Scotland have had considerable influence on its development since the provision of training was expanded in 1999. Historically, it was not a requirement for VET teachers to hold a teaching qualification in Scotland or England. Given the low status of VET and, as teaching was normally a 'second career' for such teachers – either after substantial experience in another field or often in parallel with other employment – this is perhaps unsurprising. This contrasts with other European nations and with schools in both countries, where staff have long been required to have an initial teaching qualification (CEDEFOP 2006).

Between the 1960s and the 1990s the Teaching Qualification for Further Education (TQFE) in Scotland was offered by a single higher education provider. However, throughout this period there was criticism from college principals who questioned the release of staff for extended periods as well as the wisdom of training FE staff in HE. Poor inspections in the early 1990s raised questions about staff quality leading to a concerted attempt to reform training (Morgan-Klein 2009). Occupational standards were developed by an employer-led steering group which produced the 1997 National Guidelines on provision leading to a teaching qualification and related professional development. These comprised a set of competency-based occupational standards which underpinned the reformed qualification, but were presented as 'guidelines only'. As the TQFE was to remain at higher education level, the new university providers (3 new providers joined the original sole provider) were free to design curricula around a mix of competency-based and traditional higher education approaches, creating a diversity of provision. Although the minimum level of the new qualification was prescribed by government, the volume of credit was not, leading to significant differences between providers (Morgan-Klein 2009).

Following the development of the new programmes in 1999/2000, targets were set by the then Scottish Executive for colleges to achieve higher proportions of qualified staff.

These were increased year-on-year so that 70 per cent of teaching staff in Scottish colleges now hold a recognised teaching qualification. The majority of those without a teaching qualification are part-time temporary teachers and the current target is for 90% of teaching staff to hold TQFE. With the publication of the Review of Scotland's Colleges (Scottish Executive 2007) and the Scottish Government's Response to the Review (Scottish Government 2007) from 2009, permanent full-time teaching staff are required to gain a TQFE within three years of employment. Permanent part-time staff have five years to gain the qualification. Temporary part-time staff are required to hold a Professional Development Award. This is generally delivered 'in-house' by colleges, normally as part of an induction programme, and offers advanced credit for entry to the TQFE. Students can only enter a TQFE programme if they hold a technical or subject-based qualification at a minimum of Higher National Diploma level or equivalent. All initial teacher education qualifications in Scottish FE are based upon a generic, skills-based pedagogic curriculum rather than a subject-based or specialist pedagogy. The Scottish Government has recommended that following their initial teacher education, staff should undertake at least six days per year of continuous professional development (CPD). This requirement is most likely to be met by colleges providing in-house training based on perceived workforce development needs.

In England, prior to 1999, there was no requirement for VET teachers to have teaching qualifications (Thompson and Robinson 2008, 162). Vocational and occupational experience was the key factor in determining employability. Teaching skills were generally regarded as something to be acquired through experience; however, this position has changed radically in recent years. Informed by the Fryer (1997) and Kennedy Reports (1997), part of New Labour's strategy for FE focused on VETT. In 1999 new standards for FE teachers were established by the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) and, from 2001, college teachers were required to gain an initial teaching qualification within a specified time (two years for full-time employees). By 2004 over 70 per cent of full-time teaching staff were 'fully qualified'; although for part-time teachers the proportion was much lower at 47 per cent (LLUK 2005). More recently, *Equipping our Teachers for the Future* (DfES 2004) and the 2006 Further Education White Paper aimed to create a 'full professionalisation' of teachers in the sector. This extended requirements for initial and continuing professional development, including the creation of a 'professional body' for FE, the Institute for Learning (IfL), and a formal requirement for full-time teachers to undertake at least 30 hours of CPD each year. Although such reforms do not provide parity with qualifications required for school teaching, there is no doubt that they represent some attempt to 'raise the bar' in terms of professional status. At the same time, it is clear that the regulatory and curricula reforms introduced since 2001 underpin an increasing intention to direct and control provision centrally. Requirements such as the endorsement of initial teaching qualifications by Standards Verification UK (SVUK), the introduction of a 'literacy and numeracy minimum core', compulsory mentoring and the demand that VETT courses include subject specialist pedagogy provide government agencies with an unprecedented degree of control over the curriculum (Simmons and Thompson 2007, 176).

CURRICULUM DELIVERY STRUCTURES

Currently three Scottish universities offer the TQFE - Aberdeen, Dundee, and Stirling being the only provider of full-time provision. Strathclyde University withdrew from this market in 2003. All three providers offer an in-service programme at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. No programmes are franchised or directly delivered by FE colleges. The TQFE is offered by the university providers to a partially marketised college sector on a competitive basis. While the TQFE programmes are partially publicly funded directly via the Scottish Funding Council grants to the universities, fees from the colleges and student numbers are important considerations for the providers. Moreover, the curriculum is relatively unmediated by the Scottish Government, with the length of programmes and volume of credit varying considerably. This reinforces competition between providers in particular the need to respond to corporate clients in a competitive environment.

In England, VETT initially grew as a result of the 1944 McNair Report. Provision was initially dominated by four technical teacher training institutions, which eventually became part of the universities of Bolton, Greenwich, Huddersfield and Wolverhampton. Initially, one year full-time courses were offered but, following the Robbins Report in 1963, two year, part-time in-service courses became available. For those seeking teaching qualifications the in-service route became the norm and, still today, 90 per cent of FE teachers complete their initial teacher education on this basis (UCET, 2009, 1). From the late-1980s increasing numbers of mainly 'new' universities became involved and today around 60 offer such provision. These institutions offer Certificate in Education (Cert. Ed.), Professional Graduate and Postgraduate Certificates in Education (PGCE) awards (some using variants on these titles). Many teach these courses directly to significant numbers of trainees on a full-time and part-time basis. Most of the larger providers also deliver their CertEd and PGCE programmes in partnership with FE colleges, especially in-service programmes. Thus, in practice, many trainee teachers undertake their studies at their local college rather than university (Simmons and Thompson 2007, 173).

In parallel with university-validated awards, in England an alternative source of VETT has long existed: direct provision offered by national awarding bodies such as City and Guilds. Traditionally, courses such as the City and Guilds 730 series offered a less academic, yet practical introduction to teaching. Typically, they were delivered by colleges enabling progression to a CertEd or PGCE. More recently, awarding bodies have begun to offer "Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS)" qualifications in direct competition to those validated by universities (Simmons and Thompson 2007, 173-174).

The initial teacher education curriculum in Scotland is influenced by competency-based standards but not directly shaped by them. These provide an outline of themes to be included within the TQFE, without specifying how they should be incorporated. Thus, providers design a curriculum that is 'informed by the standards'. For Arnott and Ozga (2009) this is explained by the 'discursive strategies' that underpin policy formulation in Scotland. However, at a more practical level, many of the national policies in VET are put into practice through teachers' involvement in implementation. Here the use of professional judgement in designing the curriculum has been encouraged at policy level, following the publication of 'Curriculum for Excellence' by the Scottish Government. By devolving curriculum responsibility to provider institutions a diversity of practice has emerged across TQFE programmes. Traditionally, the TQFE was based upon a one year full-time or two year part-time model of delivery. Following the decision to move towards a market-driven model, TQFE programmes have been compressed into a one year part-time course consisting of predominately skills-based pedagogic modules. There is currently no 'standard' curriculum, duration of study, or volume of credit attached to the programmes. Therefore, the governmental response to what was perceived as a monopoly provider of the TQFE was to create a 'quasi-market' that allowed a greater range of providers to compete to offer more market choice and diversity, whilst simultaneously reducing per capita costs.

KNOWLEDGE AND PEDAGOGY

In Scotland, TQFE has always had a strong utilitarian dimension. Although traditionally Jordanhill College of Education (incorporated into Strathclyde University in 1993) offered a broad-based curriculum for its FE teacher training, this was not based upon any Enlightenment notions of the 'man of culture'. There was a strong emphasis on pedagogic practices and the technical aspects of teaching and group work. There was also a clear separation between theory and practice, with teaching practice carried out within FE colleges. Unlike the secondary and primary teachers' programmes, the foundational disciplines of sociology, philosophy, psychology and the history of education were never strong elements within VETT in Scotland (Clark and Munn 1997). With the advent of national occupational guidelines in 1996 and the reduction in the credit volume of the TQFE programmes, there emerged an even more streamlined curriculum. This 'thinning out' and simplifying of its theoretical component is not unique to Scotland. According to Sayer (2006)

the move towards a practice-based curriculum has been a long-term European trend. This has been shaped, at least to some degree, by political hostility to theory: it is noteworthy that Clarke (1991), a former UK Secretary of State for Education, once referred to 'Barmy theory'. In the Scottish context employers have had considerable influence on the general shape of the qualification resulting in its acceleration, in particular via the demand for time efficient delivery modes and by extension, some compression and narrowing of the curriculum.

Therefore, the pressure is towards a narrow technicised conceptualisation of teaching practice although this continues to be resisted (somewhat unevenly) by providers. (Avis 2007, 2009a; Beck and Young 2005; Thompson 2009).

The roots of VETT in England can be traced back to instructor courses in nineteenth century Mechanics' Institutes, though its 'modern history' began with the establishment of specialist technical teacher training colleges following the end of the Second World War. By the 1970s there was a curriculum which incorporated introductory philosophy, sociology and psychology of education. There followed a period of general incremental development with the curriculum becoming less concerned with the foundational social sciences and more focused on practical pedagogy, simultaneously incorporating the (by the 1980s) pervasive nostrums of reflective practice. Ofsted (2003) conducted a survey of initial training for FE teachers which led DfES (2004) to issue its plans for the reform in *Equipping Our Teachers for the Future*. A key feature of this was an emphasis on subject specialist pedagogy, indicative of conceptualisations drawn from a school's model of teacher education - Fisher and Webb (2006) provide a critique of this with its narrow and truncated view of pedagogic practice and its lurch towards technicism. The consequence of this DfES concern was the publication by LLUK (2007) of their *New overarching professional standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector*.

REGULATION

Although national standards for the TQFE in Scotland have been adapted over the years, governance arrangements for the sector have remained largely unchanged since 1993. Under the 'guidelines for courses of initial teacher education in Scotland' the Scottish Government has responsibility for the approval of TQFE providers and courses and for setting entry requirements and specifying subject areas for the qualifications. In this it is advised by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIe) who play an active role in approving programmes. The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) also has a role in approval since it has the power to refuse registration to graduates if the programme fails to meet their standards. However, its position is ambiguous because registration is voluntary and the GTCS is not the official professional body for FE staff in Scotland - in fact, they have no such representative body. The quality assurance regime for VETT programmes in Scotland is based upon the principles of programme *approval* rather than *inspection*. In contrast with the primary and secondary school initial teacher education courses, there is no independent inspectorate with responsibility for undertaking inspections of the TQFE. Universities are initially approved to offer the programme by the Scottish Government and GTCS and then re-approved every six years. As part of the re-approval process, a national survey of students who have completed the TQFE is undertaken by the Scottish Government and the data fed back to institutions to facilitate programme changes. The Scottish Government also requires institutions to respond to national policy initiatives and incorporate these changes within their TQFE provision.

Lucas (2004) has pointed to the way in which English university-led VETT programmes were highly variable during the 1980s, arguing that they and the associated CPD became "even more fragmented... between 1993 and 1999" (37). FENTO came into being in 1999 to establish "standards" for FE teachers. Lucas points out that these were "broadly welcomed" because "of the move away from the narrow competence-based approaches such as those being used in Scotland." (p. 42). From September 2001 awarding bodies were required to obtain FENTO endorsement. Having previously been reviewed by QAA, university teacher training became subject to Ofsted inspection. By 2003 Ofsted were expressing a lack of

confidence in the FENTO Standards (Nasta 2007, 12). Following the introduction of Sector Skills Councils (SSC) to replace National Training Organisations in 2004, Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) replaced FENTO. Endorsement processes for VETT are carried out by an operational arm of LLUK, SVUK. However, in March 2010 SVUK (2010) announced a retrenchment of its endorsement services and the adoption of a transitional service; the formation of the Coalition government in May 2010 casts serious doubt over its future.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Until the early 1990s, teachers (including those in FE colleges) operated as 'bureau professionals', being granted a significant measure of autonomy in the classroom but largely operating within the bureaucratic controls of a Local Authority (Maroy 2009). However, following incorporation in 1993 there has been a decline in the proportion of full-time permanent teaching staff employed by colleges in Scotland and England, paralleled by a substantial increase in part-time temporary staff. Individual colleges have also taken responsibility for the setting of salaries and conditions of service. For a number of commentators (Avis 2005; Colley et al 2007 and Gleeson et al 2005) this period of deregulation has led to the de- and re-professionalisation of teachers, with many being replaced by assessors, learning technologists and learning support workers (Robson and Bailey 2009). In Scotland, the issue of professionalism came to a head with the publication of *The Need for a Professional Body for Staff in Scotland's Colleges* (Scottish Executive 2004). The Scottish Government of the day rejected the need for a professional body for FE teachers, proposing instead the further development of the employer-led Professional Development Forum (PDF) to discuss CPD and professional awards for in-service teachers. Interestingly, the national survey undertaken for this Government report, confirmed that for most teaching staff in colleges, their technical or subject area was considered to be their professional qualification, rather than their teaching qualification. The importance attached by vocational teachers to subject specialism has been a feature of the FE literature (Clow 2001; Robson et al 2004).

Following the Scottish Government's response to the Review of Scotland's Colleges and subsequent implementation plan to introduce a mandatory qualification requirement for teaching staff, the Government opened discussions with stakeholders on the need to have a subject requirement for the TQFE award. In 2009 *Scotland's Colleges* (the sector's employer group) and the GTCS supported a proposal to remove the subject basis of the TQFE. This policy is likely to be implemented in the near future. It may reopen the debate about the need for a professional body, anticipated by GTCS who have now agreed to grant FE teaching staff full registration status within the Council. This permits them, under certain circumstances, to teach in secondary schools. There has also been a move to expand and re-brand the PDF to include all staff working within the FE sector and to require it to report to *Scotland's Colleges*. At the time of writing the extent to which it will represent employer or broader staff interests is unclear. Currently, there are no plans to introduce a professional body for the sector. Unlike many other European countries, Scotland's FE teachers do not have a strong 'collective sense of professional identity' (Helgoy and Homme, 2007) or, indeed, even a rudimentary code of ethics that underpins their professional practice (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005). There is limited integration between teachers in FE and those in secondary schools. This is unlikely to change in the near future, given the reluctance of the Scottish Government to grant greater powers to the GTCS over the approval and regulation of the TQFE programme (Scottish Government 2010). However, concurrently the Skills Commission (2010) is calling for common teacher training for those teaching 14-19 year olds which would bring together VETT and schools teacher training, leading to a 'convergent professionalism'.

DISCUSSION

Raffe (2000, 3) suggests that in 'comparative research there is a tension between emphasising differences and emphasising similarities'. This is certainly the case in this particular 'home international' comparative study. Both systems have characteristics which suggest that neither one nor the other is superior, both having strengths and weaknesses. However, the differences suggest that lessons can be learned from both nations and that 'border crossings' may indeed be worthwhile (Menter et al 2006). Four key comparative themes can be identified from the research: governance; regulation; pedagogy and professionalisation. Each of the themes will be explored, in turn, with a view to providing the ground work for further comparative studies at a European and International level.

In Scotland and England there is a distinctive UK dimension within the VET systems. In both territories governance arrangements are similar, with a neo-liberal policy framework being adopted to encourage quasi-competitive markets and devolved institutional decision-making. These structures are managed within a strong centralised executive. This 'competitiveness settlement' is a distinctive feature of the policy context of both countries (Avis 2009b). Whilst both nations share the same goal their responses are qualitatively different. In Scotland VETT was traditionally delivered by a single provider. This was criticised on the basis of cost and inflexibility by key stakeholders, with questions being raised about quality following poor college inspections in the 1990s. In England VETT was criticised for its quality as well as its failure to address subject specialism. The response to these criticisms was qualitatively different in both systems. In Scotland the change was towards the creation of a *quasi-market* for services, where the state provided the appropriate governance while relying on competition to increase efficiency and reduce costs (Allais 2010). In England, the move was towards more *direct control* through replicating a school-based model of government, whilst simultaneously encouraging diversity. Both nations responded differently in terms of institutional structures, with England developing a complex heterogeneous system operating at different institutional levels and within a franchise model of provision. Scotland, in contrast moved towards a more homogenised system based solely upon university provision. It can be argued that Scotland ushered in a transition from government to *governance* through the use of quasi-markets and informal networks of providers, regulators and policy-makers. In contrast, England continued to operate within a *state-centric* model of direct control exercised through multiple agencies within a complex and heterogeneous system (Rizvi and Lingard 2010).

Both countries have now adopted a formal legislative framework for the accreditation of teachers in the post-compulsory sector. This has been a major achievement given the neo-liberal policy environment that operates within the UK. There are naturally distinctions between both nations in the level of awards for the different types of teachers; nevertheless, both countries have recognised they need to have a professionally accredited workforce that is, in terms of formal qualifications at least, equivalent to teaching staff in the compulsory school years. Although England and Scotland have similar arrangements for the accreditation and awarding of teaching qualifications for VETT the regulatory framework that operates within the two systems is very different. In Scotland an *approval* rather than *inspection* regime is used to regulate institutional providers. In England, a school-based inspection model has been adopted by Ofsted. The latter form of regulation would appear to be the more onerous of the two. However, the soft form of regulation in Scotland may encourage a system of internal surveillance based upon a self-regulatory and self-monitoring approach to quality assurance (Croxford et al 2009). A distinct advantage of the English system is the setting of a national standard for the volume of credit attached to qualifications in the Lifelong Learning Sector. This is set at a minimum of 120 credits for the vocational teaching qualifications. In Scotland there is no such national standard for the volume of credit for the TQFE. This it has been argued by some commentators has led to a 'race to the bottom' attitude being adopted by providers of the qualifications as a result of inter-institutional competition and the demands of employers.

The linkages between the lifelong learning sector and compulsory schooling are very weak in both systems with little opportunity for teacher mobility between the sectors – *horizontal integration*. Interesting this was partially addressed in the Donaldson review of teacher education in Scotland by recommending ‘decreasing demarcation’ and strengthening ‘cross-sectoral partnerships’ (Donaldson 2011). In England the Skills Commission (2010) is attempting to promote ‘professional convergence’ between teachers in colleges and schools working within the 14-19 curriculum. However, there has been some progress in this area in Scotland given the GTCS has become a self-regulating independent professional body in 2012 (Finn 2012). The links between initial vocational teacher training and subsequent CPD provision are in theory stronger in England than Scotland- *vertical integration*. The requirement for new teachers to undergo on-going CPD is intended to provide a bridging process in England- although it is difficult to determine how effective this is. In contrast, Scotland has simply recommended that teaching staff be granted a number of CPD days per annum with little integration made between initial teacher education and CPD. Neither country has formal arrangements for recognising professional bodies, though in Scotland all those holding a TQFE have the right to full registration with the GTCS, but only a very small proportion of qualified teachers register. In England, VET teachers are required to become members of IfL.

It is noticeable that in both countries no attempt has been made to engage with European policy discourses on teacher education (Lee et al 2008). The UK has, by and large, shunned the European social democratic agenda that until recently has characterised much of its policy-making. Although England can be seen as a reluctant partner in Europe, it is more difficult to understand the position taken by Scotland (Grek et al 2009). In contrast with initial teacher education in compulsory schooling, VETT policy has not been influenced directly by global issues related to teacher education policy. It can be argued that although both nations pursue a neo-liberal policy agenda they do so in a parochial manner that fails to look beyond national borders (Jakobi and Rusconi 2009). This may of course change given the convergence of vocational teacher education policy-making in the EU (Cedefop 2006 and 2009) and the more recent interest in VETT within OECD countries (OECD 2010).

CONCLUSION

In comparing the VETT systems in England and Scotland it is apparent that both countries have their own particular strengths and weaknesses². A positive feature of both is the recent adoption of a qualification framework for teaching staff in the post-compulsory sector. This has been long overdue and brings the countries into line with their European partners. Failings within both countries include a weak link between initial vocational teacher education programmes and subsequent continuing professional development activities. This interestingly is in sharp contrast to countries with a strong VET system like Germany where there are good links between both educational structures. A second failing within the system is the weak connection that exists between the teaching qualifications for vocational education teachers and their school counterparts. There is in reality little possibility of movement between the sectors. This poor link between the compulsory and post-compulsory education systems is difficult to explain given the UK policy agenda on lifelong learning and the 14-18 curriculum. The regulatory framework adopted in both countries is also very different. Scotland has an approval system, while England retains an inspection framework based upon the compulsory school model. The latter would seem particularly inappropriate given the devolved structure of the VETT system in England and the heterogeneous nature of the VET market. An important point of divergence within the systems is the role played by subject-based knowledge in the teacher education curriculum. Scotland has moved towards a purely pedagogic curriculum model (Canning 2007 and Lang and Canning 2010) while England has retained and emphasised the importance of subject based knowledge. This apparent divergence within the UK in setting VETT curricula is also a

² At the time of the publication, the English VETT system is under review and is likely to undergo significant change. In Scotland the FE sector is undergoing significant structural changes.

feature of the European Union where the use of 'theory' within the teacher education curriculum has come under scrutiny (Holloway 2009).

It is important again to remind ourselves of the limitations of any intra-comparative research study. Although both systems are very different in terms of scale, their differences may be exaggerated when judged within a wider international context. Nevertheless 'border crossings' can be useful in terms of policy borrowing and in understanding how policies are implemented in practice within nation states. It is also important to identify further potential areas of research from the study. In particular we need to understand better the role of subject-based knowledge in shaping the VETT curriculum.

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