

NATIONAL ACADEMY *of* EDUCATION

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EVALUATING AND IMPROVING  
TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

A photograph of a classroom scene, overlaid with a blue tint. A female teacher with short dark hair is smiling broadly, holding a clipboard. Several students in the foreground have their hands raised, indicating an interactive learning environment. The background shows a whiteboard and other classroom elements.

# International Insights on Evaluating Teacher Education Programs

MISTILINA SATO, University of Canterbury  
JANE ABBISS, University of Canterbury

**NATIONAL ACADEMY OF EDUCATION 500 Fifth Street, NW Washington, DC 20001**

NOTICE: The project and research are supported by funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This paper was prepared for the National Academy of Education (NAEd) to inform and support the work of the steering committee for *Evaluating and Improving Teacher Preparation Programs*, including the consensus report. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NAEd or the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Digital Object Identifier: 10.31094/2021/3/7

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Suggested citation: Sato, M., & Abbiss, J. (2021). *International insights on evaluating teacher education programs*. National Academy of Education Committee on Evaluating and Improving Teacher Preparation Programs. National Academy of Education.

**National Academy of Education**

*Evaluating and Improving Teacher Preparation Programs*

**International Insights on Evaluating Teacher Education Programs**

Mistilina Sato, *University of Canterbury*

Jane Abbiss, *University of Canterbury*

November 2021

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## INTRODUCTION

The 2013 National Academy of Education (NAEd) report on teacher education program evaluation in the United States provided a substantial synthesis of how the nation approaches quality assurance for teacher education programs (Feuer et al., 2013). The United States, having no federal requirements for such quality assurance, proves to be a complex nation to characterize in generalized terms. The report raised the question of how other countries evaluate teacher education programs and whether their experiences can be relevant and informative in the U.S. context. The answer to this question was addressed in the 2013 report with only some brief illustrations of globally well-known jurisdictions.

Since that report was released, some comparative analyses and syntheses of teacher education program evaluation approaches have been published, adding to our understanding of global trends in this area. The NAEd has also organized a series of papers that dive deeper into questions of the role of teacher performance assessments, surveys, clinical education, and a focus on equity in the landscape of program accreditation and evaluation in the United States. As part of this NAEd project, this paper revisits the original question of how teacher education programs are evaluated in international contexts. While several international comparative studies of teacher education in general now exist, we found that a focus on how programs are held accountable to quality assurance standards is a relatively unexplored area of comparative analysis.

## RESEARCH APPROACH

We have turned to published work and jurisdictional website information, along with our own international experiences in teacher education, to gather the evidence for this paper. We first summarize prior research syntheses on major international comparative studies in teacher education to set the context of teacher education. We then turn to the question of how teacher education programs are held to a standard of quality assurance for both accreditation of new programs and ongoing evaluation of existing programs and report on common practices that are used across jurisdictions. To help the reader understand more about how the governance of teacher education is tied to the program evaluation practices, we provide four illustrations of jurisdictions that are governed under quite different models. We close with some observations of areas of tension that have been identified across this literature. In this synthesis, we are not trying to judge jurisdictions or lay claims to best practices. We do, however, draw out themes that we think raise some questions for the field of teacher education in terms of where we may go next and point out some cautions for our collective awareness.

## THEORETICAL FRAMING FOR COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

We want to clearly acknowledge that comparative analysis is not always done with the intention of finding better practices to adopt or to copy what works in one context into another context. Rather, we write from a position of using comparative analysis as a means of learning about one's own assumptions and practices by looking outside of one's own familiar context: "Comparative education can help us understand better our own past, locate ourselves more exactly in the present, and discern a little more

clearly what our educational future may be” (Noah, 1986, p. 154). With this in mind, we recommend that readers use a policy learning approach when reading this synthesis as opposed to a policy borrowing assumption. Policy borrowing is built on the assumption that so-called best practices can be transferred across national contexts (Phillips & Ochs, 2003). With a policy learning assumption, nations can learn from international peers and those they perceive to be leading in innovation, while also holding the home nation’s values, culture, history, and contextual constraints and affordances in mind during policy deliberations (Raffe & Spours, 2007). This situated problem solving reflects our core assumption that nations do not operate as isolated entities, but instead are bound up in a larger social fabric where understanding what others do can be beneficial in understanding one’s own systems.

### **INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF TEACHER EDUCATION**

Teacher educators and policymakers around the world have turned their gaze outward toward other countries much more regularly in recent years (Paine & Zeichner, 2012). Previous studies looking internationally at teacher education have noted how teacher education varies widely across countries due to variation in organizational structures, how knowledge for teaching is organized, variation in understandings of how teachers learn to teach, and how to manage the relationship between theory and practice in the professional preparation of teachers (Tatto, 2009, 2011). The theme of variation across international contexts was highlighted in a report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2005). This set of case studies of recruitment, preparation, and retention of effective teachers in 25 countries revealed important variations across countries. For example, teacher education took place in universities and teacher training colleges, as well as in independent and state agencies. For some jurisdictions, but not all, teacher education took place after an undergraduate degree was awarded, suggesting a higher level of subject-matter knowledge expectation in those countries. The duration of in-school practice is another point of variation in cross-national comparisons. Finally, how higher education faculty become teacher educators differed across contexts. An important message from this report was that despite the variation in how the teaching profession and teacher education is structured, the engagement of teachers and their representatives in policy formation is a critical aspect for ongoing improvement and successful reform (when needed) in teacher education. This kind of engagement comes not only through consultation processes, but also with institutional arrangements that create a strong sense of ownership among the teaching workforce through ongoing dialogue and engagement in policy formulation. For example, several countries had formalized teaching councils or boards that gave the profession an active voice in policy- and standard-setting, thus setting the expectation that the profession of teaching is responsible for teaching quality.

Taking a more policy systems view to international comparisons, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) identified some common national policies and local practices that supported teacher development and overall teaching quality across seven jurisdictions identified as high performing based on Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assessment outcomes. The authors concluded from these seven cases (Alberta, Canada; Finland; New South Wales, Australia; Ontario, Canada; Shanghai, China; Singapore;



Victoria, Australia) that in addition to more generally holding a high regard for teachers within the national culture, teacher education had a distinct process for selecting people to enter the profession; had strong financial support for teacher preparation and ongoing professional learning; had a set of professional standards that outlined the expectations for teaching; and teacher education was treated as a continuum within the educational system. Again, variation in the way teacher education is structured was identified, but the structures were not the prime drivers of innovation and success. While Canada's provincial approach supported initiatives that were important locally and Singapore used a centralized system to prepare and support teachers nationally, the joint commitment of engaging with the teaching profession, supporting teachers to be leaders within the system, and providing the necessary resources to lift the profession were what made these jurisdictions successful in their quality improvement efforts.

Other international comparative studies have identified conceptual themes to consider when examining teacher education as a global endeavor. Fujimura and Sato (2020) reported on a comparative analysis of teacher preparation across seven countries (England, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, South Korea, and Thailand), chosen based on having teacher education programs primarily located in higher education settings. The comparison was undertaken in order to inform Japanese teacher education providers about practices abroad in response to policy recommendations from the Japanese Central Council for Education (2006). The recommendations from the Japanese Central Council for Education included extending the duration of school-based learning experiences in teacher preparation programs, establishing a graduate program for teachers, and introducing a teaching licensure renewal process for teachers. In their analysis of the histories and current practices in these countries, Fujimura and Sato (2020) identified three themes that illustrated the tensions that these nations have faced in teacher education. First, conceptualizing the role of professional practice in teacher education (as illustrated by England, Germany, and Thailand) requires collaboration among higher education, schools, and educational administrative agencies as well as allegiance to a set of agreed-upon expectations for teachers that are used to guide both higher education program design and learning in practice. Second, the academization of teacher education over time through the development of professional master's degrees (as illustrated by France and Finland) both challenges and supports the intersection of theory and practice, especially when pedagogy is treated as a discipline in and of itself rather than as a way of applying theory to practice. Third, the local considerations in response to globalization (as illustrated by Latvia and South Korea) show how the global trend of increasing graduate-level study for teachers can support teachers' development of deep pedagogical knowledge.

Similarly, Tatto and Menter (2019) constructed 12 global case studies (Australia, Czech Republic, England, Finland, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Korea, and the United States) with a team of international researchers and support from the World Education Research Association. The editors of this work were not seeking to create policy recommendations. Their mission was to document theoretical and knowledge traditions across the different national contexts and to unpack the empirical evidence upon which different approaches for learning to teach were founded with the goal of feeding the research community a foundation for collabora-

tion. Their focus was on university-based teacher education, which is the dominant model across contexts but is also one that has been highly scrutinized in recent decades. They reported:

The belief that teacher preparation should occur in higher education institutions, however, is not universal. In fact, in some nations the character and worth of university-based teacher education is a fiercely debated issue. At the core of this debate is a deceptively simple question: are teachers “born or made”? (Tatto & Menter, 2019, p. 10)

This question, the authors claimed, underlies national policy debates and reformulations that have created an increasing array of alternative routes into teaching, market-driven approaches that assume competition will improve quality, and external teacher education program evaluation schemes that rank and punish rather than build capacity to improve. They also argued that policy answers to this question have not consistently been based on research or been firmly grounded conceptually. They summarized six themes about the knowledge base for teacher education and how teacher education is positioned within policy contexts: the professionalization/universification trajectory versus the deprofessionalization/de-universification trajectory; the position of research in relation to policy and practice; partnerships and roles in teacher education; power and control in teacher education across political structures (e.g., nation/federal; state/regional; and local); the impact of performativity and accountability and the rise of standards; and the increasing role of technology and communication (i.e., the impact of digitization). Across all of these themes, the authors raised the question of the role that research plays in shaping the policy agenda and on-the-ground practice. While teacher education has increasingly been positioned within higher education as a matter of structure, “the contribution that research makes towards defining professional knowledge varies considerably between different settings” (Tatto & Menter, 2019, p. 281).

From these international comparative studies, we can take away some key messages about teacher education quality. Overall, in order for teacher education quality endeavors to have an impact, teaching itself needs to be a respected professional activity. This leads to the idea that policy in teacher education should be linked to the teaching profession in ways that value the voice of the practicing professionals, and this should be done through institutional or governance systems. Additionally, preparation for teaching is an integral part of the overall policy system that supports quality teaching. As such, policies and practices that are introduced to hold teacher education accountable for quality need to work in concert with other policy expectations for the teaching profession.

A second key take away is that there is no question that teaching is both theoretical/conceptual and practice-based/practical work. Research bears this out over and over again. Regardless of whether a person has a natural disposition to be a teacher, they will also need to learn a body of conceptual knowledge and develop their skills alongside an experienced guide. This suggests that teacher education, regardless of where it sits structurally within an education or policy system, needs to attend to the necessary collaboration between the teacher education providers and the professional workplaces for teachers and that the knowledges for teaching need to represent the complex epistemological terrain (Sato, 2019) for this professional work. How these fea-

tures of teacher education are represented in quality assurance or evaluation systems will be explored in the next section. Given the conclusions from this section, it should be clear that these evaluation practices vary and can be quite complex.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR TEACHER EDUCATION**

In our review of how teacher education is evaluated across various jurisdictions globally, we found that how teacher education is situated within a national education scheme matters in terms of how program evaluation takes place. Globally, over the past several decades, teacher education has shifted from being provided by normal schools or teachers' colleges to merging with or being subsumed within the higher education system (Fujimura & Sato, 2020; Tatto & Menter, 2019). Positioning teacher education within the tertiary education sector makes their primary evaluation process the quality assurance system to which higher education institutions are accountable. Thus, we found that the dominant evaluation model for teacher education across jurisdictions is the higher education quality assurance accreditation and ongoing evaluation processes. In some jurisdictions, teacher education is additionally held accountable to professional organizations, government agencies, or ministries of education. Each of these approaches is discussed in turn below.

### **Quality Assurance in Higher Education**

Definitionally, we will refer to two processes of quality assurance: accreditation and evaluation. Accreditation is a process that grants approval to an institution or entity to offer a qualification or a degree. The program is reviewed and judged according to how it meets the predetermined standards or requirements for approval. Once accredited, the institution is allowed to offer and award the qualification or degree. Evaluation, on the other hand, is a process of ongoing review and monitoring. These processes review the program systematically over time and provide recommendations for improving the quality of the program.

Quality assurance in higher education is usually guided by legislation or official stances on academic quality, delivery, and expected outcomes for the higher education institution (not necessarily for specific programs). Countries vary in how quality assurance is required and conducted. New Zealand, for example, has one national quality assurance organization for higher education. The United States, on the other hand, recognizes several regional and national nongovernmental organizations as quality assurance organizations and accrediting agencies but a quality assurance review is not required by national law. On the other extreme, Finland requires higher education institutions to conduct their own quality assurance review but does not have a national body that organizes or approves these quality assurance processes (details on Finland and New Zealand are in the illustrations reported later in the paper). Program elements such as student enrollment, scholarships, and institutional funding may also be linked to quality assurance mechanisms. For example, in the United States, students are only eligible for federal scholarship programs when attending an accredited institution, even though accreditation is not federally required.



A common element of a national quality assurance system is a qualification framework that sets out the regulations for academic qualifications and degrees. For example, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) (n.d.) sets the *New Zealand Qualification Framework* (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2016), one of the first such national frameworks to emerge globally in the 1980s (Young, 2003). This framework governs secondary and tertiary education program design. Universities New Zealand, a consortium of the eight national universities, then has the legislated power to accredit programs within those universities that are within the guidelines and regulations of the NZQA. Similar qualification frameworks operate in other jurisdictions.

Some higher education systems are governed cross-nationally. For example, according to the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education, the organization has used the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* (2015) since 2005 as a set of guidelines for qualification frameworks, processes for using learning outcomes to guide program and course content, and supporting change toward more student-centered learning and teaching. For this European higher education collaboration, quality assurance takes on three distinct purposes: accountability to the provided frameworks; ongoing program improvement; and public trust.

At the heart of all quality assurance activities are the twin purposes of accountability and enhancement. Taken together, these create trust in the higher education institution's performance. A successfully implemented quality assurance system will provide information to assure the higher education institution and the public of the quality of the higher education institution's activities (accountability) as well as provide advice and recommendations on how it might improve what it is doing (enhancement). Quality assurance and quality enhancement are thus inter-related. (*Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, 2015, p. 7)

Throughout our reading and policy analysis, we did not see an indication that quality assurance accreditation and evaluation outcomes are used to rank or compare institutions or programs within institutions to each other. Rather, the quality assurance systems are based on a criterion-referenced model of evaluation. Internationally, higher education programs are subject to other ranking systems supported by commercial entities. These rankings are typically based on publicly available institutional data, surveys of students, surveys of employers, and reputational surveys of peers. Due to the limited scope of this paper, we will not explore these evaluation systems.

### **Quality Assurance Processes**

In a robust international literature review of teacher preparation evaluation systems, Tatto et al. (2013) found that approaches to accountability and quality assurance in higher education are becoming more widely available globally. More commonly held standards of quality facilitates easier international recognition of qualifications earned and encourages institutions to maintain the value of a higher education credential as comparisons across universities become more uniform. These authors also found that procedures for quality assurance of college and university programs use very similar processes.

Most follow a process that includes an external review which evaluates an institution's progress in relation to a required internal self-evaluation. The external review is conducted by a panel of experts assembled by a recognized body (e.g., accreditation or government agency) and may include site visits and conversations with key institutional and community stakeholders. Internal evaluations are typically conducted annually and external evaluations every 3-7 years. How this information is subsequently used by each institution is rarely identified in the literature. (Tatto et al., 2013, p. 8)

These processes are common practices for program accreditation and ongoing program evaluation in the United States. In most instances, internal institutional evaluations are driven by external requirements and guidelines. Institutional quality assurance processes use data that most often describe the processes and supports for teaching and learning such as enrollment rates, characteristics/qualities of students, curriculum mapping and reviews, teaching observations, faculty qualifications, and program resources and facilities. Depending on the external guidelines and available resources, institutions also examine the results or effectiveness of the program through data such as retention and graduation rates of students, satisfaction of students through surveys and focus groups, employment of graduates, and follow-up satisfaction and success of graduates through surveys. These program evaluations require resources for data collection, oversight, and compliance, which are available to varying degrees across systems and across institutions within systems.

### **Quality Assurance Specifically for Teacher Education**

Tatto et al. (2013) claim that "[b]roadly speaking, dedicated systems to evaluate teacher education programs are relatively rare. Consequently, evaluation requirements and guidelines are generic and not teacher education-specific. They are, however, beginning to emerge" (p. 14). When quality assurance accreditation and evaluation reviews are available for teacher education programs specifically, they usually involve external agencies such as ministries of education or a professional teaching association, council, or board. These reviews may be, and often are, in addition to the higher education quality assurance reviews, thus creating additional burdens on teacher education providers to be reviewed under multiple sets of guidelines and frameworks.

In addition to their literature survey, Tatto et al. (2013) surveyed higher education faculty members and policymakers in 25 jurisdictions. Based on responses from representatives in nine responding jurisdictions (Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Finland, Germany, Israel, Italy, South Korea, and Taiwan), they report that seven of the nine have national-level mandates (all but Germany and Italy) for quality assurance systems in teacher preparation that are linked to the higher education quality assurance requirements; Germany reports a local-level mandate and Italy reports no mandate. Five of the jurisdictions (Brazil, Bulgaria, China, South Korea, and Taiwan) report that the mandate is linked to national laws or regulations. Only four of the jurisdictions (Bulgaria, China, South Korea, and Taiwan) report having teacher preparation program evaluation systems specifically. These centralized processes of national accountability are usually conducted by the ministry of education or an evaluation or accreditation agency and vary depending on the jurisdiction:

For example, in Brazil the government appears to rely on results of assessments of teacher graduates to determine the quality of the content, skills, and competencies taught in teacher preparation programs. In contrast, the South Korean government has established a clear national system of standards and mandates that are used to evaluate teacher preparation programs through both internal and external evaluations linked to specific consequences. (Tatto et al., 2013, p. 23)

From this comparative study, we begin to see that teacher education–specific program evaluation mandates and practices are not common internationally. In some jurisdictions, the higher education quality assurance system suffices and for others, teacher education–specific evaluation is highly specified. When specified, the quality assurance guidelines for teacher education usually include statements about the expectations for teachers once they begin practicing such as professional teaching standards and ethical codes of conduct. Program faculty and administrators are expected to align their programs with these standards and this alignment is tested through accreditation and evaluation processes. These professional standards for teaching share some commonalities and have some local nuance. For example, Table 1 illustrates professional standards across five jurisdictions reported in Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), as summarized by Sato and Kemper (2017). In Singapore, the National Institute of Education (NIE) has developed these statements of competencies. In Canada, provincial governments determine standards for the teaching profession. In Australia, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership negotiates national expectations across states, which ultimately hold the authority for program accreditation. In China, standards are set by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China. The United States has no federal mandated requirements, although many states align their teaching standards to model standards set out by the Council of Chief State School Officers (a professional body).

Based on this table, we can see some general consensus on the domains of knowledge, practice, and ethical responsibilities for beginning teachers. Teachers are typically expected to have a strong foundation in their disciplinary content knowledge. Beginning teachers are also typically expected to have a basic understanding of child psychology, learning theory, pedagogical approaches, and approaches to organizing learning environments. Beginning teachers are often expected to demonstrate a moral or personal commitment to children, their families, and communities, as well as a strong sense of ethical behavior in working for the public good. Finally, teachers are expected to know how to engage in professional collaboration and, in some cases, how to exercise leadership in service to the teaching profession.

Together, these standards set out the professional practice expectations that teacher education providers must support in their programs. Learning opportunities include both formally taught portions of a program in courses and the clinical experiences that are typically located in field placements in schools and communities. Teacher education quality assurance schemes commonly include the location and quality of practical field placements, the nature of partnerships that the program holds with the teaching profession, and the experience that the program teaching staff have as teachers of children and youth. These criteria are the key ways that accrediting and evaluation agencies ensure that links between the conceptual/theoretical aspects of teaching and the

**TABLE 1** Professional Teaching Standards Across Five Jurisdictions

Ontario Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership	Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China Standards for Teaching	Singapore National Institute of Education Attributes of 21st Century Teaching Professionals	United States Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Standards
Commitment to students and student learning	Know students and how they learn	Understand student attitudes and behavior Physical and mental development  Cultural characteristics	Learner-centered values	Learner development  Learning differences
Professional knowledge	Know the content and how to teach it	Subject knowledge  Pedagogical content knowledge  General education knowledge	Knowledge of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self</li> <li>• Pupil</li> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Subject content</li> <li>• Pedagogy</li> <li>• Educational foundation and policies</li> <li>• Curriculum</li> <li>• Multicultural literacy</li> <li>• Global awareness</li> <li>• Environmental awareness</li> </ul>	Content knowledge
Professional practice	Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning  Create and maintain supportive learning environments  Assess, provide feedback, and report on student learning	Instructional design Teaching implementation  Classroom management and educational activities  Education teaching evaluation	Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective skills and thinking dispositions</li> <li>• Pedagogical skills</li> <li>• People management skills</li> <li>• Self-management skills</li> <li>• Administrative and management skills</li> <li>• Communication skills</li> <li>• Facilitative skills</li> <li>• Technological skills</li> <li>• Innovation and entrepreneurship skills</li> <li>• Social and emotional intelligence</li> </ul>	Application of content Assessment  Planning for instruction  Instructional strategies  Learning environments

**TABLE 1** Continued

Ontario Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership	Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China Standards for Teaching	Singapore National Institute of Education Attributes of 21st Century Teaching Professionals	United States Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Standards
Leadership in learning communities	Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/ caregivers, and the community	Understanding and awareness of career Communication and cooperation	Service to the profession and community	Leadership and collaboration
Ongoing professional learning	Engage in professional learning	Personal accomplishment and behavior Review and development	Teacher identity	Professional learning and ethical practice

SOURCE: As reported by Sato and Kemper, 2017.

practice-based/practical aspects of teaching are maintained with some level of quality. These practices are also common in the U.S. context with regard to national accreditation processes carried out by independent accrediting agencies and state-level program approval and review requirements.

### Quality Assurance Illustration from the European Union

Since 1980, the European Union has sponsored the Eurydice Network as a way to collect cross-national information about how educational systems are structured and monitored for quality assurance. Eurydice collects information from 38 countries and publishes comparative and thematic reports on current education policy issues with the aim of assisting nations with local decision-making. A 2006 report focused on *Quality Assurance in Teacher Education in Europe* (Eurydice Network, 2006) describes the processes for evaluating and accrediting initial and inservice teacher education programs and institutions. The report addresses general and specific regulations that govern quality assurance processes, external and internal evaluation processes, how evaluation findings are used, and the reforms and debates at the time.

The report concluded that all participating countries except Luxembourg have systems to evaluate teacher education, but the evaluations are typically not guided by regulations specific to teacher education. Reflecting what we reported earlier in this paper, at the time of 2006 Eurydice Network report, the majority of European countries use their higher education quality assurance processes to accredit and evaluate teacher education that sits in higher education. These processes also reflect common practices used in higher education quality assurance processes that include both internal and external evaluation processes as reported earlier in this paper.

For teacher education specifically, 13 of the 30 participating jurisdictions in the Eurydice Network reported having qualification standards for prospective teachers as part of the external evaluation process. For example, England (United Kingdom)



provides a *Framework for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Training for the Award of Qualified Teacher Status 2005-11* accompanied by a *Handbook* that explains how the *Framework* is to be applied. Scotland (United Kingdom) similarly provides an *Evaluation Framework for the Accreditation of Programmes of Initial Teacher Education* alongside *Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Courses* that specify length of programs, length of time in professional practice placements, and required program elements. Scotland also provides *Standards for Initial Teacher Education: Benchmark Information*, which describes what teacher education students should be able to do upon graduation from an initial teacher education program.

Evaluation reports for individual institutions are made available to the institutions and the results of the evaluation are usually made publicly available as part of the public accountability scheme within each country. National reports for teacher education are less common. However, in some countries, the teacher education system is reviewed as a whole, not just by individual institutions, in order to evaluate system reform efforts and to inform future policy. For example, in 2003, Denmark collected internal evaluation reports from all 18 teacher education colleges. The internal evaluations provided a basis for making national recommendations with individual institutions being anonymized in the final report. In 2006, Malta conducted a national review of all teacher education programs to determine the progress and outcomes of a national teacher education revision that took place in 1999. In 2005 all 25 teacher education institutions in Sweden participated in a review of the reforms implemented in 2001. In 2005, Wales (United Kingdom) undertook a review of initial teacher education to develop policies and supports for how initial teacher education providers could meet the demands for teachers and encourage under-represented groups to enter teaching. Finally, Scotland (United Kingdom) used an “aspect review” of how teacher education was organized across its education system.

In 2014, the Eurydice Network sponsored a report on *Initial Teacher Education in Europe: An Overview of Policy Issues* (Caena, 2014). The summary of teacher preparation program evaluation is quite similar to the summary provided in the 2006 report, reiterating that teacher education qualifications in Europe are typically 4- or 5-year university degrees and that regulations for higher education also apply to teacher education. Ten countries have specific qualification standards for teacher education (Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Sweden, and the United Kingdom). Four countries (Austria, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden) do not use national regulations for teacher education program evaluation, instead leaving these processes up to the higher education institutions.

The 2014 Eurydice Network report dives a little more deeply into identifying how “teacher competence frameworks” are used. Most countries now have frameworks (sometimes called teaching standards) that describe what teachers should know and be able to do, addressing areas such as subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, assessment skills, professional collaboration, interpersonal relationships in teaching, diversity and equity, research skills, and leadership. The degree of specificity within these frameworks ranges from thematic strands with general statements of competence to sector-specific (early childhood, primary, secondary) descriptions of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes expected from a teacher with behavioral indicators. In Austria and Denmark, these frameworks are part of the national regulatory framework, and in Esto-

nia, Latvia, the Netherlands, Romania, and the United Kingdom, they are identified as professional standards that are part of the professional education and evaluation continuum.

### **ILLUSTRATING VARIATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY GOVERNANCE**

In our reading of international perspectives on teacher education, we find that the governance of quality assurance is one of the key differences across international contexts. Some nations (e.g., Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea) rely on a centralized approach usually operating through a Ministry of Education. Other nations (e.g., Australia, Finland, and the United States) rely on institutional or state-based approaches that are guided by external agencies such as accrediting boards, government agencies, and professional teaching organizations. In this section, we highlight some examples of these variations in models through brief illustrations of quality assurance processes. First, we look at Singapore to illustrate a national centralized system for teacher education and evaluation, then at Australia as a state-based (federal) system, Aotearoa New Zealand as a system with a teacher profession driven approach, and, finally, Finland as a teacher education driven system for evaluation. We maintain that in seeking insights from international comparisons of approaches to teacher education program evaluation, it is important to see different approaches to evaluation in the context of the broader teacher education systems within which they have been developed.

The four featured countries—Singapore, Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Finland—have different approaches to governance of teacher education. We note that in some countries, such as the United States, there is devolved responsibility for teacher education and small and medium sized countries may have similar populations to the states or provinces where policies for teacher education program accreditation and evaluation reside. Demographically, the selected countries are small- to medium-sized. Recent national population statistics show that Aotearoa New Zealand is the smallest of the four with a population of 5.11 million. Singapore and Finland have slightly higher populations (at 5.69 million and 5.54 million, respectively) and Australia has the largest population (at 25.69 million). For comparison purposes, 31 states in the United States have a population of less than 6 million and 2 have a population of more than 25 million.

We also note that there are differences in social context and the status of teaching as a profession in different political jurisdictions. Each of the four countries that we have chosen to feature have their own unique population diversity, cultures, and histories. For example, Singapore's largest ethnic groups are Chinese, Indian, and Malay, whereas the largest ethnic groups in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and Finland are of European heritage. Finland was a Grand Duchy of Russia until 1919 when it became an independent Republic, and in the 1990s it sought and gained membership in the European Union. Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and Singapore have shared experiences of British colonialism but each have, at different times, gained independence from Britain and have their own systems of governance. Singapore is a constitutional republic whereas Australia and New Zealand are both parliamentary constitutional monarchies, and Australia has a federal system of state governments. In relation to the status of

teaching, Finland and Singapore in particular are contexts where teaching is positioned as a high status and respected profession. This positioning reflects government policies that boost and maintain the status of teaching as a profession, including policies relating to qualifications for teaching, selection into teaching, and the remuneration of teachers, as well as broader social valuing of education and teaching.

The country illustrations were selected in order to show how accountability through quality assurance processes sits in different places within the education system writ large. We hope that these illustrations draw attention to assumptions that are built into national systems and enable readers to learn about their own policy contexts by examining outside perspectives, thus enacting the policy learning frame we outlined at the beginning of this paper. In reading about each of the countries, readers are invited to think about how the featured systems for evaluation are different or similar to those with which they are familiar, what assumptions underpin these systems (e.g., about who should control teacher education and to whom teacher education providers should be accountable for the quality of their programs), and whether or how particular and different approaches to evaluation may be desirable and workable within their own teacher education systems and contexts.

Each of the four country illustrations focuses on teacher education in its social and political context and on particular features of quality assurance systems within that country. We selectively highlight features of quality assurance (accreditation and evaluation) within each of the countries as particular points of interest to illustrate how different elements form key parts of quality assurance systems in different jurisdictions.

### **Singapore: A National Centralized System for Quality Assurance with Specialized Focus on Teacher Education**

In Singapore, teacher preparation is positioned as a vital element in the education system and is integral to meeting government aspirations for educational improvement. Singapore has a centralized system for teacher education and the NIE is responsible for preparing nearly all teachers in Singapore through its diploma and degree courses, depending on the level of education at entry.

As a sovereign city state, Singapore's system for teacher education operates within a geographically small area (on an island of approximately 730 square kilometers, the size of large cities in other countries and smaller than cities like Sydney and Shanghai), meaning that the institutions for teacher education and evaluation are physically close to each other. There is also a sense of close connection in the responsibility of the NIE to the Singapore Ministry of Education for implementation of Ministry-framed policies and goals for education.

Since gaining political independence in 1965, Singapore has built a modern economy. Creating a strong public education system has been part of the government's strategy for fostering an internationally minded and culturally diverse society. There is strong belief in education and the importance of education to benefit people and the economy and for nation building. Shifts in policy in the 1990s turned attention to the quality of education and encouraged broader views of teaching and learning. Focus shifted toward the development of creative thinking and learning skills, greater pedagogical flexibility, and approaches for addressing learner differences. Emphasis

was given to building character and life skills as well as academic success (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Goodwin, 2012; Goodwin et al., 2017).

Shifting policy also helped to lift the status of teaching as a profession as part of the political mission to build a high-quality education system. These shifts included resourcing for teacher remuneration, recruitment, and professional development. Programs were introduced to support teacher growth (e.g., paid study leave), recognize the everyday work of teachers (e.g., financial rewards in the form of bonuses and one-off salary increments), provide opportunities for career enhancement, and support teacher well-being through greater work flexibility (Goodwin et al., 2017). The status of teaching in Singapore was enhanced through a combination of policies aimed at strengthening educational quality and broader social valuing of education.

The Ministry of Education directly administers schools and the NIE. This makes for a close tripartite relationship (Goodwin et al., 2017). Within the Singapore education system, the Ministry of Education is responsible for formulating policy goals, providing financial and personnel resources, and establishing the systems and structures to ensure that educational initiatives are realized and conform with the policy direction. The teacher education management system and NIE programs are developed in collaboration with the Singapore Ministry of Education (National Institute of Education, n.d.).

The NIE began as the Teachers' Training College in 1950 and, through institutional mergers and reorganizations over the years, transformed into an education institute that, since 1991, has been part of Nanyang Technological University. The institute provides initial teacher education for preservice teachers and professional development programs for teachers and school leaders. The preparation of teachers is framed by the NIE's Values, Skills, and Knowledge model, which identifies attributes for 21st century teaching professionals (see Table 1), and is directed toward ensuring that preservice teachers can meet the NIE Graduand Teacher Competencies (Goodwin et al., 2017). These competencies are organized around three performance dimensions relating to professional practice, leadership and management, and personal effectiveness. These standards provide a foundation for quality assurance of teacher education in the sense that teacher preparation programs within the NIE are expected to align with the attributes for 21st-century teaching professionals and ensure that graduates from these programs meet expected standards.

Turning to evaluation as an element of quality assurance, the evaluation of teacher education programs is directed toward continuous improvement in alignment with the centrally established education policies. Goodwin et al. (2017) explain that the systemic approach to the preparation of teachers in Singapore is "undergirded by evaluation procedures and processes intentionally designed to be both educative and developmental" (p. 102). The NIE engages in internal evaluation in the form of ongoing, layered self-study for continuous learning, reflection, and evaluation for the purpose of teacher preparation curriculum revision and renewal. The layers of examination include research-based approaches and consensus building through consultation with local and international authorities and professional stakeholders, including school leaders and teachers. It is from a period of such examination in the early 2000s that the Values, Skills, and Knowledge framework for teacher education was formed. While the process for teacher education program evaluation is internal to the NIE, which has the responsibility of preparing teachers, this aspect of teacher education is part of a broader

systems approach to teacher education and educational reform that is managed by the Singapore Ministry of Education.

### **Australia: A State-Based System with National Guidelines**

Next, we report on Australia as an example of a federal system of states that are guided by a quasi-governmental agency that provides national frameworks, standards, and performance requirements for teachers and school leaders. Governance of Australia's education system sits across the national, state or territory, and school levels. Both the national and state level are implicated in the accreditation and evaluation of teacher education programs.

Teacher education in Australia generally requires a minimum of 4 years of tertiary study. There are four main pathways to qualify as a teacher: (1) a 4-year undergraduate teacher education degree, predominantly for primary school teachers; (2) concurrent study over 4 years of bachelor's degrees in teaching and another subject field, primarily for secondary school teachers; (3) an academic degree followed by a 2-year teacher education qualification for primary and secondary teaching; and (4) a master's of teaching via a 2-year teaching internship program offered by university providers (e.g., Teach for Australia), predominantly for secondary teachers. Selection criteria and processes for entering teacher preparation programs are set by initial teacher education providers, allowing them to emphasize local priorities to attract particular types of applicants. All teacher education students must meet the national tertiary education admission requirements and meet the local grade point average for entry. Before qualifying as a teacher, all graduates must pass the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education Students prior to graduation.

Teacher registration processes are governed at the state level, but there are national standards that all teachers must meet. The *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* are used across both preservice and inservice teaching. Graduating teachers must meet these standards at the "Graduate level." A teacher graduate registers as a Provisionally Registered Teacher and is then required to demonstrate their ability to meet the professional standards at the "Proficient level" before being eligible for full registration. This usually happens within a 2-5 year period as governed by the state authority. Typically, teachers put forward a combination of demonstrations of standards-based teaching performance, evidence-based classroom inquiry, observations by colleagues, and teacher reflections as evidence for full teacher registration (Burns & McIntyre, 2017).

Australia has quality assurance measures specifically for teacher education. The standards and requirements that are the foundation for this quality assurance are set by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). In 2010, AITSL was formed to provide national leadership across the state and territory governments for promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership. Established as a public company and funded by the Australian Government, AITSL serves as a facilitator and broker for national conversations across the state teaching regulatory authorities, state education agencies, and universities. The Australian Government is represented within the company by the Minister for Education and Training, who sets out the program of work for AITSL. As a quasi-governmental and independently run organization, AITSL has its own constitution and board of directors that maintains



decision-making authority, while the day-to-day operations of AITSL are led by a chief executive officer. AITSL staff support key aspects of national accreditation for initial teacher education, including developing, supporting, and maintaining national approaches to improve the quality of initial teacher education (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2015b).

AITSL developed both the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* that are used across both preservice and inservice teaching and the *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* (known locally as the *Standards and Procedures*). Teacher education providers must demonstrate that their program is designed to ensure that graduates meet the professional teacher standards. The *Standards and Procedures* lay out the requirements that an initial teacher education program must meet to be nationally accredited (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2015a). They were initially developed in 2011 and have undergone several updates in subsequent years. These guidelines claim accountability and quality assurance purposes:

These Standards and Procedures reflect high expectations of initial teacher education and the interest of all Australian governments in maximising our collective investment in the development of preservice and graduate teachers. They also represent a collective sense of accountability and acknowledge that evaluation of initial teacher education is a shared responsibility. Quality assurance of teacher education programs is essential to ensure every program is preparing classroom ready teachers with the skills they need to make a positive impact on school student learning. (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2015a, p. 3)

Six standards guide the national program accreditation process and the degree to which outcome measures for program evaluation have been introduced in recent years is notable. Standards 2-5 include typical expectations for processes of teacher education program development, design, and delivery; program entry requirements; program structure and content; and professional experience. Program standards 1 and 6 represent how the accreditation process has taken on an evidence-based approach for program *outcomes* and warrant detailing (see Box 1).

In addition to meeting the requirements of the national *Standards and Procedures* for teacher education program accreditation, university teacher preparation providers also must ensure that programs meet the Higher Education Standards as established by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency.

While AITSL provides these national guidelines, regulatory bodies within each state or territory are responsible for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs using the national *Standards and Procedures* and the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. AITSL collaborates with these state-level authorities and leads conversations to support nationally consistent procedures. The state authorities regulate the period for which accreditation is granted for an individual program, not exceeding 5 years. Once programs are nationally accredited, they must report annually to the state authority, including evidence of program impact, changes to the program, and data for national accountability purposes. This annual reporting allows for ongoing program quality review and risk management by the state authorities. AITSL also collects data from programs through their annual reports to state authorities for national analysis. These

**BOX 1**  
**Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in  
Australia: Standards and Procedures (1 and 6)**

**Standard 1: Program Outcomes**

- Program design and assessment processes identify where each Teacher Standard is taught, practiced, and assessed
- Require that preservice teachers have demonstrated successful performance against all of the Teacher Standards prior to graduation
- Preservice teachers must successfully complete a final-year teaching performance assessment that is reflective of classroom teaching practice, including the elements of planning, teaching, assessing, and reflecting and clearly assess the Teacher Standards
- A demonstration of how preservice teachers positively impact student learning
- Use of graduate outcomes data such as employment data, registration data, survey data from graduates, and principal satisfaction surveys

**Standard 6: Program Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement**

- Processes for the ongoing collection, analysis, and evaluation of data to inform program improvements and periodic formal evaluation of the program
- Develop and implement a plan for demonstrating program outcomes in relation to preservice teacher performance and graduate outcomes, including program impact, program strengths, program changes, and planned improvements
- Inclusion of aggregated assessment data from the teaching performance assessment for all preservice teachers and aggregated assessment data from other assessments

national activities can include creating guidance for state-level accreditation processes, testing the national quality framework, national standard setting, providing exemplars of practice and student performance, and other quality assurance activities.

**Aotearoa New Zealand: A Teaching Profession-Driven  
Approach to Teacher Education Quality**

A third governing practice in quality assurance is for the teaching profession to provide the primary guidance for the quality that is expected and how that quality is maintained, as illustrated by Aotearoa New Zealand's approach. Similar to Australia, teaching qualifications in Aotearoa New Zealand are available at the undergraduate degree level (although undergraduate degrees are commonly 3 years), through a 1-year graduate diploma, post-graduate diploma, or master's degree study (with 1-year programs being the dominant pathway to secondary teaching), and via a 2-year internship model (i.e., Teach First NZ, a member of Teach for All) as a post-graduate diploma.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, provider accountability for the evaluation of teacher preparation programs is primarily handled by the teaching profession, which is represented by the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (Teaching Council; the New Zealand Education Council was renamed the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New

Zealand in September 2018). To be able to prepare teachers in initial teacher education, teacher education providers must be accredited by or have approval from the Teaching Council and participate in external evaluation (monitoring) processes overseen by the Teaching Council. University providers must also adhere to internal and external university evaluation requirements overseen by the Committee on University Academic Programmes, as part of Universities New Zealand, for external evaluation of the overall academic standards and qualification levels in the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. Similarly, non-university providers are externally accountable to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority for the academic quality of their programs. However, it is the Teaching Council's approval and monitoring processes that are focused specifically on assuring the quality of teacher education.

As the professional body for teachers, the Teaching Council is a quasi-autonomous body that derives authority from an Act of Parliament that is administered by the Ministry of Education. The Council represents teachers and their interests and at the same time has accountability to the Ministry of Education and government. Members of the governing board of the Teaching Council include elected representatives from the early childhood, primary, and secondary education sectors as well as an elected registered teacher from the teacher education sector. The Ministry of Education also appoints a slightly smaller number of members to the Council. The Teaching Council provides leadership for teachers and sets the direction for the education profession by establishing expectations for teacher practice and behavior through *Our Code, Our Standards: Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession* (Education Council, 2017a), managing teacher quality through certification and registration processes, and handling complaints related to teacher conduct and competence. Importantly, for this discussion of quality assurance systems, the Teaching Council sets the requirements for approving and monitoring of initial teacher education programs (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, n.d.). The Teaching Council also has the authority to gather information from teacher education providers for purposes of quality assurance, including audits and special reviews. It is through the Council's responsibility for approving and monitoring initial teacher education programs that the teaching profession is integrally involved with the evaluation of teacher education programs.

Approval for initial teacher education programs is undertaken in accordance with regulatory guidelines developed by the Teaching Council, the *ITE Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review Requirements* (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2018) and all teacher preparation programs must be approved under these requirements. These new requirements emerged after a period of scrutiny of initial teacher education, which was undertaken in the context of broad political concern with educational quality and a drive for systems change to fix perceived weaknesses in initial teacher education. Teacher education was seen as a lever to improve teacher and teaching quality and thereby overall education performance. The result was a vision for a future-focused initial teacher education system (New Zealand Education Council, 2016). The Teaching Council was positioned to take a key role in driving change, to shift the teacher education system to embrace the sociocultural context of New Zealand, and to provide impetus for teacher education providers to change preparation programs in order to produce teachers who are better able to adapt practice and meet the challenges of a

changing education environment (Education Council, 2017b; Whatman & MacDonald, 2017).

For accreditation purposes, teacher education programs must be coherently designed, show alignment with the professional code and standards for teachers, establish an integral partnership with the schooling or early childhood sector for which they are developed, and illustrate their students' competence for teaching through a cumulative integrating assessment (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2018). All approved initial teacher education programs must demonstrate for the Teaching Council how teacher graduates will be able to meet the ethical code and professional standards in a supported environment as beginning teachers. The standards are organized around aspects of teaching and learning that are common to teacher preparation internationally, including professional learning, professional relationships, learning-focused culture, design for learning, and teaching. There is, though, a unique flavor and focus for program approval for all of the standards but particularly for the standard on Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership (known as the Treaty of Waitangi in its English form).

Te Tiriti o Waitangi was signed by Māori chiefs (the Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand) and a representative of the British Crown in 1840 as a foundation for governance and cultural practice through shared language and customs in Aotearoa New Zealand. The treaty has been broken many times but in recent decades there has been renewed commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi through a collective effort to support bicultural practices in teacher education and schools. Shifting practice includes increased use of te reo Māori (Māori language) in curricula and teaching practice; attention to Māori cultural values, customs, and practices; recognition of and respect for the Indigenous worldview and Māori knowledge in relation to what is taught; and emphasis on culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy. As part of the program approval process, initial teacher education providers need to demonstrate that they can prepare and ensure confidence that graduating teachers meet the teaching standards in relation to a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and biculturalism. Teacher education providers must show that teacher preparation programs are developed based on authentic partnership and consultation with local iwi (tribes or groups in the Māori community) and that proposed programs are acceptable to communities, including Māori communities (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2018).

The process for initial teacher education program approval also involves the teaching profession. Proposed programs are assessed by approval panels that include, in various combinations, teacher educators, teachers from the teaching sector in which the program is focused, Māori representatives, Pacific peoples representatives, and curriculum and assessment experts. Approval panels recommend whether programs should be approved and may provide conditions on approval or recommendations on how programs may be further strengthened (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2018). If a provider wishes to make changes to an approved program, they must apply to the Teaching Council for approval of the changes.

Ongoing initial teacher education program evaluation is also managed by the Teaching Council through program review and monitoring. In seeking and gaining approval for their programs, providers agree to undertake program self-reviews and participate and cooperate in external program reviews and monitoring (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2018). Through self-review, providers are expected to

engage in internal processes for review and continuous improvement while also being accountable externally to the Teaching Council for undertaking self-review. In relation to monitoring of programs, external monitors are appointed by the Teaching Council and the focus for monitoring visits on particular program elements is directed by the professional body. Monitors provide a program report to the Teaching Council and the provider. In addition, the Teaching Council manages processes for national moderation of assessment in teacher preparation programs and providers are required to supply assessment and other information for national moderation.

### **Finland: A Teacher Education–Driven Approach**

Our final illustration looking at Finland reports how the higher education community, namely teacher educators, can drive a quality assurance system for teacher education. Eight universities in Finland provide teacher education programs. Early childhood and pre-primary teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree while primary and secondary teachers are required to have a master's degree. Teacher education can be either concurrent study of discipline areas and pedagogical training or an initial degree followed by pedagogical training (Eurydice Network, 2020/2021). Teacher education is heavily research-based, with a strong emphasis on pedagogical content knowledge. Students must also spend 1 full year teaching in a university-affiliated model school before graduation. These schools support both pupils and teacher-students in their learning and serve as a place for prospective teachers and researchers to develop and model new practices and complete research on teaching and learning (Hammerness et al., 2017).

Teaching as a professional career is highly desired in Finland. Less than 10 percent of the applicants for teacher education programs are selected after they submit a rigorous written application. Several features of the Finnish education system support the strong reputation of the teaching profession including high levels of trust and decision-making, stable and competitive salaries, opportunities to collaborate locally and nationally, and expectations for professional creativity and autonomy.

Teachers are treated as research professionals in Finland (Hammerness et al., 2017). The Finnish education system is self-described as a system “based on trust and responsibility” with much local autonomy for both schools and universities regarding curriculum, teaching, and research (Eurydice Network, 2020/2021). The Ministry of Education and Culture appointed the Teacher Education Forum in 2016, which created the *Teacher Education Development Programme* (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016), a set of guidelines that outline expectations for teacher and teacher educator competence; teacher education admissions processes; pedagogical innovations focused on learners and led by teachers and teacher educators; collaboration among teacher education and education sectors; professional leadership; and strengthening research-based teacher education. Thousands of educators and students participated in the development of these strategic guidelines for teacher and teacher education development. Emphasis is placed on recruiting and admitting students with strong capacity for teaching; a learner orientation in pedagogy across all education sectors; research-based and whole school approaches to educational decision-making; new and diverse learning environments including team teaching and cross-disciplinary approaches; meeting the needs



of a diversifying student population; and mentoring and peer support as systematic elements of the teacher development continuum. A striking feature of the guidelines in the *Teacher Education Development Programme* is how much emphasis is placed on the role and leadership of teacher education in establishing a strong research base for teacher education practices and its role in leading community and education sector engagement in the education of teachers.

Finland does not have a third-party accrediting body for teacher education. Educational institutions and providers in Finland are required by law to evaluate their own programs and activities but there are no national directives regarding the methods of these internal self-evaluations (Eurydice Network, 2020/2021). External evaluation is also conducted in Finland's educational institutions and since 2015 has mainly been carried out by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC), an independent agency within the Ministry of Education and Culture. FINEEC uses three types of evaluation: (1) quality audits, (2) thematic evaluations, and (3) engineering degree program reviews that are tied to international accreditation. The quality audits support institutional learning and improvement while ensuring the quality of education, and the thematic audits are used to provide strategic or targeted information for local, regional, and national decision-making.

The external evaluations rely on a very high degree of trust in local expertise. The process begins with a self-evaluation made by institution staff members in which they identify their objectives, strengths, and weaknesses with evidence. Then, members of an external panel of experts familiarize themselves with these report documents and prepare follow-up questions for the institution. Finally, the panel of experts assembles an evaluation report based on the information from the self-evaluation and the follow-up interviews (Eurydice Network, 2020/2021). After the evaluation, FINEEC publishes a report on the results.

FINEEC is explicit in stating its theoretical stance on evaluation, choosing to use an enhancement-led evaluation in its external evaluations (Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, 2019). The goal of enhancement-led evaluation is to involve staff, students, and stakeholders in recognizing their strengths and successes while supporting the institutions toward achieving their own objectives. FINEEC does this by supporting education providers and higher education institutions through arranging external panels, which can include international panelists, organizing evaluation training workshops, conducting quality assurance benchmarking activities, disseminating information about evaluation outcomes, and promoting research on evaluation.

Additionally, FINEEC bases its evaluation of higher education on three premises. First, the audit framework is the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, which emphasizes a competence-based, student-centered, and research-based approach in education. Second, higher education institutions maintain autonomy in their quality assurance processes according to their own needs and goals. Third, FINEEC follows up with post-audit support to support improvement and mechanisms for sharing good practices.

## CONCLUSION

Across this discussion of international quality assurance practices for teacher education and illustrations of how quality assurance is governed in specific jurisdictions, we have identified several issues for further consideration. These reflect tensions that are international but that need to be worked out in particular educational contexts, in recognition of the different political, social, and cultural environments and educational systems within which teacher education programs are grounded. Some of these issues are explicitly attended to in the summaries and reports we read, while some have gone unspoken and we choose to raise them here for future research and reporting consideration.

### **Resources, Regulation, and Multiple Accountabilities**

We found very little to no reporting on the resources needed to manage quality assurance practices. These resources are spread out across both the national entities that are set up to govern and support these quality assurance processes as well as the institutional resources needed to participate or comply with the regulations. Resources include time to develop, administer, collect, and analyze data/evidence as well as prepare reports. In some instances external expertise may be needed to ensure a reasonable level of reliability and validity within the data. In some jurisdictions information management systems may be needed to manage the robust amount and variety of information required. We also acknowledge here that as accreditation and evaluation of teacher education specifically becomes more prevalent globally, teacher education in university settings will have the requirement of accountability to both their high education regulations and their teacher education requirements. If these multiple reporting and regulating activities are not carefully managed within jurisdictions, teacher education providers can become over-burdened and over-regulated.

It would seem prudent from a resource and accountability standpoint for jurisdictions to find ways to align and streamline program evaluation requirements and practices. For example, shared data-collection instruments and practices, common focus questions for systems-level analysis and improvement, and alignment of reporting at the local, state, and national levels could all be practices that improve quality while decreasing administrative burdens. We also noted that several countries in the Eurydice Network have conducted national studies within teacher education, reviewing the state of teacher education as a whole rather than comparing and contrasting individual institutions, in order to set policy, align program improvement efforts, and evaluate national investments.

### **Bureaucratization, Quality Assurance, and Continuous Improvement**

One of the issues identified in the Eurydice Network (2006) report on the European Union was the risk of over-bureaucratization of quality assurance that is not guided by an overall strategy for quality improvement. This concern is tied to questions of frequency of evaluations. More frequent evaluations can introduce greater stress within the system and consume a lot of staff energy and institutional resources. Additionally, frequency of evaluation does not always account for the time needed to actually

implement the recommendations that emerge from the evaluation process. Fundamentally, this issue is about striking a balance between quality assurance and continuous improvement.

Mitigating this tension may sit within the vision of the purpose of the quality assurance scheme that a jurisdiction supports. As we reported earlier, quality assurance is usually driven by both a desire for accountability (is the program designed to meet requirements and does it meet minimum outcomes?) and for enhancement (does the program evaluation suggest areas of improvement?). If the evaluation scheme is overly focused on accountability, the opportunity for program improvement may be diminished. Similarly, in the case of the Eurydice Network (2006) report mentioned above, if there is not an overall strategy for quality improvement, the purpose of enhancement can be uncharted and left obscure. We saw in the Finnish example how a nation that has been internationally recognized for high-quality teaching and student outcomes set out its path for continuous improvement even in light of strong existing performance in teacher education. Its government key project, *Teacher Education Development Programme* (Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, 2016), sets out the goals for teacher education in a forward-thinking set of aspirations that provide a path for ongoing improvement and development. This example illustrates how a jurisdiction can drive system improvement with a development plan guiding how programs will move into the future. In another illustration, Singapore demonstrates how a more centrally run system uses program evaluation to drive improvement. In this more tightly knit system, the layers of schools, teacher education, and the national agencies work and plan together to create a multi-layered evaluation process to drive system improvement.

### **External Measures of Teacher Effectiveness and Teacher Education Program Evaluation**

Initial teacher education in most jurisdictions is a tertiary education endeavor. It lays a foundation for professional practice and launches a teacher's career. The degree to which teacher preparation can be held accountable for the teaching practices enacted in educational settings beyond the preparation experience remains an open question. Some states in the United States have begun seeking external measures of teacher effectiveness once the teacher education student begins teaching as evidence of teacher preparation program quality, sometimes without appropriate consideration of the impact of teaching contexts on the quality of teaching. We did not see a strong press for this form of teacher preparation evaluation in the studies and reports that we reviewed.

The illustration we provide in the case of Australia demonstrates the strongest example we found of a jurisdiction that uses a teacher performance outcomes-based approach to teacher education program evaluation. This example requires that teacher education programs report on how preservice teachers positively impact student learning, thus requiring that a connection between teaching performance and student impact be demonstrated by the preservice teachers. Programs must also report on aggregated data for the required teaching performance assessments and other assessments within the program. But it does not go as far as to require evidence of teacher effectiveness based on student learning outcomes once the graduate is in their professional career.

The international evidence does not seem to suggest that measures of teacher effectiveness based on their students' performance are being used internationally.

### **Globalization, Standardization, and Local Practice**

As professional teaching standards, program design elements, and teacher performance assessments become more common globally, jurisdictions are being compared to each other using international expectations to judge the quality of local practices. Local context, culture, histories, and values matter a great deal and should not be immediately abandoned in the face of globalized expectations. In an international comparative study of teacher education programs, Fujimura and Sato (2020) reported that local considerations in response to globalization was a serious concern for some countries. For example, the Bologna Process in Europe promoted the policy that preservice teachers complete postgraduate study for teacher certification. This standardization of master's-level qualifications for teacher education across Europe was supported to promote occupational mobility across Europe and to promote the movement of people through international exchange activities and credit compatibility among European Union member countries. For Latvia and the other countries in the European Union that have smaller economies, this shift in educational expectations for teacher certification would have been a major systemic change that also had economic implications. Latvia's population continues to decline because of the economic and income disparity with more economically advantaged countries such as France and Germany. Teaching is not a stable profession in Latvia and the salaries for teachers are quite low in comparison to surrounding nations. Therefore, the incentive to pursue a master's-level degree for the professional wage of teaching is not very high. The standardization of professional qualification within the European Union also contributes to the outflow of doctors and other professionals from Latvia. Today, teaching qualifications in Latvia remain at the undergraduate level. The Latvian example is a reminder to stay in the global conversation about improving teacher education while also understanding how global standards may or may not serve local economic, cultural, and educational values.

### **Closing Thoughts**

Our intention was to provide some international perspectives on quality assurance of teacher education programs. Where countries or states have adopted specific teacher education quality assurance processes, these usually include statements of expectation for practicing teachers, such as professional teaching standards and ethical codes of conduct. These frameworks are referenced within accreditation and evaluation processes. In specific consideration of evaluation aspects of quality assurance, the studies we reviewed illustrated how external evaluation for higher education follows similar processes across jurisdictions, namely using internal self-studies as a starting point and external agencies reviewing those internal reports, interviewing stakeholders, and providing a third-party perspective on quality. We also noted that while teacher education program evaluation specifically is not common practice internationally, there is an increasing emphasis on the use of professional teaching standards and teacher education program review guidelines.

In the illustrations we provide, we note that the governance for accountability of teacher education quality sits in different parts of the education system—national accountability, state accountability with national guidelines, teaching professional accountability, and higher education/teacher educator accountability. These variations, we think, illustrate different things about these systems: trust across and within the education system, intentional systemic design, regulatory compliance, commitment to community values, orientation toward improvement, and balancing local needs with national aspirations. From a policy learning viewpoint, these international variations highlight factors that need to be considered and weighed during deliberations about approaches that offer possible ways ahead for teacher education quality assurance and evaluation in particular contexts.

We return to the point made in the OECD report from 2005 that we reported on earlier. Structures can vary a great deal, as can governing processes. The critical element we see in the illustrations we report on is the engagement of teachers and teacher educators in policy formation and evaluation processes. Quality improvement requires professional commitment and systems for quality improvement need to recognize, support, and lift the status of the teaching profession. While broad political agendas may drive the elements and processes for the evaluation of teacher education programs, members of the profession should be integrally involved in shaping and undertaking teacher education program and system evaluation.

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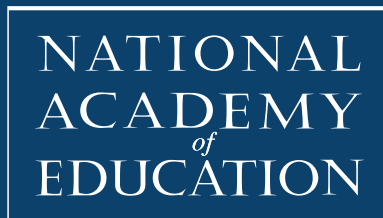
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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Mistilina Sato** is an associate professor at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand and currently serves as the head of the School of Teacher Education. Prior to her move to the University of Canterbury, Sato held the Carmen Starkson Campbell Chair for Innovation in Teacher Development at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities where she led the Teacher Education Redesign Initiative and chaired the Network for Excellence in Teaching university consortium across Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Sato's research focuses on teacher development across the career continuum, including studies in the development of equity-based dispositions for teaching in preservice teacher education, consequential validity of performance assessments in preservice teacher education, epistemological underpinnings of teacher education curriculum, transitions from teacher education into career teaching, and teacher leadership development. Her recent international research has focused on policy systems in China and Japan that support teaching quality. She has won awards for National Staff Development Council for Best Research Paper and the Early Career Research Award from the American Educational Research Association Division on Teaching and Teacher Education. Sato began her career in teaching as a middle school science teacher. She holds a bachelor's degree in geological sciences from Princeton University and a Ph.D. in curriculum and teacher education from Stanford University.

**Jane Abbiss** is an associate professor and a teacher educator at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. During her more than 20 years in teacher education, Abbiss has led major teacher education program developments. These include the establishment of a master's initial teacher education program at the University of Canterbury as part of a New Zealand government initiative for the development of exemplary post-graduate level programs for initial teacher education. Abbiss's research portfolio is varied and includes publications about learning to teach and teacher preparation, curriculum studies and social sciences education, learner experience and identity. Common threads in her research emphasize the practice of teaching and the lived experiences of teachers and learners. Abbiss was the editor of *Curriculum Matters* from 2013 to 2020, which is a journal published by the New Zealand Council of Educational Research. Prior to her work in teacher education, she was a secondary school teacher and the head of the Department in Social Sciences. She taught social studies, geography, history, and classical studies in secondary schools. Over the years, she has received several teaching awards, including a Commonwealth Relations Trust Study Award, the Woolf Fisher Fellowship, and the Antarctica New Zealand Tertiary Educators' Study Award. Abbiss has an M.A. with First Class Honors in geography from Massey University and a Ph.D. in education from the University of Canterbury.



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