Control, resistance and influence: a comparative analysis of the teaching standards development processes in England and Scotland

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Teaching standards have been increasingly used to identify and categorise the work of teachers across educational systems for the purpose of certification, licencing and, in some cases, career professional development. In both England and Scotland, teaching standards have been used as a central tenant of attempts to regulate the work of teachers. Most recently in England this has resulted in the Teachers’ Standards (DfE 2012), and in Scotland, The Standard for Registration (GTCS 2012), The Standard for Career-Long Professional Learning (GTCS 2012), and The Standards for Leadership and Management (GTCS 2012). Through drawing on Basil Bernstein’s field of recontextualisation within the Pedagogic Device (Bernstein 2000), a ‘what, who, how’ (Singh 2002) stance was adopted towards the processes involved developing standards in the two nations. This included investigating the extent to which the two sets of standards embrace differing conceptions of teachers’ professional knowledge, identifying the ‘ideological filters’ of agents with privileged accesses to the standards writing groups, and exploring the processes involved in the development of the pedagogic discourse and standards text. A mixed qualitative approach was taken to the research questions composing documentary analysis and elite interviews with agents of the recontextualised field. Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2003) and Toulmin’s (1988) analysis of argumentation were used to make sense of the research data. Implications for the future development of teaching standards are considered in light of the findings and this feeds into the wider debate around the nature of teacher professionalism and regulation.


