In recent years, teacher education reform has become a powerful global policy trend. Despite differing national contexts, these reforms often share the underlying assumptions that teacher quality is central to student learning and that teacher education is a major factor in the improvement of teacher quality. Teacher education reform is therefore considered as a central strategy for improving a nation’s ability to compete in the global economy, as promoted by discourse emerging from the work of the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

This particular policy agenda has surfaced in Scotland in the form of ‘Teaching Scotland’s Future’ (TSF; Donaldson, 2011), a set of policy recommendations, which are currently being ‘implemented’. Through a process of vernacular globalization, local actors ‘institutionalise’ global policy trends and integrate them into pre-existing cultural structures (Menter & Hulme, 2011). This paper will consider the role that the Scottish ‘myth’ has played in the ‘re-contextualisation’ of this particular policy agenda.

In this paper, ‘myths’ are defined as translations of history, or ‘stories’, which work to construct a particular way of perceiving the nation. They have functional properties that modern society depends on, and are central to the formation and maintenance of a ‘national identity’ (Miller, 1997).

The overall approach of this research is Critical Policy Analysis, and elements of Actor-Network Theory (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010) have been drawn on in order to conceptualise the role of the ‘myth’, and the overall policy process. Data used within this research consists of twenty-five semi-structured interviews conducted with policy-makers and practitioners, and document analysis of policy documents, minutes of meetings, draft reports, press releases and social media.

This paper argues that the ‘Scottish myth’ plays a crucial role in shaping not only the content and focus of TSF, but also the processes by which it has been formulated and implemented. It also raises a number of concerns about the capacity of the Scottish education system to achieve systemic and meaningful change, when such a powerful actor is in operation.


