

October 30, 2024

ISSN 1094-5296

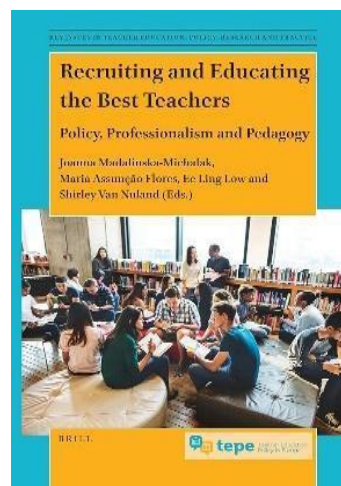
Madalinska-Michalak, J., Flores, M. A., Low, E. L., & Van Nuland, S. (2021). *Recruiting and educating the best teachers: Policy, professionalism and pedagogy*. Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004506657>

Pp. 260

ISBN: 9789004506657

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Recruiting and Educating the Best Teachers: Policy, Professionalism and Pedagogy was developed from proceedings of the 12th Annual Conference of Teacher Education Policy in Europe Scientific Network (TEPE Network) convened in May 2018, at the Institute of Education, University of Minho Braga, Portugal. The book's editors, Madalinska-Michalak, Flores, Low, and Van Nuland, are internationally renowned experts in teacher education and teacher professional development. Together with authors of this volume, they offer insightful research across different political, economic, socio-cultural and educational contexts across the globe.



The primary audience for this book is a diverse teacher professional learning community including pre-service teachers, practicing teachers, teacher educators, policymakers and researchers. Written in scholarly language, the book draws upon empirical quantitative and qualitative studies to consider addressing three key questions: “What does the best teacher education program look like? How can we attract the best teachers into teacher education programs and to schools? How should we approach recruitment into teacher education, the different stages of teachers’ careers and the teaching profession itself?” (pp. 7-8). This overarching perspective on professionalism to ensure future-ready teachers is one of the most appealing features of the text.

The book is divided into two parts, each consisting of six chapters. Part 1 establishes that the teacher recruitment and educating the best teachers are inextricably linked to policy and quality. Part 2 of the book builds on quality standards for the development and education of future-ready teachers through pedagogy and professionalism. The structure and themes of the book present a logical development of the need to infuse

Singh, V. (2024, September 25). Review of *Recruiting and educating the best teachers: Policy, professionalism and pedagogy* by J. Madalinska-Michalak, M. A. Flores, E. L. Low, & S. Van Nuland (Eds.). *Education Review*, 31. <https://doi.org/10.14507/er.v31.3869>

quality benchmarks in every aspect of teacher education. In Part 1, the primary theme is policy in recruiting and educating the best teachers, with emphasis on the following subsidiary themes: quality and its multiple dimensions and meaning, the influence of transnational agencies in teacher education policy, and teacher agency (Chapters 1-6). Part 2 examines the central theme of developing and educating the best teachers focused on pedagogy and professionalism, with subsidiary themes exploring transformative teacher education for future readiness, the lifelong learning mindset, and reflective practitioners (Chapters 7-12).

The text commences with the familiar challenge of policy and quality improvements, presenting studies in Chapters 1-3 conducted in Finland, Portugal, and Poland on initial teacher education, recruitment of pre-service teachers and their transition into schools. The French case presented in Chapter 4 demonstrates a unique stance of resistance to transnational agencies and global trends in teacher education and “commitment to highly specialized teachers...national standardization of selective processes through national tests and ...controlled entrance into the teaching profession” (p. 82). Building on Manso & Sanchez-Tarazaga’s (2018) perspective of quality, the authors of Chapter 5 define “quality as a coherent and adequately resourced system for teachers’ recruitment, selection, induction, and professional development based on competencies needed throughout their careers” (p. 92). Overall, the first section of the book addresses current challenges for recruitment and retention, culminating with gender gap in teaching and equal representation (Chapter 6), and further highlights policies to shape the quality of the entire teaching force (Darling-Hammond et al. 2017). This task gets started with dynamics between reconstruction of professional identity of teachers and work requirements. It is guided by the competence frameworks in induction programs and evaluation processes.

Part 2 of the book builds on Part 1 by integrating an ethical stance on teacher voice and agency in research for construction and validation of knowledge to inform policy and quality in steering recruitment and retention of teachers. The initial focus on teacher voice and agency in Chapter 2 is one strength of the book and a distinctive contribution to a culture of empowerment in research. Central to this point is Foucault’s (1980) understanding of power relations between researchers and teachers and hence, the need for emancipatory research design and methodologies. For example, “How can research be designed that construct meaning through negotiation with research participants rather than researchers imposing meanings on situations?” (pp. 47-8.). Readers are invited to examine one approach to teacher education in Ontario, Canada, where teacher candidates benefit from “a solid understanding of the research-based, evidence-informed pedagogy and the theoretical and empirical foundations for these practices” (Chapter 7; p. 138). Drawing further on research-pedagogy and theory-practice linkages in Chapter 8, another set of contributors identify constructivist and interpretivist approaches in eliciting perspectives from pre-service teachers about their own learning experiences while pursuing employment-led teacher preparation in England. Chapter 9 underscores the role of the theoretical foundations of

Irish teacher education and pre-service teacher preparation for developing professionals with an ability to link theory to practice. A desired goal of teacher professionalism is rooted in transformative teacher education.

The portrayal of the Singapore context in Chapters 10 and 11 appeals to transformative teacher education programs as a means to find practical ways to develop teacher professionalism and future-ready teachers. Education can only be “transformative” with innovative teaching and dynamic relationships between students and teachers who work together with their community as full and active members. In Chapter 10, an innovative teacher program supports critical thinking, knowledge creation, innovative pedagogies, lifelong learning and Group Endeavours in Service Learning (GESL) through which pre-service teachers learn to serve their communities, learning from each other and learning by serving others. GESL supports the development of their full potential through empathy, social responsibility, and collaborative learning and practice, co-constructing a shared vision of teacher professionalism and future ready learners. Chapter 11 purposefully integrates transformative teacher education and professionalism into the Singapore context through an innovative value-based program. The program promotes inquiry into practice involving values in the formation of teacher identity, dispositions for “lifelong learning” and a deeper understanding of “reflective practice”. The chapter strengthens this approach with the views of Kwek et al. (2017) for teachers to become autonomous thinkers who are future-ready in a world that is volatile, uncertain and complex. The editors of the book emphasize a lifelong learning mindset to professionalism, that meets the standards of skills and competencies required for education to contribute to community development in the process of nation building.

The final chapter is grounded in the Irish context and presents a question for the way forward: “Into which reflective practices do we wish to guide our teachers?” (pp. 244-5). The authors endorse reflective practice as the ability of teachers to reflect and question their thinking and actions to become engaged in a process of continuous learning. In Chapter 12, one pertinent recommendation is for teacher educators as professionals to move beyond valuing what students already know about the known and value what students discover about their ontological self, their beliefs and the impact on teaching practice and actions. This process requires creative pedagogy that reaches beyond performance and assessment measures. Readers recognize that while the unique socio-cultural context may influence methods towards transformative teacher education, the goal is universal: to be future-ready lifelong learners engaged in reflective practice.

The collective contributions in this volume call attention to the need for developing strong teacher education programs and pathways to address challenges that may arise. Throughout, contributors reiterate that schools must be the center of teacher education programs. Another point of emphasis is that to attract the best teachers into teacher education programs and to the schools, strong relationships must exist between both. Universities, in collaboration with schools, must be prepared to restructure teacher education programs for recruitment purposes and retention.

Priority should be given to a teacher competence framework in induction programs and evaluation processes for entry into the teaching profession, which can be used further as a benchmark for improvement at different stages of a teacher's career. In turn, teachers can experience empowering professionalism through research-based evidence-informed pedagogy, linking theory and practice, and informing a service learning approach.

The editors and contributors of *Recruiting and Educating the Best Teachers* are to be commended for producing this significant, compelling, and timely book. It is a unique contribution that shares global perspectives in recruiting and educating the best teachers for quality and relevance of learning outcomes in classrooms. It offers readers profound lessons to contemplate shifts of policy across international, national and local levels, that are necessary for quality processes in recruitment and teacher education to prepare teachers who are future-ready. While countries can learn from each other through cross-cultural analyses, teacher education programs at local levels must take into account historical and socio-cultural circumstances amidst globalization standards to inform policy and ensure quality. Quality is well embedded as a complex and multidimensional concept throughout the book's comparative perspectives on policy, professionalism and pedagogy.

In the preface, the editors underscore current global issues impacting teacher education that have either been omitted or not discussed in depth: human diversity, education of teacher educators, global pandemic, anti-racism and decolonization. To this end, the editors request proposals for future volumes in a book series entitled *Key Issues in Teacher Education: Policy, Research and Practice*, to cover topics not fully addressed in this volume. The final section on "Lessons Learnt," in *Recruiting and Educating the Best Teachers* also requires discussions on the nexus between policy formulation, implementation and reforms, and the inextricable linkages between teaching, research and service-learning as integral aspects of teacher education and recruitment. These discussions align with the book's powerful lesson that for education in schools to be of high quality, it must be transformative.

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