The rise of globalisation has led to increasing levels of worldwide connectivity in which there is a greater flow of goods, services, people and ideas between nations (see Lauder et al., 2006 and Simmons, 2010).

However, in education much of this flow is one-way, typically moving from west to east. Evidence for this can be found in the establishment of international branch campuses of western universities, particularly in the Middle East and south Asia (Lane, 2011). Similarly, in the field of teacher education, there is a recent phenomenon of cross-cultural activities in which western Higher Education Institutions are invited to lead continuous professional development (CPD) activities for in-service teachers with the aim of promoting innovation in teaching practices.

Such programmes are often based around the exportation of notions of pedagogic practices influenced by “western templates” (Sheil, 2006:20).

In the UK, educational policy decisions are determined by ‘what works’, and with notions of good, best and excellent practice (see Coffield and Edward, 2009) used to support the blanket use of evidence-based teaching (EBT). These same principles and practices are then applied wholesale in cross-cultural teacher development programmes.

The shaping of professional practice is, however, dependent upon a socio-cultural dimension (Beckett and Hagar, 2003) and characterised by an “inquiry of doubt, of tentative suggestion, of experimentation” (Dewey, 1910 p112), therefore the notion of a single approach that is effective in all settings is fundamentally flawed.

The success of any curriculum innovation is dependent on the staff who implement it, as it is they who have the ability to adopt, change or reject it (Carless, 2001).

As such the development of teachers should be seen as a joint endeavour in which teacher educators, practitioners and policy makers are encouraged to find local solutions to local issues.

We seek discussion and debate from policy makers and fellow practitioners which links policy to practice, arguing that for cross-cultural teacher development to be meaningful and innovative, greater consideration of the socio-cultural and professional setting of teachers is needed.

References

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