

How do different countries construct teachers' professional identities?

Comparing the evidence from 7 countries – and
England

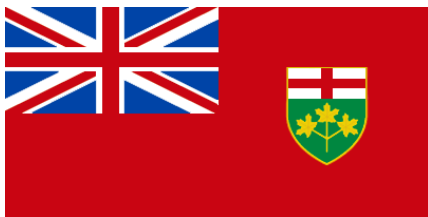
Philippa Cordingley

Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in
Education
(CUREE)



Introduction to our research

- Research into the key building blocks of teachers' professional identities in seven education systems worldwide



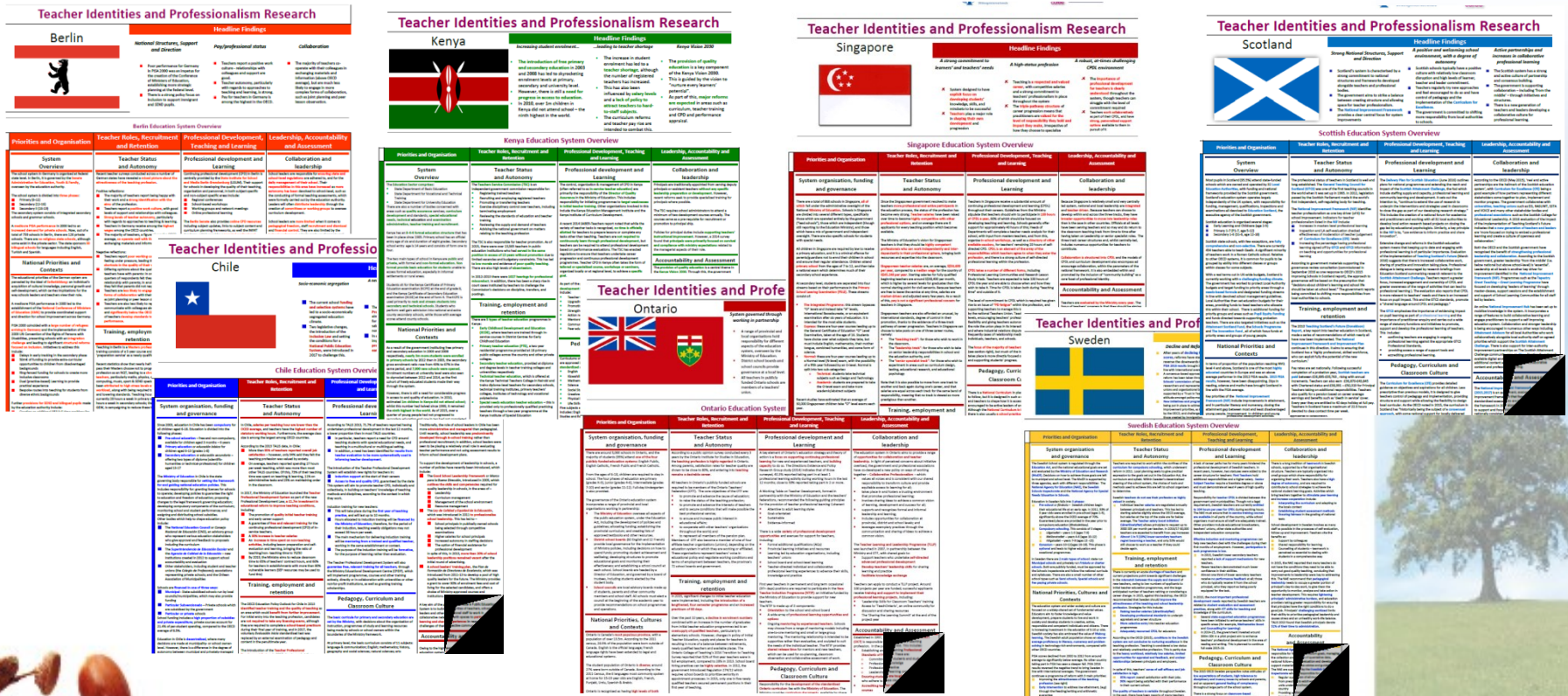
Introduction to our research

- We explored how different countries construct teachers' professional identities through the lens of:
 - Classroom practices
 - Professional learning and development
 - Collaboration and networks
 - Government structures eg accountability systems
 - Teacher voice and leadership
 - Wider social and cultural contexts
- In order to cast light on how teachers create, access, share and shape professional knowledge,



Stage 1

Research posters for each of the 7 systems, summarising education policies & context



The image displays a collection of research posters for seven different education systems, arranged in a grid-like fashion. Each poster is titled 'Teacher Identities and Professionalism Research' and features a national flag in the top left corner. The posters are:

- Berlin:** Focuses on national structures, support and direction, pay/professional status, and collaboration.
- Kenya:** Discusses the evolution of teacher education from 2003 to 2008, highlighting the impact of the 2008 Education Act and the role of the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Studies (KICS).
- Singapore:** Examines the impact of the 2008 Education Act on teacher education, focusing on the role of the Singapore Education Council (SEC) and the Singapore Teachers' Union (STU).
- Scotland:** Explores the impact of the 2008 Education Act on teacher education, focusing on the role of the Scottish Education Council (SEC) and the Scottish Teachers' Union (STU).
- Chile:** Discusses the impact of the 2008 Education Act on teacher education, focusing on the role of the Chilean Education Council (CEC) and the Chilean Teachers' Union (CTU).
- Ontario:** Examines the impact of the 2008 Education Act on teacher education, focusing on the role of the Ontario Education Council (OEC) and the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF).
- Sweden:** Discusses the impact of the 2008 Education Act on teacher education, focusing on the role of the Swedish Education Council (SEC) and the Swedish Teachers' Union (STU).

Each poster includes a 'Headline Findings' section, a 'System Overview' section, and a 'Teacher Status and Autonomy' section. The posters are presented in a collage format, with some overlapping and some partially obscured. The background of the collage features a large tree on the right side and a small image of a branch with leaves on the bottom left.

Teacher Identities and Professionalism Research

Sweden



Headline Findings

Decline and Reform

- After years of declining PISA scores, reforms have started to reverse the downwards trend. PISA 2016 results brought Sweden in line with international averages.
- A consensus-based approach to school reform has been taken through a Schools' commission of teachers, researchers and representatives from unions and organizational bodies supported by a 'Trust in Teachers' attitude amongst policy-makers.
- New initiatives and programmes are being put in place to address improvement priorities, as identified by the OECD, and challenges, such as those created by immigration.

The Teaching Profession

- Swedish teachers do not see their profession as highly valued in society and there is an acute teacher shortage in some areas. This is a long-standing problem partly due to the heavy workload, relatively low salaries and limited opportunities for appraisal and feedback. In spite of this, teachers' sense of self-efficacy and job satisfaction is high.
- Considerable attention is being paid to improve the attractiveness of the profession by raising teacher salaries, providing funding for increased numbers of support staff, developing professional standards and resourcing professional development activities.

Making Collaboration Work

- Swedish teachers have a high degree of autonomy and a long tradition of teamwork. Many teachers however do not have the conditions they need for good quality teaching.
- Improvements to leadership, particularly around pedagogical leadership, are seen as key to addressing this. Currently however principals have heavy workloads and devote large amounts of their time to administration.
- New initiatives will involve collaboration between the Agency and individual schools with great needs, pioneering new approaches to collaboration.

Country-specific headline findings – eg Sweden

- Decline and reform,
- The status of the profession
- Making collaboration work

Key issues for all countries:

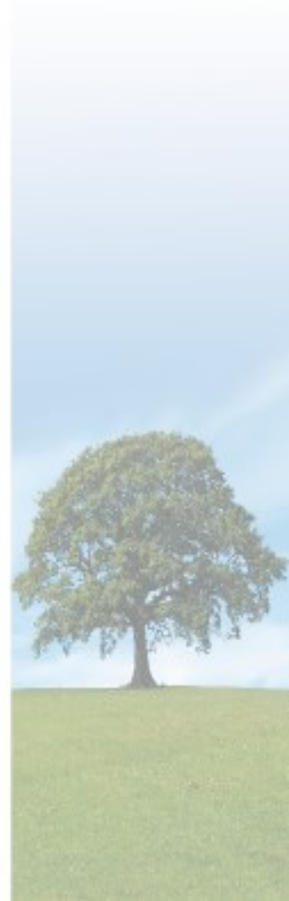
- Teacher status and autonomy
- Training, employment and retention
- Professional development
- Pedagogy, Curriculum and Classroom Culture
- Leadership accountability and assessment





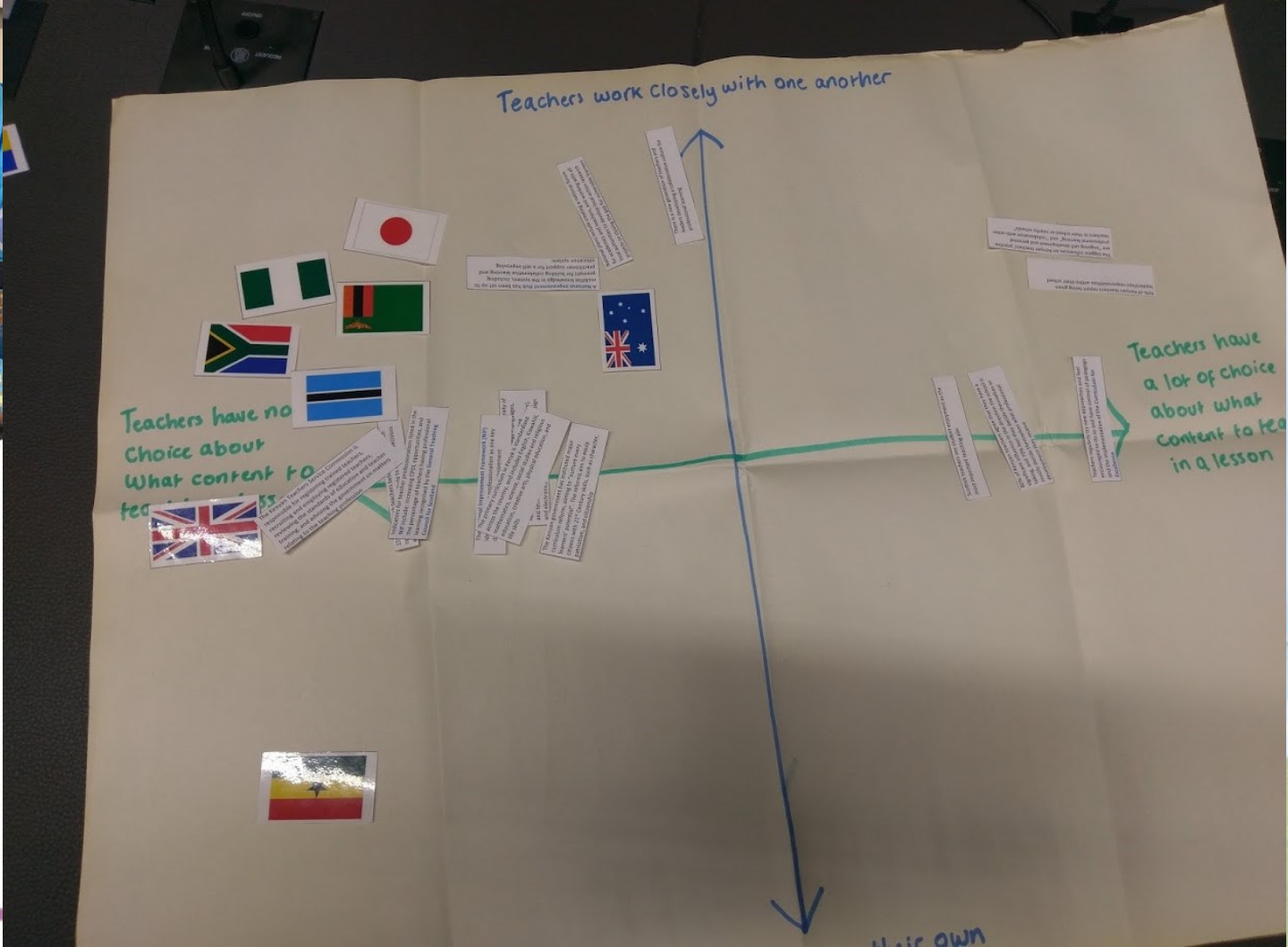
Stage 2 – what makes a difference within country

- We used the wider research to structure a survey
- We used the country analyses/posters to contextualise survey questions
- We worked with teacher professional bodies and associations to recruit teachers to surveys
- We compared surveys and posters and created country highlight reports



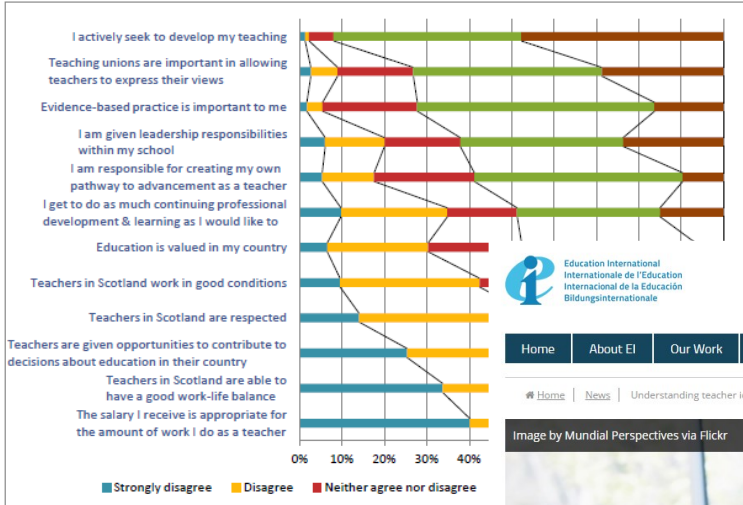


International teacher focus groups



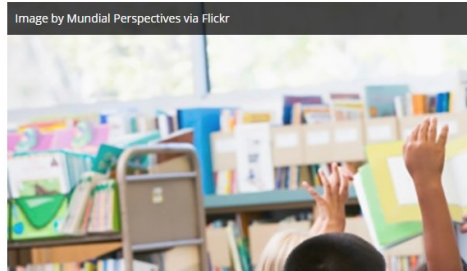
The survey highlights from Scotland were published on the EI website, and made national news in Scotland

77% of teachers in Scotland do not feel they are able to have a good work-life balance



Scottish teachers feel they have higher levels of autonomy over their individual teaching &

- Teachers in Scotland feel they have:
- Their pay (97%)
 - How they and other teachers
 - National schemes of learning



Understanding teacher identity in the 21st century

Text by: [Education International](#) Published: 22.09.2017 Last edited: 26.09.2017

How national policies and cultural factors influence the development of teachers' professional identities is the subject of a new set of studies commissioned by Education International – an eye-opener for educators and policy makers alike.

How national policies and cultural factors influence the development of teachers' professional identities is the subject of a new set of studies commissioned by Education International – an eye-opener for educators and policy makers alike.

The Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) and Education International have developed a new set of studies that focus on teacher's professional identities. The studies will be published in the next few months.

Education undervalued in Scotland, teachers say



Almost four in five teachers surveyed did not feel that a work-life balance was achievable PA

Share Save

Teachers feel disrespected and overworked and most do not believe that education is valued in Scotland, according to a study.

The findings of a survey of more than 1,300 teachers also revealed that almost four in five did not feel they could achieve a work-life balance while only 15 per cent felt they were given the chance to influence national education policy.





Created illustrative case studies of key issues

- Teacher Identity and Leadership – recruitment and retention
- Continuing Professional Learning and Development
- Teacher Evaluation
- Teacher Voice in Policymaking
- The Integration of Refugees and Migrants



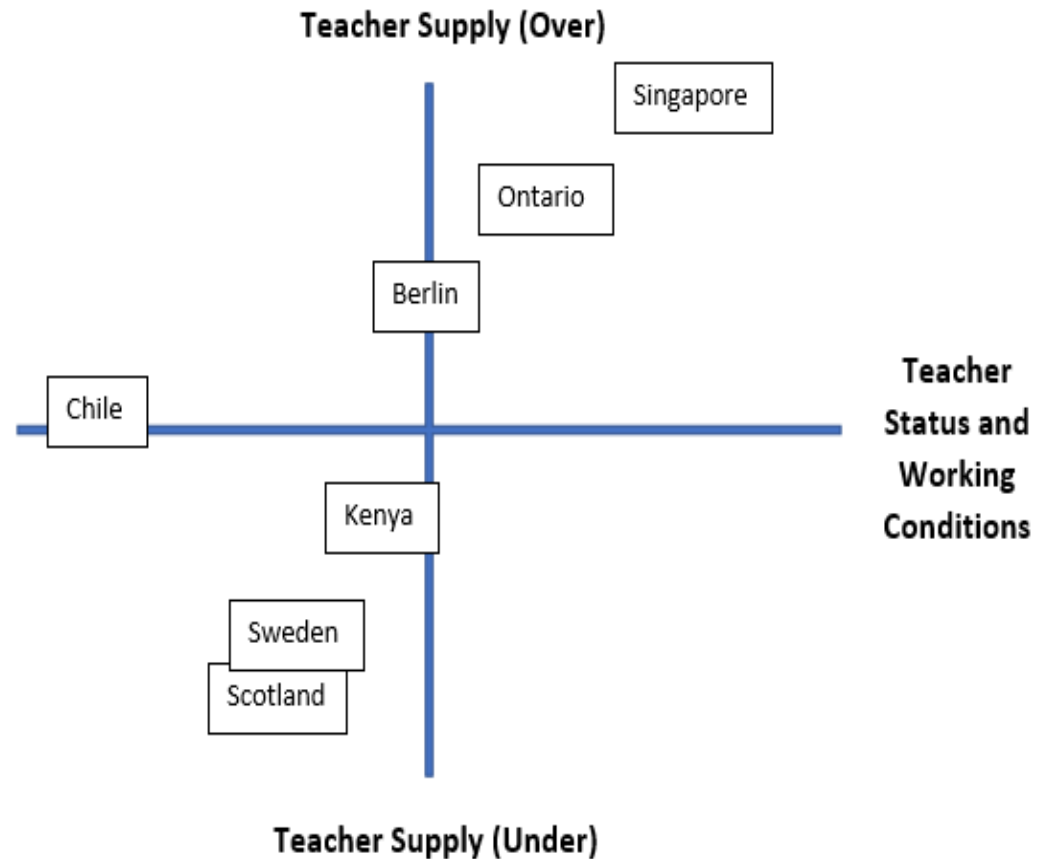
Overview

- Lots of contextual variation but some intriguing trends
- Pedagogy is central concern of CPDL even in countries where curriculum reform dominates
- *Except where* performance is high/policy is long term
 - where the spotlight has moved on to teacher leadership as the driver for improving pedagogy and the curriculum
- Interesting patterns in the relationships between key factors including:
 - Teacher supply and teacher working conditions
 - Teacher working conditions and system performance
 - Teacher CPDL and system performance
 - Teachers' powers to make decisions about pedagogy and about curriculum



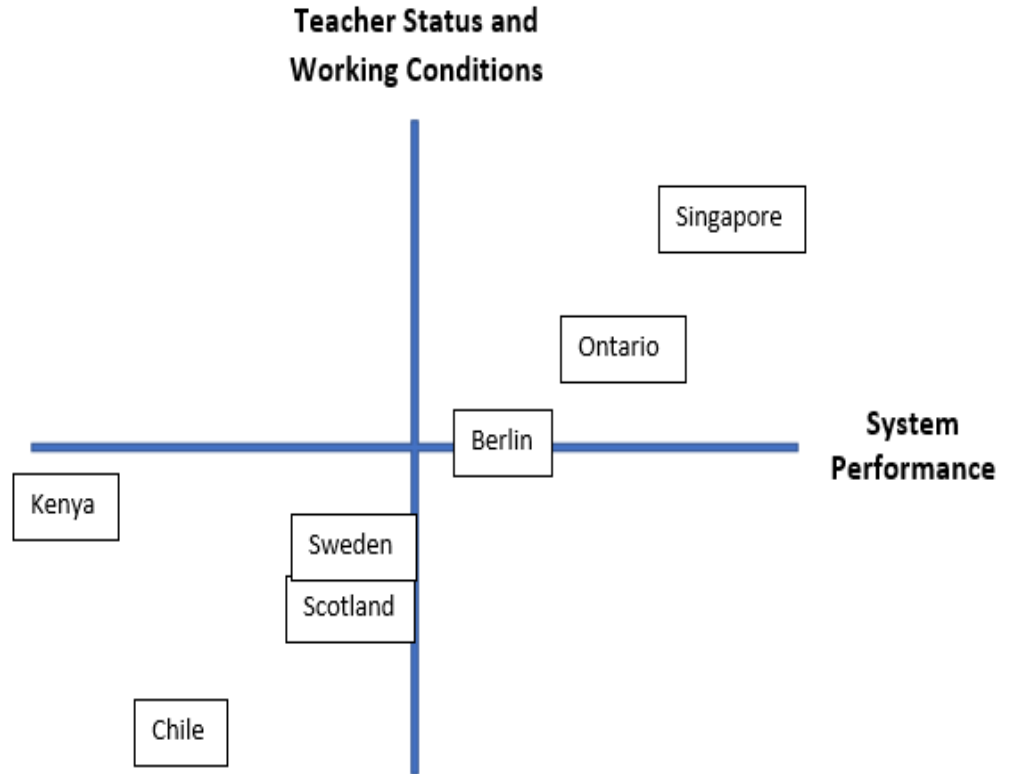
Teacher supply and working conditions

- Strong, predictable and relatively linear links between teacher supply and status / working conditions



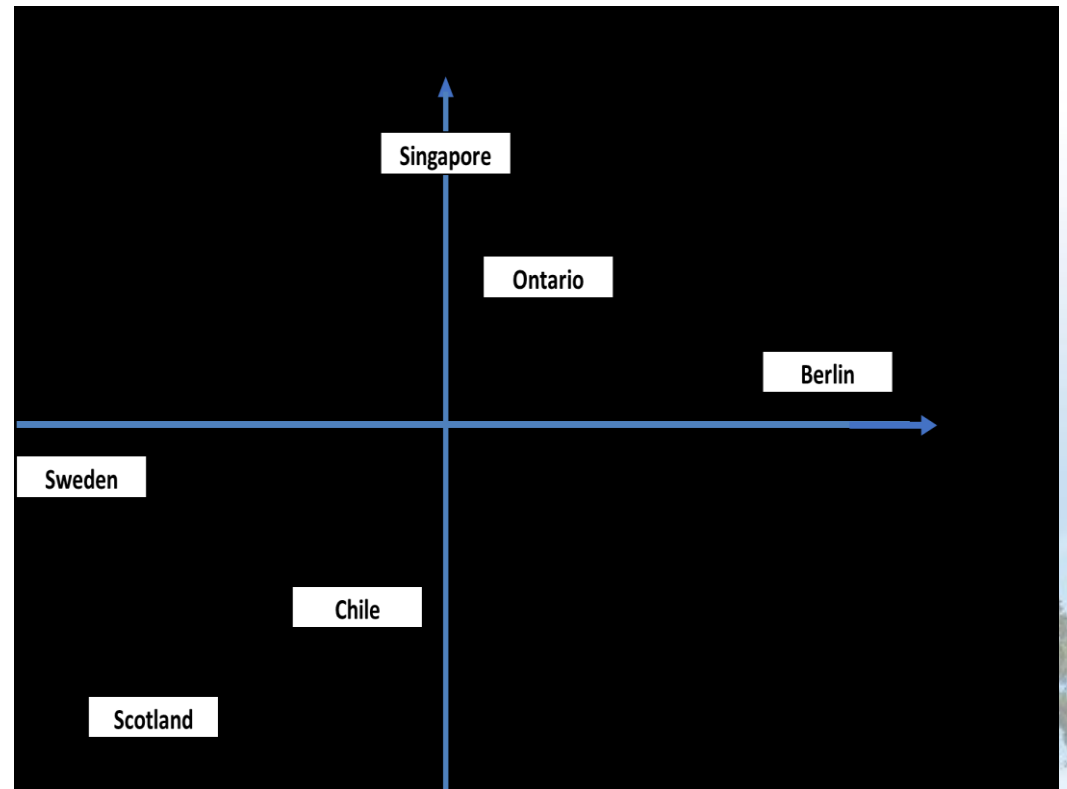
Teacher status and system performance

- Strong links between system performance and working conditions in many of these countries too
- Outliers partly relate to wide diversity *within countries*
- **Where do you think England would sit on the status ad working conditions axis?**



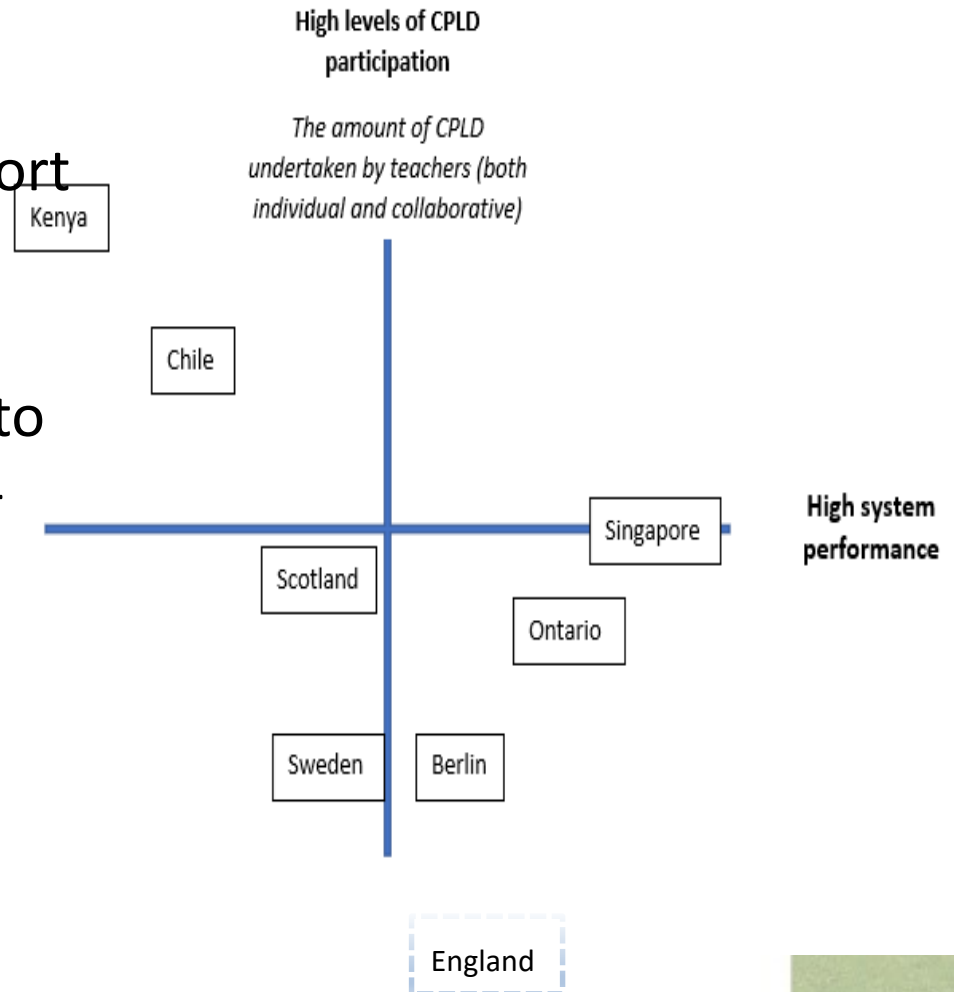
Work load and work life balance

- The patterns around workload and work life balance are diverse
- Lower working hours don't guarantee a positive work life balance
- Positive status and predictability/stability look to be more important
- **Where do you think England would sit on the work life balance axis of this grid?**



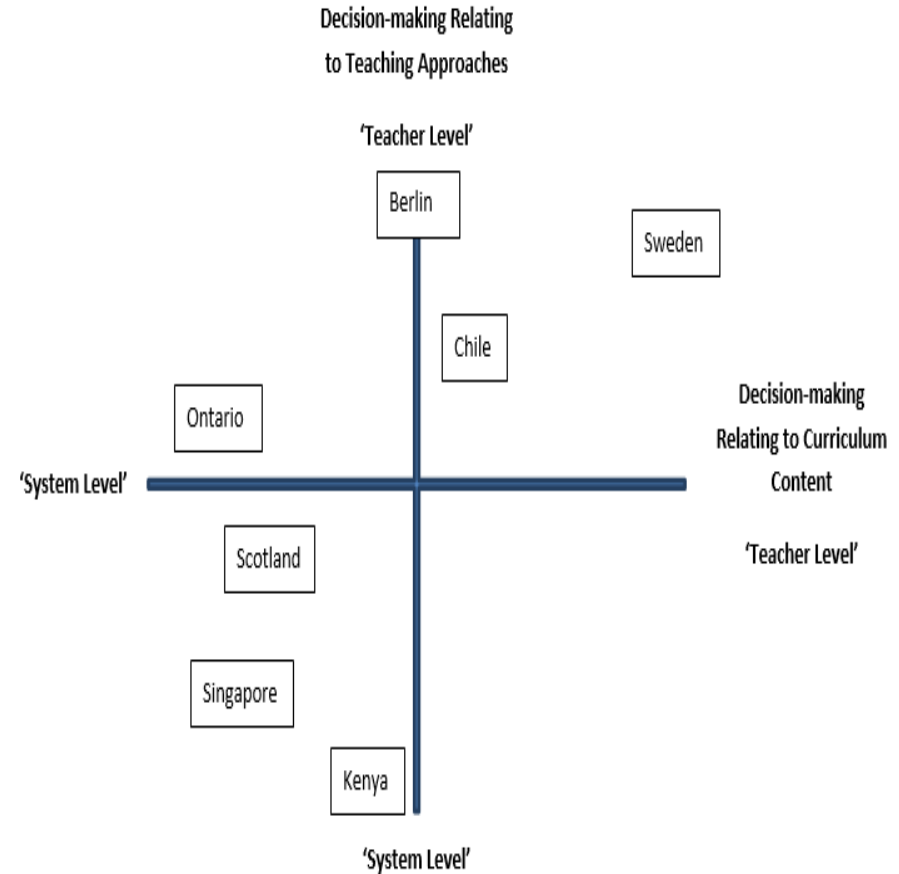
CPDL and system performance

- Intense and new reforms sometimes generate very significant increases in short term CPDL
- In Ontario teacher CPDL has, if anything, reduced to make way for teacher co-learning and leadership
- **Where do you think England would sit on the CPDL axis of this grid?**



Teacher decision making

- There is often more room for teacher professional judgement re pedagogy than the curriculum
- But in high performing systems in this sample, decision making about both was relatively centralised...
- And teacher leadership was a strong feature of system design
- **Where do you think England would sit on the curriculum & or pedagogic axis of this grid?**



Teacher values

Teachers ranked their values in interesting ways:

- Across all seven systems, ensuring student success in formal examinations was felt to be the least important teaching aim
- Promoting student interest and enjoyment in education was top, in Ontario, Scotland and Chile; and
- Educating students to be good citizens was top in Berlin, Singapore and Kenya (which linked to their enjoyment)
- In Sweden communicating subject knowledge to students was the top priority which flowed directly from new reforms which focus on communicating knowledge
- What teachers in the other six countries were saying was that the route to success was *through* engaging with students in the round



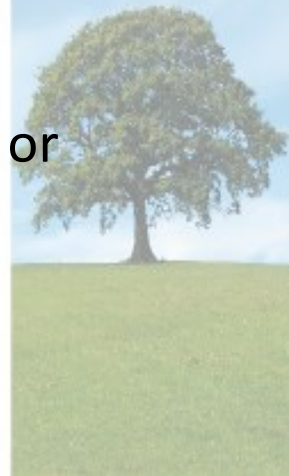
Value priorities

- Where would we rank teachers' values in England?
 - Communicating subject knowledge
 - Ensuring student success in formal examinations
 - Promoting student enjoyment and interest in education
 - Inspiring students to follow their interests
 - Preparing students for their next stage of education/employment
 - Educating students to be good citizens



CPDL and teacher supply

- This evidence suggests that key building blocks for developing teachers' professional identities include:
 - Clarity about career stages and progression that value teaching not just schooling
 - Positioning teachers as professionals who want and need to learn on a continuous basis, not as practitioners whose work needs to be corrected; and
 - Investment in high quality CPDL
- These factors helped ensure strong teacher supply
- But CPDL becomes a problem not a solution if
 - It focuses on correcting deficits; or
 - high levels of CPDL entitlements lack resource, ring fencing or capacity to do it well



Teacher status and system vitality

This evidence suggests that :

- Explicit policies focussed on enhancing the status of the teaching profession, and their professional learning, contribute to high performance and teacher retention
- Pupil achievement, system performance, education capacity and system vitality are linked to a range of measures, including explicit focus on:
 - Improving wider public perceptions of teachers as skilled professionals
 - Enhancing teachers' own professional learning and development, and the contribution of both to self-efficacy at the same time
 - Emphasising and developing teacher leadership
 - More holistic system goals



Work life balance - 1

- Perceived positive work life balance linked less with amount of mandated working time than:
 - The status of the profession, of teachers and teaching –probably relative to other professions
 - Aligning the system’s and the teachers’ professional values?
- Changes that had little or no impact arose from :
 - Formal reductions in time without reducing workloads;
 - Or carving reductions out of what teachers see as fundamental



Other time and work life balance issues

- Other issues included the importance of:
 - Attending to timescales as well as the quantum of time in addressing teachers' work life balance
 - E.G. designing change initiatives and reforms on the basis of accurate evidence about the constraints under which teachers are working so that, for example, teachers have the time to grasp new responsibilities effectively.
 - Ensuring that requirements made of teachers, including those that help them develop the things they prize such as their practice and their confidence in their ability to make a difference for their students, are *proportional to the resources given to them*



Developing increasingly teacher led systems

- *Aspiration* for “increasingly teacher or school-led system” common
 - E.g. **Scottish** government wants to create a “genuinely school- and teacher-led system” – via e.g. Curriculum for Excellence.
- Some evidence to suggest gaps arise because policy makers:
 - equate a commitment to a teacher-led system with decentralised policy making
 - organise this through delegation to local leaders who may or may not then involve teachers
- The gap is also often down to the Bananarama principle
 - E.g. in Scotland teachers are free to lead/responsible for a wholly cross-curricular national curriculum
 - With little curriculum resource, CPDL support or underpinning rationale to help them navigate the resulting complexity



Magical thinking

- Magical thinking about changing teachers' professional identities sounds fun and appeals to policy makers
- But what actually works is long term, cross party aspirational thinking, planning , working and listening





philippa.cordingley@curee.co.uk

[@PhilippaCuree](https://twitter.com/PhilippaCuree)

www.curee.co.uk

Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in
Education

Tel: 024 7652 4036

