Our team used case studies of eight countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Taiwan, S. Korea, Japan and Singapore) to examine how nations used policy or laws to affect their national teaching workforce in the period 2000-2015. We examined legislation or polices affecting teachers (e.g. merging teacher ed schools into academic universities, setting new teacher licensure etc.) as well as decisions to take part in transnational testing programs.

In this paper, we focus primarily on methodological issues -- can national case studies provide evidence that will allow us to evaluate the efficacy of various theories that try to account for global trends or changes in educational policy around the world? We specifically consider theories of global governance, governmentality, world culture theory and other theories of globalization that posit the spread of testing regimes, neo-liberal ideology and other reform agendas (e.g. GERM).

We ask, “what is a nation a case of?” with regard to each theoretical framework. We provide a brief summary of the policies enacted and discuss how the variation among these cases suggest strong national trajectories and stronger regional effects that have been previously theorized.