

Convergence and divergence in teacher education across Europe

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Convergence and divergence in teacher education policies

- Involves identification of broad patterns across Europe, with some time-limited attempts to look at resulting issues
- Structure of presentation –
 - overall focus on Initial Teacher Education (ITE)
 - background factors in policy analysis
 - teacher recruitment & retention
 - teaching and teacher education
 - ITE – qualification levels and practical experience

Policies and public discourses

Policies are only 'representations which are **encoded** in complex ways (via ... interpretations and re-interpretations) and **decoded** in complex ways (via actors, interpretation and meanings in relation to their history, experiences, skills, resources and context).'

Stephen Ball, 1994:16

Policies and public discourses

Policies and the 'public discourses' they may represent often serve to 'dull sensitivity to the complexities that underlie the practices of teacher education....(by) a filtering out of historical, social and political assumptions'

(Thomas Popkewitz 1987:ix).

The lived realities of teacher education and teaching

- Under broad patterns of convergence and divergence at policy levels are the realities of teacher education as it is 'lived' by student teachers, serving teachers in the schools, Teacher Education Institutes and universities in which they work.

Background factors

Broad social, cultural, political and economic changes across Europe

The effects of these changes on broad government policies

Government investments in teacher education as a lever for change in schooling

Radical changes to schooling and Higher Education

High stakes testing regimes (PISA)

Globalisation, pan-European agendas and their particular effects on the marketisation of the Higher Education sector

Economics and political choices

‘Public budgets in all Member States are under great pressure. The global economic downturn and declining revenue in many Member States in recent years have aggravated this problem and put greater pressure on education and training budgets, as countries try to balance their public finances. Fiscal constraints have led to cut-backs in public funding for some phases of education.’ (EC, 2015)

Socio-cultural and technological change

Increasing social, cultural and linguistic diversity across Europe

Increasing levels of social inequality in some Member States

Dealing with the fall-out from conflict and social unrest

Fast pace of technological change leading to changes in social behaviour

Technology in the outside world and technology in schools – implications for teacher education

Globalisation and international competitiveness: European consequences

- Neo-liberal regimes of performativity and audit – the ‘marketisation’ of Higher Education
- PISA results for schooling
- International hierarchies and league tables for universities in which research is prioritised

Pan European agendas for education

- The European educational agenda - long term impact of the Bologna Process – still causing structural, conceptual and institutional changes in teacher education
- Other pan-European agendas with implications for education – e.g. Lisbon Strategy (2000), Employment and Training Policies (2010) and the 10 year growth strategy EU 2020.

The work of teachers and teacher education

- The highly complex and challenging tasks teachers face and the need for each of them to develop high-level expertise in teaching and learning and an understanding of what it takes for young people to succeed in their education
- Teacher education then becomes educating for the schools of today as well as the schools of tomorrow (for teachers' ability to respond effectively to educational changes to come)

Visions of teaching and teacher education

The contributions of teachers and teacher education to the common (social or public) good

Teaching as an art, informed and developed by research

The central importance of research and scholarship in teacher education

Teacher recruitment and retention

- ‘The most important factors for attracting teachers to the profession and retaining them within it: salary, employment security, status of the profession, commitment to education/ contribution to society and consequent levels of job satisfaction.’

(European Commission, 2015)

Improving the quality and status of teaching across Europe?

- **Convergence** - many Member States are taking actions to improve the quality and status of teaching
- **But also**, 'some Member States' responses to the economic crisis have had a negative impact on the status of the teaching professions, which risks engendering high costs later.' (EC, 2015)

Improving the quality and status of teaching across Europe?

- **Divergence** – whilst recruitment to ITE is high and teacher numbers are good in some Member States, others are now facing significant teacher recruitment crises and / or teacher retention problems (EC, 2015)

ITE as a policy lever

Convergence –

- Positioning of ITE as a policy lever for changing the schooling system and for raising the quality of teaching but divergences in how this is to be achieved
- a known trend across (*most of*) Europe towards requiring higher levels of qualifications (MA/BA) for Initial Teacher Education (EC, 2015, words in brackets are my addition)

Convergence and divergence in strategies to reform ITE

- higher levels of qualifications for ITE including moves to Masters level (Hungary, Portugal, Norway, Ireland)
- alternative routes (e.g. Teach for Estonia, Bulgaria, Austria, Norway etc schemes and Employment Based Initial Teacher Training in England)
- alternative providers (e.g. Hibernia on-line courses in Ireland; schools in England)
- no ITE required at all

Bologna and its after effects

Long term impact of the Bologna Process – causes structural, conceptual and institutional changes for teacher education -

- re-modelling of existing degree and post-graduate ITE programmes to meet Bologna specifications of degree and M level accreditation
- curriculum changes, including enhanced focus on research-informed ITE in some states
- institutional mergers / collaborations
- institutional 'upgrading' and the consequences for teacher educators employed in TEIs

The Benefits of ITE

- Analysis of TALIS data (EC, 2015) shows that more than nine out ten teachers in Europe have completed Initial Teacher Education (91.2 %).
- The same analysis shows that at EU level, teachers feel better prepared for the different aspects of their job if they have completed an Initial Teacher Education programme
- A large majority of these teachers (80%) say that their studies included the three essential elements of content, pedagogy and practice.

What is included in ITE?

2 European Commission definitions –

- the ‘content’ of teaching (subject knowledge)* its ‘pedagogy’ (understanding of teaching and learning) and ‘practice’ (classroom-based training)
- pedagogical competences, subject-matter knowledge* and subject didactics + development of students' capacities for reflective practice and on-the-job research.

Practical training and school-based practice

- **Convergence** - a trend towards increasing the amount of practical training, including school-based practice, within programmes but **divergences** in what this means and how it is to be achieved
- What does 'practical training' consist of beyond school-based practice? What counts as school-based practice within programmes (more than just the practicum)?
- What goes if practice increases?

Learning in schools: beyond the practicum?

‘There is a trend towards remodelling Initial Teacher Education for student teachers to learn in school settings *so that they can get into real classrooms early in the programme, spend more time there and receive stronger support in the process.*’

EC (2015) *(my italics)*

The Practicum

- The amount of time devoted to practical training in schools varies widely between countries.

For example, for primary teachers ranges on UG degrees from -

- 40 hours in Latvia
- 630 hours in Italy
- 900 hours in Austria.
- 840 hours (24 weeks) England on a post-graduate course of 36 weeks.

The Practicum and beyond?

- Where is the practicum placed in the programme?
- How long is it?
- What does the practicum 'curriculum' look like?
- What does it involve in terms of activities for the student teacher?
- (How) does it relate to previous learning in the TEI?
- What kinds of teacher knowledge are valued during the practicum?
- Who teaches / mentors / supports the student?
- Who is in charge of the practicum?
- Who assesses its outcomes?

The Practicum Curriculum

The 'practicum' curriculum – workplace learning –

- needs to be carefully planned and implemented;
- created by effective partnerships between TEIs and schools,
- clear responsibilities, roles and resources;
- careful planning of the practical classroom elements and clear links within ITE programmes
- links between practice and research clarified

The Practicum Curriculum

- appropriate use of observation, feedback, reflection and collaboration
- both formative and summative assessment for student teaching staff
- mentorship support matching the individual learning needs
- adequately selected, educated, supported and remunerated mentors

Teaching the (student) teachers

Convergence – further focus needed on those who teach teachers –

- enhanced mentoring programmes including at M level and / or professional recognition (Norway, Hungary)
- validation of School-Based Teacher Educators' roles (the Netherlands and England)
- enhancing the work of teacher educators in TEIs and their competences, including 'transversal competences' (the Netherlands, Flanders, Austria)

Teaching and learning for all teachers

The professional development potential in teaching teachers – new learning, new roles, new forms of professional recognition

Convergence – the potential for development of new ways of ‘teaching teachers’ to improve ITE and CPD

But moving beyond mentoring?

Summary

Convergence - many Member States are taking actions to improve the quality and status of teaching

Consensus and **convergence** - continuity and progression of learning across the career-course is very important for career satisfaction and development

But also, some responses to the economic crisis have had a negative impact on the status of teaching

Summary

Convergence in positioning of ITE as a policy lever for change and quality enhancement but **divergence** in how this is to be achieved

Known trend across (*most of*) Europe towards requiring higher levels of qualifications (MA/BA) for ITE but also **divergence** and difference

Summary

Convergence - a trend towards increasing the amount of practical training but divergence around what this means in terms of teacher knowledge

Consensus and **convergence** around the importance of those who teach teachers and their professional development

Divergence in terms of how this is implemented

Pan-European Implications

Europe 2020 – visions of pan-European prosperity –
economic outcomes linked to educational outcomes

European teacher & student teacher mobility issues?

Varied strategies for reforming and improving ITE (and
CPD) without accompanying investment in valuing of
teachers' work and schooling structures?

Against backgrounds of increasing social inequality?

Teacher recruitment and retention

- The most important factors for attracting teachers to the profession and retaining them within it: salary, employment security, status of the profession, commitment to education/ contribution to society and consequent levels of job satisfaction