

**Teachers' Education as a Part of European Higher Education
Area**
(What Strategy for Teachers' Education?)

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Introductory questioning

Teacher education and training is not an island.

Teachers are working in the middle of our societies; however, sometimes they seem to be isolated with their children into secure classrooms.

Education and training systems go through deep challenges and changes today. Their structural, social and international dimensions undergo substantial reforming.

Do these changes bring new chances and development also to the area of teacher education and training, in particularly to teachers as a graduate (higher education) profession?

Reforms are a necessity, partnership also

Reforms of (higher) education systems in Europe and globally are *a necessity*, established by the fast changing world:

→ *Broadening access to (tertiary) education*

→ *Progressing of the "knowledge society"*

→ *Internationalisation of (higher) education*

→ *Mobility, co-operation, competition, interdependence*

In the integrating Europe of today, despite problems, there is a visible *need of an open forum* in which governments, universities, students and other stakeholders could meet and discuss issues related to modernization and development of higher education. This forum is the *Bologna process* (BP).

European Higher Education Area - 2010

The main aim of *BP* is to establish a common *European Higher Education Area* (EHEA; 45 countries) *until 2010* with the following characteristics:

- mutual *recognition of qualifications*;
- common overarching *structure of studies* (three cycles);

- agreed rules and procedures in *quality assurance*;
- more *flexible* study paths;
- perspective of *long life learning* in higher education;
- increased *mobility* of students, graduates and teachers;
- consideration of the principle of *employability*, etc.

At the *legislative* level national authorities are responsible for implementation, at the *programme* level higher education institutions take the responsibility.

Structural vs. internal aspects of a renewal

In the process of renewal, *structural* changes seem to be of primary interest. Indeed, comparing with the traditional models changes are huge. *Three cycles*:

- first / undergraduate* (3-4 years, 180-240 ECTS);
- second / master* (1-2 years, 60-120 ECTS);
- third / doctoral* (3-4 years, 180 ECTS).

Structural changes are important but their potential could be fully realized only in an *internal renewal*.

The very *philosophy* (concepts) of *higher education studies* is changing – including studies of future teachers.

→ *A Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA* (Copenhagen, January 2005 → Bergen 19 May 2005).

The Copernicus Turn in Higher Education

Traditionally, approaches in higher education have been started *from the perspective of those, who produce, hold and forward the Knowledge*; saying simpler – from the *professors' perspective*. This was the 'Archimedes point' of the (traditional) academic knowledge and all study structures, teaching and learning methods etc. have been subjected to it.

The new higher education discourse which had been growing up during last decades turns around this very point and establishes it in a new way *from the perspective of those who need and search for Knowledge*; saying simpler - from the *student's perspective* [that is, *student-centred approach*]. Study structures, teaching and learning methods need a new (conceptual) 'point of footing'.

Some new concepts

Higher education qualification: "Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme." Equally important as for *employment* as for *continuation of studies*.

Learning outcomes are distinct from the *aims* of learning: they are concerned with the *achievements of the student* rather than the overall *intentions of the teacher*.

Accompanied by transparent assessment criteria they specify the (minimum) requirements for the award of ECTS credits.

Competences: dynamic combination of attributes (with respect to *knowledge* and its *application, to attitudes and responsibilities*) that describe **learning outcomes** = *what are students able to perform at the end of studies.*

The outcome is more than a mechanic sum of courses

Flexibility: Ways in which an individual student is allowed to combine credits (workload; elective courses) to get an appropriate *profile* to his/her *qualification* (or to broaden his/her qualification in the life long learning perspective, e.g. to get license to teach another subject) should consider a principle that the final outcome - the degree - *is more than a mechanic sum of individual courses / modules.*

Further on, **learning outcomes** are defined by three dimensions: *cycles / levels of study* (descriptors of learning outcomes at the first, second, third cycle), *student workload* (expressed in ECTS credits) and *quality of an institution* (organisation; research and teaching; equipment etc.).

Quality Assurance (QA)

→ *Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA* (E 4 Group; February 2005 → Bergen, 19 May 2005)

1. The importance of *internal QA at higher education institutions*; the role of students.
2. The use of an agreed set of *European standards for internal and external QA* in a context of BP.
3. Establishment of *European Register of recognized QA agencies*; cyclical reviews of QU agencies.
4. BP member states should enable universities *to choose among all agencies (evaluation & accreditation)* from the European register.
5. BP member states should *accept assessments from these agencies* and use as a basis for decisions on licensing or funding of higher education institutions.

Higher Education isn't an ivory tower

Higher Education has **multiple objectives** in modern societies:

- *development and maintenance an advanced knowledge base;*
- *preparation for the labour market;*
- *enabling personal development and*
- *preparation for life as active citizens in democratic society.*

There is no advanced knowledge without *autonomy*; however, it is necessary that in the process of designing new curricula as well as in evaluating quality universities *co-operate with all stakeholders.*

In *teacher education* this is even more important because it is an *interdisciplinary field* which demands the ‘external (school) environment’ as its laboratory.

Higher Education vs. Teacher Education

Many *higher education institutions* have been starting processes of *curricula renewal* in various *disciplines*.

In different disciplines and study areas a broad *inter-national co-operation in curricular renewal* has been also launched; including the area of *teacher education and training*.

The case of **TUNING**: over 150 universities from all BP countries ‘tune’ their curricula in 9 disciplinary areas, including *education and teacher education* – see <http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu>.

EU countries, in the frames of the ‘*Objectives 2010*’ agenda, also pay attention to the development of teachers education and training – *ENTEP network*: not only *initial teacher education* at universities and colleges but also *in-service training* and development of *partnerships with schools*.

Some Tuning findings

There is an incredible *variety of traditions and systems* of teacher education and training in Europe: it is necessary to ‘*tune*’ them; however, any ‘*uniformation*’ (‘*harmonization*’) should be strictly *avoided*.

Bologna *three cycles system* gives better *chances for the development and empowerment* of this area.

The *internal (curricular) renewal based on new concepts* (e.g. learning outcomes, competences, ECTS etc.) make the design of *comparable programmes possible* (mobility, recognition, transfer, etc.) without any ‘*uniformation*’ of institutional curricula. The main stress has been given to *modernizing methods and approaches to learning, teaching and assessment*, including *internal quality assurance measures*.

Common EU Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications

In the broadened EU-25 the ‘*tuning*’ of (*not only tertiary*) *qualifications* in various professions is a growing necessity: a common framework of qualifications – including upper secondary education – is already under construction.

Last year (2004), EC – DG Education has started preparing a special document on *competences and qualifications for teachers and trainers*.

Draft document stresses the *role and importance of quality education of teachers and trainers* in the context of the *EU Lisbon strategy*.

Education and training of teachers and trainers – also in close co-operation of faculties and schools – has been confirmed as one of the *key factors* for the entrance to the *knowledge society*.

A. Common principles

The profession of teachers and trainers is:

(1) *a graduate profession of an interdisciplinary nature which interlinks:*

- a) a knowledge of their *subject matter*,
- b) a knowledge of *pedagogy*,
- c) the skills required to *guide and support learners*,
- d) an understanding of the *social and cultural dimension of education*;

(2) a profession placed *within the context of lifelong learning* (in-service education and training);

(3) a *mobile* profession (within Europe);

(4) A profession *based on partnerships* (e.g. with schools etc.).

Last but not least: (is/should be?!) an *attractive* profession with an appropriate *status in the society!*

B. Key competences

Teaching, training and learning should be approached in a broader sense: as in their *economic* as well in their *social and cultural* aspects.

The work of teachers and trainers demands to develop their competences in *three distinctive horizons*:

- (1) *work with knowledge, technology and information*;
- (2) *work with fellow human beings* (inclusion etc.);
- (3) *work with and in society* (national, European and global dimension).

On 21-21 June 2005 a large EU conference was organized in Brussels to check this *agenda* before formal adoption of Teacher Competences and Qualifications in political bodies of the European Union (2006). Participants firmly supported it.

A conclusion

Exchange of good practices and co-operation between countries is needed today. The case of a Research Project *Enhancing Professional Development of Education Practitioners and Teaching* (2004-2006; 12 SEE countries - Albania and Slovenia included)

aims at:

- using best European practices in particular circumstances of the SEE region to improve teacher education and training in local environments,
- making these practices part of institutional reality,
- contributing to the national developments in the area of teacher education and training and
- improving regional and European co-operation in teacher education and training.