

Theses on Renewal of Teachers' Education in Slovenia (Recapitulation)

Note: For integral text in Slovenian click
<http://www.pef.uni-lj.si/strani/bologna/dokumenti/prenova-pedag-studijev.pdf>

The Bologna process has stimulated reform activities at Slovenian universities and in the area of teacher education and training. For the moment, there are fairly diverse notions about which direction the development of new study programmes for future teachers should take. The question that remains least resolved at the teacher training faculties is the relationship between undergraduate and postgraduate studies, or between the first- and second-cycle qualifications.

The first initiative towards creating a general concept of new study programmes in Slovenia was taken by the Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana; in this it relied primarily on the experiences it gained through its co-operation in the TUNING¹ project, while all the main documents of the Bologna process were also applied. In summer 2004, the faculties of education of all three universities in Slovenia harmonised and confirmed this concept at a joint meeting.² Below we present the seven main points of this concept.

(1) Mission of the faculties of education. There is an increasing trend in Europe and worldwide that universities through specialised faculties (under different names: Teacher Faculties, faculties of education etc.) foster intertwined activities focussing on:

- a) *the education and training* of teachers, trainers, educators, counsellors and other professional staff (hereinafter: 'teachers')³ working in the institutions of education and training as well as in other institutions within the system of education and training;
- b) *research* in the complex area of education and training; and
- c) *contributions to cultural and economic development* at national and/or regional levels in co-operation with their stakeholders (governmental and non-governmental organisations, media, publishers, human resource development, employment etc.).

(2) The teaching profession is a regulated profession. As in the majority of modern countries, in Slovenia the teaching profession is governed by regulations. The new systemic legislation in the education field (1995) confirmed the trend that Slovenia had been gradually establishing since the mid-1980s:

- a) teachers must hold a *higher education degree of an appropriate profile* (e.g. teaching subject/s) that includes education theories, pedagogy and teaching practice; this qualification can be achieved either in a parallel (integral) model of initial (pre-service) study or in a consecutive model, that is with appropriate credential programmes after achieving a higher education degree of an appropriate profile regarding the teaching

¹ The Tuning website can be found at: <<http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu>> and <www.rug.nl/let/tuningeu>.

² This concept has been published (in Slovenian) in Plevnik, Tatjana (ed.). [*Key topics in education in Europe. In Slovenia: renewal of teacher education. In Europe: the teacher profession in Europe.*] Ljubljana: MoES, 2005, pp. 7-14. The renewal process of study programmes running at the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Education already follows these guidelines.

³ In this text, all professionals in education and training are understood as 'teachers' (teaching profession).

subject(s) but that does not include education theories, pedagogy and teaching practice;
and

b) teachers take part in in-service education and training: they constantly upgrade, extend and update their knowledge and skills.

These regulations consider the complexity of the education and training process and presumes that during their initial education and training teachers acquire the *competencies needed to carry out the teaching profession in contemporary societies*, in particular:

a) the general level of knowledge, skills and understanding that is achieved in higher education;

b) familiarity with and mastery of education processes in relation to the individual and society in general; and

c) familiarity with and mastery of a specific (subject) area and/or discipline in which they will be operating professionally (educating, teaching, counselling etc.).

(3) *The teaching profession is an academic profession. Teachers' initial education contains two components: academic and vocational; it leads to a double qualification that:*

a) bases the challenges of professional work in education on scientific knowledge (of the subject, research methods etc.); and

b) gives teachers access to studies in the second and third cycles and to lifelong learning, which forms the basis for high-quality and innovative professional work, and for reflecting experience and top achievements in the profession.

(4) *Teaching profession and employability.* In verifying basic academic standards and quality, modern higher education, courses must also incorporate an assessment of graduates' employability. *Employability does not simply mean employment. The employability of graduates is measured by the flexibility of their qualifications:* by a range of generic and subject-specific competencies which are tied to a series of working processes, or which enable the effective expansion of this series of competencies.

Modern tertiary-level education and training for the teaching profession can therefore no longer be geared just to the mastery of the concluding work process such as transferring knowledge (teaching) in a specific narrow subject area. Subject areas are becoming increasingly interlinked, teaching is becoming ever more linked to mastering the entirety of education processes, while modern society is producing additional and ever new challenges: the widest possible inclusion of the young and adult population, concern for people with special needs, information and communication technology, the multicultural environment and so on. Alongside *quality*, the *breadth of training for the teaching profession* is today the most important *factor of employability*.

Initial (undergraduate) education courses therefore need to include *greater flexibility*: instead of (excessively) early specialisation in a (too) large number of subject areas, there is an urgent need to acquire basic and all other competencies that will enable and support the individual's professional development in the sense of lifelong learning (in-service training). Competencies do not merely depend on the specific narrow contents closed off (or even isolated) in individual courses, but are developed in all the courses that comprise the study programme. In the future, there will be an urgent need to expand the *elective part of studies*. *Greater flexibility* in courses also means systemically enabling someone who has already obtained the first teaching qualification – to teach for instance one or two subjects – to later enrol in further

study to *obtain a qualification for teaching e.g. a second or third subject*, and to have this recognised.

(5) *Teacher professional qualification and study cycles*. Training for the teaching profession and most importantly the employability of graduates is not just the concern of higher education institutions, but also *employers*; in this case, especially the ministry competent for education, and the managers of schools and other education institutions. In connection with plans for the new, 'Bologna' qualifications for teachers, it is especially significant here that the system of regulating the teaching profession in Slovenia has traditionally a *professional qualification on only one level of study: the undergraduate level*. One of the most important issues in overhauling study programmes is therefore how to define learning outcomes and qualifications at the end of the first and second cycles.

On this point, the Bologna process brings a major challenge for all European systems of teacher education and training. The study structure, which involves *two levels*, the undergraduate and postgraduate or master's (and, of course, a third, doctoral level),⁴ assumes two levels of competence or learning outcomes and therefore also two levels of professional qualification. In this new system, the master's degree is not and can no longer be a purely *academic qualification* aimed almost exclusively at the transition to doctoral studies, as was the case at one time when a few candidates enrolled in such studies. We are encountering a dual challenge:

a) the challenge for higher education institutions is how to design and orient the new postgraduate (master's) courses so that they will facilitate both appropriate *academic* and appropriate *professional qualifications*; and

b) the challenge for *employers* is how to orient the system of employment conditions (including the conditions for career advancement) so that *alongside the professional qualification obtained through undergraduate study (initial teacher education and training)* it will also require a *postgraduate professional qualification* and encourage the lifelong learning ambitions of students and graduates.

(6) *What kind of two-level structure for pedagogical studies?* The successful implementation and development of the new two-level ('Bologna') course structure therefore depends significantly on the considerations of employers and on the closest co-operation possible between them and higher education institutions. From the point of view of higher education institutions that specialise in providing initial education and training of teachers, while taking account of the traditions and current arrangements for qualifications, the following structure appears to be the *optimal possibility*:

a) *Undergraduate courses* should develop general higher education competencies, basic competencies for work in education and/or for teaching in a given subject area, and should continue to ensure the training of teachers to meet those standards that Slovenia attained close to twenty years ago. This level should therefore remain the *initial (professional) qualification for work in education*, at the same time being an (academic) *qualification for an entry to postgraduate studies*; these courses cover *240 ECTS points, lasting four years of full-time study*. Undergraduate courses in *pre-school education* also maintain the current duration and scope (*180 ECTS points or three years of full-time study*), but this specific area of study should regain the possibility of progression to postgraduate study. Undergraduate studies (can) end with a dissertation (up to 15 ECTS).

⁴ See *A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*. Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks. Copenhagen: Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, 2005.

b) *Postgraduate master's courses* develop competencies for demanding specialised research, development, counselling, management and similar work in education (*specialised professional qualification*) which, on the other hand, are at the same time the prerequisites for the possible continuation of studies at the doctoral level (academic qualification). Courses cover (at least) 60 ECTS points *or last one year of full-time and two years of external study*. Courses end with a master's dissertation (15 ECTS points). In line with the new legislation (May 2004), the study programmes are planned so that transitions from different previous courses are possible (including from courses that do not train teachers); candidates concluding three-year (180 KT) studies are also able to do additional modules so that at the end of the second level of study they can attain a total of 300 KT (180 + 120).⁵

c) *Doctoral courses* develop competencies for the most demanding specialised research and development work in (or about) education. Courses cover 180 ECTS points *or three years of full-time study (five years as an external student)*, of which 60 ECTS points are generally gained in organised forms of study, and 120 ECTS points through individual research work under a mentor. Studies end with a doctoral thesis.

In addition to the studies on three levels, in teacher higher education studies an important place is occupied by *study programmes for enhancement* (up to a maximum of 60 ECTS points), which enable the:

a) acquisition of the *expanded initial professional qualification* (e.g. qualification for teaching an additional subject; mastery of new features of the profession required by the regulations etc.);

b) *acquisition of a pedagogical qualification* for those candidates who have completed studies in an appropriate discipline (a consecutive model of teacher training);

c) acquisition of specific competencies that are – depending on the possible inappropriate profile of the candidate's undergraduate course – necessary to *continue studies at the master's level*; and

d) *updating, intensification or expansion of specific competencies* in line with the specific interests of the candidate and their working environment.

(7) *Teaching and learning strategies*. Ideas of overhauling courses at pedagogical and other faculties that educate teachers would be incomplete and inadequate if, alongside sectoral, systemic and institutional issues, there was no discussion of the *issue of overhauling course strategies*.

The preparation of new study programmes takes the *principles and tools of the ECTS credit system* into account and relies on development work and *recommendations formulated in this connection as part of the Tuning project*. It is vitally important here that the formulation of individual syllabuses and courses as a whole derive from a definition of the (necessary) study or work obligations of the student and do not – as in the past – revolve around the work obligation of the lecturer.

⁵ Account should be taken here of the recommendation of the Helsinki Bologna continuation seminar of March 2003, where the *minimum requirement* for this level of study is "60 ECTS credits at the *Master level*" (seminar on *Master-Level Degrees*, Helsinki, 14-15 March 2003; <http://www.Bologna-Berlin2003.de>). The additional 60 ECTS points in this case can in principle be organised from appropriate courses on the undergraduate and/or postgraduate level, but the "60 ECTS credits" (at the second level or in the fifth year of full-time study) must without exception be attained 'on the master's level' (*master level descriptor*). This criterion relates primarily to the complexity of postgraduate study.

The starting point for syllabuses is therefore the *general and specific competencies* and *learning outcomes* of the graduates, which are defined on different levels (knowledge, understanding, application, transferable skills); emphasis is given to the development of reflection. The methods of study and teaching ensure the attainment of planned study achievements and methods of assessing knowledge that are appropriate to this have also been envisaged.

Learning outcomes: these must be clearly described, along with the criteria for assessing or determining whether they have been achieved. This means that the (minimum) requirements and standards for gaining credit points in one study unit (subject, module) need to be specified. Achieving average and above-average requirements is indicated in the evaluation of the subject. *Learning outcomes* are planned in four groups: (a) knowledge and understanding; (b) application; (c) reflection; and (d) transferable skills.

Methods of teaching and learning: the *Tuning* documents emphasise the cognitivist or constructivist and socio-constructivist approaches in teaching, learning and assessment for achieving the higher quality of knowledge – higher-level, internalised and empirical knowledge. This means that, in line with this, we need to expand the methods of learning and teaching that enable such learning outcomes: lectures, seminars, research seminars, project work, individual assignments, co-operative learning and teaching, active (reflective) teaching, portfolio conferences, laboratory exercises, field work and workshops. We are introducing those methods of teaching and learning with which we can facilitate to the greatest extent the attainment of the learning outcomes set out in individual courses or modules.

Methods of assessment: in line with the principles formulated in the *Tuning* project, assessment does not simply cover knowledge but also understanding – assessment is focused on cognitive processes, a deeper understanding of the subject, the quality structure (scheme) of knowledge, the organisation of knowledge and higher-level processes (metacognitive and self-regulating). The existing traditional methods of assessing knowledge therefore need to be fleshed out, for example with oral/written exams, colloquiums, essays and seminar assignments, log books, practical assignments or a product, projects, dealing with real problems, dealing with unresolved assignments (problems), peer evaluation, portfolios and so on. A selection should be made of those assessment methods that are most suited to verifying the learning outcomes set out in the course or module.