

# C · E · P · S *Journal*

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*Revija Centra za študij edukacijskih strategij*

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# C · E · P · S *Journal*

Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal

*Revija Centra za študij edukacijskih strategij*

The CEPS Journal is an open-access, peer-reviewed journal devoted to publishing research papers in different fields of education, including scientific.

## **Aims & Scope**

The CEPS Journal is an international peer-reviewed journal with an international board. It publishes original empirical and theoretical studies from a wide variety of academic disciplines related to the field of Teacher Education and Educational Sciences; in particular, it will support comparative studies in the field. Regional context is stressed but the journal remains open to researchers and contributors across all European countries and worldwide. There are four issues per year. Issues are focused on specific areas but there is also space for non-focused articles and book reviews.

## **About the Publisher**

The University of Ljubljana is one of the largest universities in the region (see [www.uni-lj.si](http://www.uni-lj.si)) and its Faculty of Education (see [www.pef.uni-lj.si](http://www.pef.uni-lj.si)), established in 1947, has the leading role in teacher education and education sciences in Slovenia. It is well positioned in regional and European cooperation programmes in teaching and research. A publishing unit oversees the dissemination of research results and informs the interested public about new trends in the broad area of teacher education and education sciences; to date, numerous monographs and publications have been published, not just in Slovenian but also in English.

In 2001, the Centre for Educational Policy Studies (CEPS; see <http://ceps.pef.uni-lj.si>) was established within the Faculty of Education to build upon experience acquired in the broad reform of the

national educational system during the period of social transition in the 1990s, to upgrade expertise and to strengthen international cooperation. CEPS has established a number of fruitful contacts, both in the region – particularly with similar institutions in the countries of the Western Balkans – and with interested partners in EU member states and worldwide.



Revija Centra za študij edukacijskih strategij je mednarodno recenzirana revija z mednarodnim uredniškim odborom in s prostim dostopom. Namenjena je objavljanju člankov s področja izobraževanja učiteljev in edukacijskih ved.

## **Cilji in namen**

Revija je namenjena obravnavanju naslednjih področij: poučevanje, učenje, vzgoja in izobraževanje, socialna pedagogika, specialna in rehabilitacijska pedagogika, predšolska pedagogika, edukacijske politike, supervizija, poučevanje slovenskega jezika in književnosti, poučevanje matematike, računalništva, naravoslovja in tehnike, poučevanje družboslovja in humanistike, poučevanje na področju umetnosti, visokošolsko izobraževanje in izobraževanje odraslih. Poseben poudarek bo namenjen izobraževanju učiteljev in spodbujanju njihovega profesionalnega razvoja.

V reviji so objavljeni znanstveni prispevki, in sicer teoretični prispevki in prispevki, v katerih so predstavljeni rezultati kvantitativnih in kvalitativnih empiričnih raziskav. Še posebej poudarjen je pomen komparativnih raziskav.

Revija izide štirikrat letno. Številke so tematsko opredeljene, v njih pa je prostor tudi za netematske prispevke in predstavitve ter recenzije novih publikacij.

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## Editorial

### Building Partnerships in an Educational Ecosystem

The field of education is facing enormous pressures. Changes in societies, knowledge, and work are a reality in Europe as well as across the globe. The Council of the European Union (2014, p. 22) has noted:

In a fast changing world, the role of teachers – and the expectations placed upon them – are evolving too, as they face the challenges of new skills requirements, rapid technological developments and increasing social and cultural diversity, and the need to cater for more individualised teaching and special learning needs.

In order to improve education in the future, it is important to develop and implement strong partnerships (The European Council, 2014). Teacher education is expected to foster cross-disciplinary and collaborative approaches so that educational institutions and teachers understand that part of their task is to cooperate with relevant stakeholders, such as colleagues, parents, and employers. The European Council sets high standards for teacher educators and teacher education programmes; it expects them to respond to societal changes and improve the quality of education for different types of learners. The Council of the European Union (2014) emphasises that high-quality teaching is needed for learners to realise their full potential, both as individuals and as active members of society and as contributors to the workforce.

Teachers and teacher education play a key role in ensuring high-quality learning outcomes. However, they are only part of a bigger picture that is continuously changing. As Hargreaves described in the 1990s, that picture is a moving mosaic. In a complex world, many different parts are interconnected and interdependent. Teacher education and teachers' work happen in collaboration with many partners. Building a partnership is not a one-sided process in which communication only flows in one direction. Rather, it is a multi-faceted process with many changing contexts.

Building partnerships in education is the focus of the articles in this journal's current edition. It was the main theme at the conference of The Teacher Education Policy in Europe (TEPE) in 2015 in Dundee, Scotland. The *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal (CEPS Journal)* announced a call for papers on this topic and invited conference participants and people working in and with the field of teacher education to submit articles. TEPE is an academic network that brings together educational researchers, policy makers, teachers, and practitioners from Europe and also often from other countries globally.

Annual conferences provide an opportunity to reflect on the year's theme from different angles. The 2015 conference explored the opportunities and challenges of building partnerships within and across teacher education policies and practice. Toward that end, it encouraged discussions on the following themes:

- Building Partnerships with Schools
- Building Partnerships with Local Authorities
- Building Partnerships with Policy Makers
- Building Partnerships in Teacher Education

Therefore, this edition of *CEPS Journal* aims to analyse and reflect upon how, and under what conditions, partnership in education can be created and implemented. This issue of the journal also aims to address the barriers that impede cooperation and identify the areas where cooperation is most needed. While partnership is a commonly used concept in recent political discourse, what is missing is a deeper reflection on what partnership requires from different partners and what kinds of conditions are needed to build and sustain it. A general meaning of partnership links it with concepts of cooperation, sharing, and joint aims. Building partnerships in education requires collaboration and cooperation on several levels: global, national, institutional and personal. At times, partnership can include all these levels, and, in some cases, it can focus on specific connections.

Partnership can be viewed from the perspective of a system and how different parts of that system are interconnected. In addition, a sociological framework is a central concept in the learning sciences. From the perspective of learning research, we can see the trend towards more cooperation and co-creation that can also be understood as partnership. Increasingly, learning is being seen as a process that is based on sharing and participating with different partners in a learning society. Social perspective theorists reject the traditional information-processing view that posits that knowledge is acquired by transmission from one knower to another, and then represented solely within the mind of the knower. Rather than use the terms 'acquisition' and 'representation', social perspective theorists view knowledge as 'construed by' and 'distributed among' individuals and groups as they interact with one another and with cultural artefacts, such as pictures, texts, discourse, and gestures. Knowledge is not an individual possession; rather, it is socially shared, and it emerges from participation in social activities (Reynolds, Sinatra & Jetton, 1996; Cole, 1991).

Recently, the ecosystem concept has emerged in many disciplines. Partnership and ecosystem concepts are frequently seen as being parallel or even synonymous. The ecosystem concept is used in several disciplines or discourses. We can see it being used in discussions on business ecosystems, innovation ecosystems, education ecosystems, health care ecosystems and service ecosystems. The



*Collins English Dictionary* defines that “an ecosystem is all the plants and animals that live in a particular area together with the complex relationship that exists between them and their environment” and *Dictionary.com* gives a more general meaning, stating that “any system of interconnecting and interacting parts”. The ecosystem concept has been increasingly used in the fields of medicine and health care. Walpole et al. (2016) advocated that human health is fundamentally determined by the health of ecosystems. They claim that guidance is lacking about how to address the topic of ecosystems within medical education. The same kind of opinion can be heard in the field of veterinary medicine.

Schwind et al. (2016) suggested the need for a transdisciplinary approach through which organisations promote cooperation and collaboration among humans, animals, plants and ecosystem health sectors and professionals. That understanding of ecosystems acknowledges that the health of each sector is dependent upon the health of the other sectors (Kahn et al., 2012).

The ecosystem concept has its roots in biology, where typical ecosystems are a forest, a pond, and grassland. The most important feature of an ecosystem is the interconnectedness of its constituents. Species closely interact with one another to survive. They are interdependent, and information flows throughout the system, both of which are basic conditions for survival. While warmth, water, and energy sources all contribute to the ecosystem, the system does not function well without interconnectedness.

The ecosystem concept has recently been expanded to include more human contexts, especially social structures. The systems of human actors or companies and organisations can also be described as ecosystems. The term ‘innovation ecosystem’ refers to a dynamic, interactive network that breeds innovation. In practice, the term can refer to local hubs, global networks, or technology platforms (Moore, 2006). According to Oksanen and Hautamäki (2015), an innovation ecosystem is a network of relationships through which information and talent flow through systems.

A high level of interconnectedness and interdependence and the flow of information are the most important features of the ecosystem concept. Mars, Bronstein and Lusch (2012) analysed the value of this concept, noting that the metaphor inherent in this concept had provided a fresh lens through which to view a dramatically altered world. However, they also had some caveats. Biological ecosystems involve separately functioning compartments that are linked by flows of resources and information. While the ecosystem metaphor is a useful tool for understanding and predicting the conditions that shape and influence organisational systems, its appeal to business leaders and scholars has, in large part, been based on one central misguided assumption: that biological

ecosystems are both communal (supported by individual commitments to the greater good) and stable. Biological ecosystems emerge, function and collapse organically, without the aid or intervention of purposefully designed strategies and structures. Ecosystem engineers create and modify habitats upon which other species rely. If key actors are harmed or removed from ecosystems, failure becomes highly likely. Human organisations can design and plan systems and networks. Human engineers (actors) may create conditions that can, potentially, have an impact beyond the local setting. Humans have the ability to adapt and replicate innovations, which expands the impact of human engineering across multiple settings.

Niemi et al. (2014) noted that an educational ecosystem has complex connections and processes that interact with different levels of society and different social structures. We can refer to a macro-level ecosystem when different levels or sectors in a society and the educational system work together. On its own, education cannot create the future. It must establish connections with other sectors, including health care, housing, business, and working life. However, educational ecosystems also have meso- or mid-level units that consist of structures and social practices at the institutional and community levels (e.g. universities, other higher education institutions, schools) that can create a sharing and cooperative culture. In discussions about successful organisations, it seems that a commitment to joint aims and a shared culture are critical. In education, we can also observe micro-level ecosystems, where individuals are learning and creating knowledge and are, then, influenced by characteristics, such as prior knowledge, skills, motivation and attitudes, which represent the learner's cultural background, as well as interactions with other people and artefacts (Säljö, 2010, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, an educational ecosystem consists of a large number of interconnected parts, both horizontally and vertically.

We can learn from earlier studies (e.g. Walpole 2016; Scwind, 2016) that the health of an ecosystem is based on interconnectedness and information flow (meaning communication in human relationships). The system functions well when its different parts work together. However, in reality, that is not always true. Ecosystems can have serious dysfunctions and imbalances, often in natural environments impacted by human actions as we have learned from the many reports on climate change. The same is true for educational ecosystems. In different sectors, partners and actors are not interconnected. They do not share information, resources or aims; tension can thus arise. Moreover, cultural practices may also separate one part of the system from another.

Many sociologists, notably Habermas (1987), have described how systems in a modern society can be separated from each other and can become

colonized through hierarchy and lack of communication. As in society, so in education; the subsystems can become separated into segmented territories with their own aims, social practices, and power structures; eventually, collaboration between the parts vanishes.

An educational ecosystem is not a stable system. In contrast to a biological system, an educational ecosystem needs human actors, and it is dependent upon conscious human behaviour. For an educational ecosystem to be sustainable, its participants must intentionally share joint aims and take action to ensure interconnectedness, interdependence, and open and transparent mutual communication between all partners. In complex and moving systems, many of the components undergo their own change processes, and this information needs to be analysed, updated and shared when working towards common goals. Interaction and communication with the flow of information are basic conditions for maintaining commitment from partners. When referring to partnerships in education, we have to acknowledge that collaborators must set an intentional aim to ensure that the ecosystem works to realise joint goals and objectives. 'Partnership' means human action that promotes interconnectedness and communication.

The theme of the current edition of *CEPS Journal* is building partnership in education. The articles describe how partnership has been promoted in different European countries and in different forums. In the articles, we can see that achieving connectedness and communication does not happen without tension and contradictions.

This issue of the journal begins with a discussion paper written by Kari Smith, "Partnerships in Teacher Education – Going beyond the rhetoric with reference to the Norwegian context". This paper was originally given as a keynote lecture at the TEPE Conference. Its main message is that partnership should go beyond rhetoric. Responsibility for education lies with a number of people, including stakeholders, policy makers, researchers, teacher educators, teachers, and parents. Teacher education is placed in the middle of the many complex relationships that exist between the various stakeholders. For partnerships to go beyond rhetoric and for the partners to strive to truly work together to achieve a shared goal, several challenges must be overcome. The partners should trust each other and be open to listening to and accepting different opinions and solutions. In reality, a partnership involves risks, especially when the aim is to develop an idea or to go beyond the comfort zone of all the partners; this process can be time-consuming. There will be successes as well as relapses, and Smith suggests that it is important to establish clear agreements about how to share power and responsibilities. Smith reflects on the tensions that often

emerge in partnerships. Working in a team and seeking consensus to enable progress may be challenging. Partners often represent different cultures, but this can also be mutually beneficial. Often different kinds of expertise are necessary to achieve the shared goal. Smith suggests that partners should be open to and respect each other's expertise, and also see value in it for the common interest. Smith also introduces Halvorsen's study in the Norwegian context in which four different resources— intentionality, unpredictability, flexibility, and vitality—can be found when promoting cooperation between teacher education institutions and teacher practice in the field. Practice is an important part of teacher education, and it requires universities and local schools to engage in a high level of collaboration and establish shared aims. Smith also describes the main principles of a new cooperative model for partner schools and teacher education institutions in a Norwegian context.

The second article, "The Discourse of Partnership and the Reality of Reform: Interrogating the Recent Reform Agenda at ITE and Induction Levels in Ireland", by Judith Harford and Teresa O'Doherty, provides an Irish context. In their paper, Harford and O'Doherty describe the role that the Teaching Council plays in teacher education reform. That Council is the statutory body in Ireland that is responsible for regulating the teaching profession. In that country, universities and colleges had exercised high levels of institutional autonomy in relation to the content and nature of teacher education programmes with little state intervention or regulation. This situation changed considerably in 2006 when teacher education was impacted by state intervention and regulations. Now, all teacher education programmes in Ireland must be rigorously reviewed and professionally accredited by the Teaching Council. A significant problem with this change has been that it has instituted one-sided communication and regulation as top-down processes. Harford and O' Doherty describe an example of how a shift from 'teaching practice' to 'school placement' was announced by the Teaching Council. The Council did not consult with Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers, schools or teachers before publishing its guidelines. The ITE providers had full responsibility for implementing the policy shift. The unbalanced communication resulted in a breakdown of interconnectedness, but it also stretched resources to a very critical point. Schools, teachers, and teacher educators were expected to respond to requests on a goodwill basis that is unsustainable in the long-term. Another case of one-sided regulation is related to the introduction of a revised induction/probation process. The Council's decision imposed an additional burden on teachers in terms of out-of-school time and administration. It also eroded the traditional collegiality of schools by requiring teachers to assess their peers at a time when teachers as civil servants

are hardest hit by national budgetary cuts. In summary, Harford and O’Doherty note that the rhetoric of partnership, and the absence of the Council’s willingness to value real partnership and to support it appropriately, has drained the goodwill of Irish teachers. Through an analysis of key policy documents, this paper argues that partnership can be valorised. If a partnership metaphor has been loosely employed, it denotes consensus and collaboration.

The third article, “Scenarios of Mentor Education in Romania – Towards Improving Teacher Induction”, by Mihaela Stîngu, Eve Eisenschmidt, and Romiță Iucu describes how to organise induction for newly qualified teachers by training high-quality mentors. These Romanian researchers worked in partnership with Estonian teacher educators to find models for Romania. In Estonia, a teacher induction programme has been in place for more than ten years. In contrast, in Romania, teacher induction is relatively new and has only been mandatory since 2011. The need to support new teachers is an urgent issue in both countries, and training mentors is a key issue for a successful and sustainable teacher induction programme. In Estonia, a mentor teacher supports socialisation, provides emotional support and fosters the novice teacher’s professional development and learning through dialogue and reflection. The mentor courses see schools as learning organisations. Thus, mentoring is viewed as a partnership between a mentor and a new teacher. However, a mentor plays a specific role; to grow into this role, s/he needs well-organised training. This paper proposes two possible scenarios for the Romanian system; in one, the mentor training is part of academic master and doctoral education, and in another, it is part of more flexible short-term in-service education. The advantages and disadvantages of both models are addressed in this article. Ultimately, the paper proposes that a flexible, needs-driven system, which encompasses a degree of choice, will best fulfil the professional development of teachers who wish to become mentors. Both countries and their educational systems see that induction is a very important phase in a teacher’s professional development, but a model cannot be transferred directly from one country to another. Stîngu, Eisenschmidt, and Iucu suggest that discussions about mentoring in Europe are needed. We should identify how schools as organisations can support novice teachers and mentoring within the school context, and determine how to create a collaborative culture to support newcomers. At the macro level (national and European levels), they propose more discussion about how to select mentors and organise their workload and how to arrange for mentor education.

The fourth article, “Newly Qualified Teachers’ Needs of Support for Professional Competence in Four European Countries: Finland, the United Kingdom, Portugal and Belgium”, by Vilhelmiina Harju and Hannele Niemi, is related

to the European Erasmus+ programme about which the authors have collected data. The first few years in the teaching profession are demanding. Although initial teacher education forms an essential base for a teacher's work, it cannot fully prepare new teachers for the complexities of schools in a changing world. This study focuses on investigating the needs of support for professional development among newly qualified teachers from four different countries: Finland, the United Kingdom (England), Portugal and Belgium (Flanders). The results indicate some of the most urgent areas that should be addressed in all four countries. New teachers need support and mentoring so they can learn how to handle situations in which conflicts arise, such as bullying in schools. They also need support for how to differentiate their teaching methods so they can promote their students' individual growth. In addition, when analysing the profiles of eight support-need latent variables, the teachers in the different countries viewed supporting students' holistic development as the most important area. In summary, Harju and Niemi conclude that new teachers' needs are related to their students' learning and well-being, but in order to respond to these student-related tasks teachers need partnerships in the school community as well as partners outside the school environment. Cooperation with parents, special needs teachers, and often also with multi-professional experts, is needed. To resolve conflict situations and address students' individual and holistic growth, teachers need partners and the opportunity to work with different kinds of experts and stakeholders. Teachers' work is not limited to the classroom. Nowadays, it increasingly expands outside the classroom and the school environment.

The article in the *Varia* section, "Pre-service Home Economics Teachers' Attitudes on Selected Aspects of Practical Teaching", by Francka Lovšin Kozina, is also related to teacher education. This paper presents the results of a study conducted among pre-service home economics teachers in a Slovenian context. The results showed that the majority of the pre-service teachers agreed that the feedback from their colleagues was helpful for their professional development. Collegial interaction is important in professional development, and it has an impact on the teacher's intention to continue a career in education. However, the results also revealed some critical points in a teacher's competency development, including problems related to the application of theoretical knowledge on the children's development in practice and problems related to classroom management in specific situations. Interestingly, pre-service teachers with more teaching lessons showed less confidence in knowing the developmental characteristics of the children for whom they must prepare lessons. It can be assumed that pre-service teachers and new teachers have similar problems: both are faced with inconsistencies between their ideals about teaching and their

initial teacher experience. These findings can also suggest a gap between pre-service teachers knowing the facts related to the children's personal development, and the student's ability to apply factual knowledge, which also suggests that some improvement is needed in the preparation stage of teaching practice. The results in the Slovenian context support Harju's and Niemi's study of newly qualified teachers in four European countries. The most important need that new teachers had for support was how to promote their pupils' development. When discussing partnership and interconnectedness, we can see that, from a teacher's viewpoint, the closest sphere of interaction is the students in the classroom, and teachers need resources to address that.

The second article in the *Varia* section is "Recognition in Programmes for Children with Special Needs". Marjeta Šmid examines the factors that affect the inclusion of pupils in programmes for children with special needs. She uses the theory of recognition as a frame for their analysis. The concept of recognition includes three aspects of social justice: economic, cultural, and political. The author argues that not only institutional arrangements but also patterns of cultural values prevent children with special needs from enjoying equal participation in the school's social life. She notes that, in practice, arrangements of schooling and the treatment of children with special needs prevent them from full participation in the life of the classroom and the school. Šmid argues that, if pupils with special needs are to actively participate in the classroom and advance their achievements in schools, redistribution (additional resources, change of methods of work), recognition (change of oneself, attitudes and values) and better representation (participation in the widest possible activities, actual decision-making, children are heard) are needed. Moreover, we must also be aware of which cultural patterns of values hinder children with special needs from equal participation and how those cultural patterns of values impact these children.

This issue of *CEPS Journal* also includes a short reflection about the theme of the TEPE conference. In his report, "Building partnerships by bridging cultures, contexts, and systems – Reflections on TEPE 2015", Marco Snoek notes that we need a stronger analysis of the dynamics and conceptual elements of partnerships. Building a partnership is not about integrating two subsystems into one; nor is it about making formal agreements and establishing criteria that need to be met if one is to be considered as a partner in a partnership. Rather, building a partnership entails creating spaces for a shared professional dialogue where participants from different subsystems meet, exchange their understanding and interpretation of issues and create opportunities for mutual learning based on mutual respect.

This issue of the journal provides examples about partnership at different levels of the educational ecosystem. The articles describe macro-level national processes, institutional practices, and personal, micro-level experiences. We can see that the system can lose its functionality and resilience if some of the actors take control and exert their power and authority, and if communication only flows in one direction as a top-down strategy. We can also see that professional support and collegiality are important resources, and in changing contexts we must re-evaluate what is truly beneficial for learners, as in the case of inclusion. In an educational ecosystem, we cannot wait for some outside forces to form a partnership. Even in biological ecosystems, there are always actors, even though the actions are not strategically designed. Human ecosystems are led, intervened and developed by human actions. Our increasingly complex and dynamic world sets high demands for all actors in the educational ecosystem. We must be aware of how different actors influence the system. We must identify the barriers and obstacles that should be overcome. In an educational ecosystem, partnership involves intentional action. It demands that we identify, analyse and manage educational systems and their subsystems. We have to go beyond rhetoric and analyse how power, rights, and responsibilities, control, regulation and resources are negotiated and agreed upon. Teachers' work depends on macro-level systems as well as institutional cultures, but they are also actors who influence those systems and processes. To maintain a healthy and successful educational ecosystem, interconnectedness and communication are essential.

HANNELE NIEMI

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## Partnerships in Teacher Education – Going Beyond the Rhetoric, with Reference to the Norwegian Context

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KARI SMITH<sup>1</sup>

∞ Teacher education plays a central role in education and relates to various stakeholders of education. Currently, teacher education is not perceived as the sole responsibility of higher education institutions, and they are expected to work closely together with other partners. In this paper, the concept of ‘partnership’ is defined and mutual benefits and challenges in partnerships with disciplines and institutions beyond teacher education programs are briefly discussed. Issues related to partnerships with students are addressed, and the last part of the paper discusses the partnership between teacher education and the practice field with examples from Norway. Three models illustrating such partnerships are described. The central argument of the paper is that partnerships in teacher education need to go beyond rhetoric.

**Keywords:** partnership, partnership with students, school-university collaboration, the third space

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## Partnerstva v izobraževanju učiteljev – onkraj retorike, s poudarkom na norveškem kontekstu

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KARI SMITH

∞ Izobraževanje učiteljev v izobraževanju igra osrednjo vlogo in se nanaša na različne akterje. Trenutno je izobraževanje učiteljev dojeta kot odgovornost visokošolskih ustanov; od njih se pričakuje, da tesno sodelujejo z drugimi partnerji. V tem prispevku je definiran koncept »partnerstva«. Prav tako na kratko razpravljamo o skupnih prednostih in izzivih partnerstva z disciplinami in ustanovami onkraj programov za izobraževanje učiteljev. Naslavljamo tudi vprašanja partnerstva s študenti, v zadnjem delu prispevka pa razpravljamo o partnerstvu med izobraževanjem učiteljev in prakso na norveških primerih. Opisani so trije takšni modeli. Osrednji argument prispevka je, da morajo partnerstva v izobraževanju učiteljev iti onkraj retorike.

**Ključne besede:** partnerstvo, partnerstvo s študenti, sodelovanje šol-univerz, tretji prostor

Coming together is a beginning,  
Keeping together is progress,  
working together is success.  
(*Henry Ford*)

## Introduction

Teachers matter (OECD, 2005), teacher education matters (EU Commission, 2013), and school matters (Donaldson 2011, 2015). Education matters, so that the children of today and of tomorrow are well prepared to develop our respective nations and the global society to serve as constructive contexts for humanity. The responsibility for education lies with various stakeholders, policy makers, researchers and teacher educators, teachers, and parents. Teacher education is placed in the middle of the many complex relationships among the various stakeholders, as it is the agent for executing decisions made by policy-makers in preparing teachers, who again prepare the citizens of future generations. Thus, teacher education carries an enormous responsibility, and it cannot do so alone. Teacher education needs more than relations with the many stakeholders in education: it needs partners, to come together with them, to keep together, and to work together. Teacher education should aim at establishing partnerships with other stakeholders in education, an argument supported by the Council of the European Union:

Teacher education programmes should draw on teachers' own experience and seek to foster cross-disciplinary and collaborative approaches, so that education institutions and teachers regard it as part of their task to work in cooperation with relevant stakeholders such as colleagues, parents and employers (The Council of the European Union, 2014/C 183/05).

In the following, partnership, as understood in this paper, will first be presented, followed by mutual benefits and challenges in partnerships with disciplines and institutions beyond the context of teacher education programs. Next, the sensitive subject of forming partnerships with students will be explored. The last part of the paper deals with partnerships between teacher education and the practice field and three models, illustrating three cases of school-university partnerships. Partnerships enable teacher education to have a space where practice and theory meet to support students' preparation for the teaching profession, as well as to promote professional development for teachers and teacher educators. The aim of this paper is to argue that partnerships in teacher education need to go beyond rhetoric.

## Partnerships – a working definition

A search for the definition of partnership in the Online Etymology Dictionary indicates the Latin word for ‘partner’, *partitionem*, which means sharing, partition, division or distribution. By adding *-ship* (in Old English *sciepe*), which characterises a state or a condition of being, a current understanding of partnership as found in the on-line Merriam-Webster dictionary can be derived. Here partnership is defined as ‘a **relationship** resembling a legal partnership and usually involving **close cooperation** between parties **having specified and joint rights and responsibilities**’ (Merriam-Webster, author’s emphasis added).

The working definition of partnerships in the current paper is that ‘a partnership is an agreement between teacher education institutions and stakeholders of education who work together towards a shared goal, to improve education at all levels’. However, a definition consists of words only, and to put it into practice, some underlying conditions for sustainable partnerships should be familiar to and accepted by all parties.

If partnerships are to go beyond rhetoric and the partners strive to truly work together to achieve a shared goal, the challenges are multiple (Martin, Snow & Franklin-Torrez, 2011), and it seems that some basic conditions ought to be in place. Inspired by Sandholtz (2002) some of the following conditions are likely to strengthen school-university partnerships. The partners should trust each other and be open to listening to and accepting different opinions and solutions. Magolda (2001) and Zeichner (2010) observe tensions that often develop in partnerships, and it is a challenge to work as a team which through negotiations seeks consensus to enable progress. Partners often represent two different cultures (Zeichner, 2010) yet for partnerships to be mutually beneficial, they draw on different kinds of expertise necessary to achieve the shared goal. Partners, therefore, should be open to and respect different forms of expertise, and also see value in it for the common interest. Likewise, partners often represent various types of organisations or institutions with different missions and limitations, however, instead of seeing differences as an obstacle to cooperation, it can be viewed as a benefit and provide opportunities for mutual learning (Sandholtz, 2002). Furthermore, a partnership involves risks, especially when the aim is to develop, to go beyond the comfort zone of all partners, and it can be time-consuming (Lemke & Sebelli, 2008). The partners are likely to experience success as well as relapses, and it might be worthwhile to make explicit agreements about the sharing of power and responsibilities. Sandholtz (2002) expresses doubts regarding whether partnerships can function unless

the partners plan for an ongoing commitment, especially in education where the achievement of goals are difficult to measure and might only be envisioned in a long term perspective.

In other words, educational partnerships that go beyond the rhetoric are based on long-term commitment and genuine aspiration to work together to improve education at all levels.

## Partnerships in teacher education

Higher education institutions are commonly perceived to be the primary agent for preparing teachers and thus have the overall responsibility. This is, however, changing, and teacher education institutions are expected to establish partnerships with other stakeholders, as suggested in EU documents, such as *Supporting Teacher Educators* (2013) and *Strengthening Teaching in Europe* (2015). Both documents convey a clear call for cooperation. Furlong et al. (2000) and Darling-Hammond (2006) argue that teacher education needs to form strong relations with agents inside and outside academia, and especially on the practice field. It is argued in this paper that teacher education might be strengthened if teacher education institutions form partnerships with a number of stakeholders, as illustrated in Figure 1.

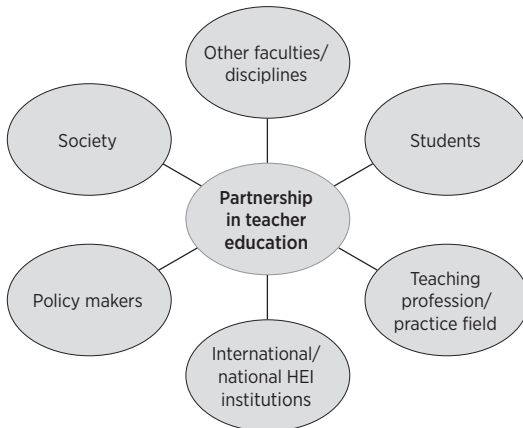


Figure 1. Partnerships in teacher education

In the following, the three partnerships emphasised in bold will be further developed. The first two, partnerships with other faculties and disciplines are briefly discussed, next partnership with students is attended to, before partnerships with the practice field are addressed in greater detail. Due to space

concerns, possible partnerships with policy makers and society and partnerships crossing national borders are not dealt with in the current paper.

*Partnerships with other faculties and disciplines in higher education*

One of the main criticisms of teacher education is that it is fragmented (Darling-Hammond, 2006a, 2012; Grossman & Hammerness, 2009). Students complain not only about the well-known gap between theory and practice but also between the various disciplines in teacher education, especially in secondary school teacher education, for which a high level of disciplinary expertise is required. Teacher education consists of four main components, disciplinary knowledge, knowledge about teaching the discipline (methodology), educational/pedagogical knowledge and practicum (Smith, 2015). Three decades ago, Shulman defined pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which forms the core of teachers' professional knowledge (Shulman, 1986). However, the responsibility for the four components often lies with different faculties/departments in the university, and the dialogue between them is not always the best. Delicate issues are, for example, students' contact persons, scheduling, assignments and exams, and, in particular, where to place a lengthy practicum during a busy semester (Smith, 2015). At times it might even lead to a breakdown in communication, and the students find themselves in the middle of an internal institutional power relation struggle. Nevertheless, when having to react to an unplanned classroom situation, teachers are not likely to draw on knowledge learned in a specific component of teacher education for their in-action reflection (Schön, 1983). They make a decision based on how they read the complexity of the situation which probably reflects all four components. The Finnish researcher, Sven-Erik Hansén (2008) introduced the concept of 'teachership', which represents the comprehensive knowledge and actions of teaching; a question that needs to be asked is whether students experience that they are encouraged to develop 'teachership' during their education. For this to happen, faculties/departments which contribute to teacher education need to establish partnerships built on trust and respect for each other's expertise which might not always be the case. Brennan and Willis (2008, p. 297) claim that 'Education is not a top discipline in the university sector'.

Another option for mutually beneficial learning lies in establishing partnerships between teacher education programs and other programs that educate for a profession, such as medicine, law, social workers, etc. They share a common goal, to educate professionals, and working in partnerships which explore the commonalities and distinctions in educating for a profession is a direction of research yet to be fully exploited.



### *Partnerships with student teachers*

Students of teaching not only form the largest group of agents in teacher education, but they are also the primary stakeholders of education. They are engaged in their professional education and will be those carrying the daily responsibility for preparing the coming generation of political leaders and contributing citizens. As early as in 1991, Michal Fullan asked: ‘[...] what might happen if we treated the students as someone whose opinion mattered’ (Fullan, 1991, p. 170). Jean Ruddock (1999) asked what would happen “if we looked for an alternative approach to school improvement- through listening to and acting on what pupils have to say about learning in school” (Ruddock, 1999, p. 41). These voices from the end of the previous millennium talk about the benefits of forming partnerships with children in school, and even more so, similar ideas are to be considered in higher education and teacher education where the students are adults. Ruddock’s question could be asked with some minor, yet important alterations; ‘What would happen if we looked for an alternative approach to [teacher education] improvement through listening to and acting on what [students] have to say about learning [how to become a teacher]?’ On the surface it might seem as if we have come much further in higher education as most universities have established student parliaments, students are represented on various academic committees, and students are also asked to assess the quality of teaching and the facilities in many institutions. The question is, though, to what extent do academia and teacher education programs listen to and act on the student teachers’ voices?

Smith and Pollak (2008) examined how teacher educators in a large teacher education institution in Israel perceived the usefulness of standardised student evaluation on the quality of teaching. They found from the quantitative data that teacher educators accepted the democratic rights students have to provide feedback on the quality of teaching, as this was more or less a national norm in higher education. Entering into a deeper qualitative analysis of the data, teacher educators were much more apprehensive in their views, and they added comments such as ‘What can they (the students) say about my teaching’ (Smith & Pollak, 2008, p. 203).

Cook-Sather (2002) claims that listening to student voices and paying attention to their suggestions when making decisions about education runs counter to political trends in education (she refers to the US context). She suggests there are two main obstacles to authorising student voices, or to forming genuine partnerships with students. First, there has to be a change in the structure of higher education, and students must become more involved in decision-making processes, and second, a change in perceptions, in the mindset, of how

to form relations with the larger group of agents in education (i.e. the students). Historically, the power relations in higher education have been quite clear; the academy had the power, and the students were subject to how the power was executed. Today power relations have changed, and higher education institutions depend on the money students bring into the institutions either as tuition fees or as governmental funding depending on student numbers. Moreover, teacher education can be said to be ‘under attack’ from several directions, an increasing governmental investment (and not only financial) in higher education, demands by the public and private sector to educate according to their needs (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012), as well as a strong call for a democratic education which also means, involving students in decision making (Josephson, 2016).

In the following, a practical suggestion of how to invite students to become partners in forming the content of teacher education is presented. The proposed example is influenced by Korthagen and his colleagues’ work on Realistic Teacher Education (2001). The idea is that teacher education starts with a period of field observation, followed by the university courses. The curriculum is not pre-planned but formed in alignment with the students’ experiences and questions from the practice field. Teacher educators, especially those involved with education and subject didactic modules do not finalise the lectures and the reading lists in advance but do so together with the students building on their cases and concerns. Later in the education process, the students spend a lengthy period in school, practicing teaching and being mentored by school-based teacher educators. At the teacher education institution, they share experiences and critical incidents in seminars with teacher educators, and once more, the practical experiences are explained by theory and supported by the relevant literature.

A schematic model of a practice-oriented teacher education is presented in Figure 2.

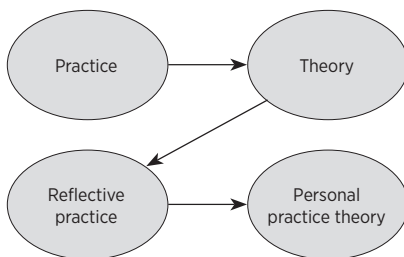


Figure 2. Practise-oriented teacher education

At the beginning of their education, students of teaching are placed in schools to observe teaching, students, relationships, support systems, etc. without being familiar with the theoretical literature. Then they spend time at the university to become acquainted with relevant theory and empowered to reflect on and understand their experiences via a theoretical lens. However, as the teacher educators do not know in advance what stories the students will tell, they cannot pre-plan the lectures or reading lists. Instead of lectures, there will be more dialogic teaching including students, peers, and teacher educators. The content of the dialogues will lead to the suggested /compulsory reading of literature relevant to the issues raised. When the students next spend time in the practice field (this time, teaching), they have more content and theoretical knowledge which they draw on when engaging in reflective practice. The students do not merely accumulate experience; they are equipped with some basic theoretical knowledge to frame the analysis of the experiences. During this period, it is recommended that school-based mentors, teacher educators from the university, and the student teachers engage in professional dialogues about the practicum within what Kenneth Zeichner (2010) calls the third space: '[...] the creation of hybrid spaces in preservice teacher education programs that bring together school and university-based teacher educators and practitioner and academic knowledge in new ways to enhance the learning of prospective teachers' (Zeichner, 2010, p. 92).

The hypothesis is that further theoretical readings and discussions emerge from the joint meetings in the third space, addressing issues that have been raised by the students and school-based, as well as university-based teacher educators. Students and their experiences become the core of the teacher education program, and such an approach does not easily lend itself to top-down regulations of how and what to teach in teacher education. The approach also disputes the traditional view on education that the academy sits with the 'important' knowledge, and students are passive recipients of that knowledge. The main challenge with a more student-centred approach to teacher education is not only that it goes against traditions and perceptions about how to prepare teachers, but it also puts teacher educators in a vulnerable state. Such an approach would require teacher educators with a high level of professional knowledge, practical as well as theoretical, and confidence to engage in spontaneous teaching and to draw on knowledge relevant to unplanned stories and cases. Teacher educators will spend less time preparing lectures, but more time reading and reflecting on their own teaching and professional learning to enhance their students' learning. It is a question of exploiting what Helen Timperley (2011) calls 'teachable moments'. Another challenge for higher education

institutions is that final reading lists can be presented only post-teaching and not prior to teaching. This requires a change of mind not only by teacher educators but also by academic leaders, as well as of students. The core issue is that teacher educators' professionalism needs to be trusted, so they are able to form true partnerships with students in how these are to be educated as teachers. The teacher education programs would be less uniform as every teacher educator in cooperation with the students would, to some degree, design the content of the course. The big question is whether there is space for such an approach in what we see as a more and more controlled higher education system in which efficiency and accountability are key words (Cochran-Smith, 2016). The Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP) has, however, proved to be successful with a similar approach (Darling-Hammond, 2006b). Furthermore, are teacher educators prepared to take on this responsibility? A practice-oriented approach to teaching, as discussed above, is not only conditioned to partnerships with students but also partnerships with the practice field, which is elaborated below.

### *Partnerships with the practice field*

Previously in this paper, the students as partners have been discussed, and their role in the third space, and in this section the role of the practice field and its actors is further elaborated. 'The overwhelming evidence of a decade of research on teacher knowledge is that knowledge of teaching is acquired and developed by the personal experience of teaching' (Munby, Russell & Martin, 2001, p. 897). The arena for acquiring knowledge of teaching is the practice field, schools, whereas knowledge about teaching is mostly acquired at the university. The third space, as defined by Zeichner (2010) above, is the meeting point where the different aspects of teacher knowledge meet and merge, and the question is how the third space is structured and planned into the teacher education programme, and what the power relations between the various actors are. Bhabhas (1990) uses the term 'hybrid spaces' when two cultures with different traditions and perceptions meet and through communication and negotiations new understandings emerge, and a hybrid third space is created. This is what a true partnership between teacher education institutions and the practice field might lead to, and actors from both cultures will cross boundaries and develop new understandings.

In many countries, teacher education is mainly understood as pre-service or initial education for teaching. However, today a broader understanding of the concept is emerging: that teacher education is career long. It starts with initial education and continuous throughout the induction period and the in-service education of teachers. The Teaching Council in Ireland (2011) has

argued in favour of revisiting the concept of teacher education, and to take this into consideration in allocating resources to professional education. Similar ideas are articulated by the European Commission (2013), 'Teacher educators are not only responsible for the initial education of new teachers but also contribute to the continuing professional development of Europe's six million serving teachers. They are present at every stage of the teacher's career' (European Commission, 2013, pp. 6-7). The importance of the continuous professional development of teachers is argued for by several authors (see van den Bergh, Ros & Beijjaard, 2015). Moreover, teacher education is a career-long education that involves teacher educators in higher education as well as school-based teacher educators at every stage of the teacher's career. A central component of initial teacher education is the practicum, followed by an induction phase. Research suggests that school-based mentoring for novices has a positive effect on motivation, resilience, and retention in teaching (Fresco & Nasser-Abu Alhija, 2015; Ingersoll & Perda, 2012). In-service learning of teaching takes place, to a large extent, in schools; it is work-based learning (Eraut, 2014). However, attending formal courses offered by higher education institutions might be useful to update professional knowledge. In the emerging conception of teacher education as continuous education, the practice field and higher education share the responsibility for teacher education, they are partners pursuing the same goal, educating teachers to improve education at all levels. The question is, however, if they form true partnerships in which they are equal partners, or are there hidden power-struggles, for example, of who leads the partnership, who shall decide on the content of practicum or assessment of student teachers' performances, which are not often articulated or discussed? Do the higher education actors respect the expertise held by the practice field as being equal to their own theoretical expertise and vice versa? The literature reveals that this is not always the case, and tensions are found to be common (Bullough & Draper, 2004; Halvorsen, 2014; Magolda, 2001; Zeichner, 2010).

In a doctoral dissertation, an extensive study of partnerships between teacher education and the practice field of early childhood, elementary school, and upper secondary school, Halvorsen (2014) found four different resources which support the development of true partnerships in the meeting of challenges. Halvorsen (2014) has termed these intentionality, unpredictability, flexibility, and vitality.

*Intentionality:* In a partnership, the actors come with different expectations, and there is often a concern for how to protect their own identity and autonomy. A strong intention of pursuing a shared goal is needed to overcome tensions and concerns, and when this happens, Halvorsen (2014) found that the

relations in the partnership became more democratic. When the intention was weak, often in situations where the agents had been forced into a partnership, tensions and power struggles characterised the collaboration, and a true partnership was not established: it existed only on the level of rhetoric.

*Unpredictability:* When working in collaboration with others, unexpected occurrences are likely to develop. If such situations are seen as problems and the blame is put on one of the partners, there is little hope for future productivity of that partnership. However, if the unexpected occurrences are experienced as challenges, and there is mutual trust among the partners that the challenge can be solved and used as a learning experience, then unpredictability was found to strengthen the internal relations in the partnership.

*Flexibility:* Various partners join partnerships for diverse reasons, and they come with substantial perceptions and habits of how to work. In Halvorsen's study (2014), she found that when the limits of tolerance founded on habits and rituals could be liberated in imaginary contexts that were different from the familiar context, freedom and new ideas then catalysed innovation. It depended on the level of flexibility that the partners showed to go beyond their own comfort zone and face unfamiliar situations and contexts. In cases in which this kind of flexibility was missing, the partnerships did not develop beyond a formal agreement.

*Vitality:* When concerns about how to position yourself in a partnership, especially in relation to maintaining autonomy, yet remaining integrated in the partnership, are overcome, then curiosity for how the collaboration develops and how it might benefit a shared goal might catalyse vitality of the partnership and enhance sustained engagement and creativity (Halvorsen, 2014).

Below, three cases of relationships between the practice field and higher education are described; however, not all meet the conditions for partnerships discussed in the current paper. The continuum illustrates the level of commitment of the three types, practice schools, partner schools and university schools:

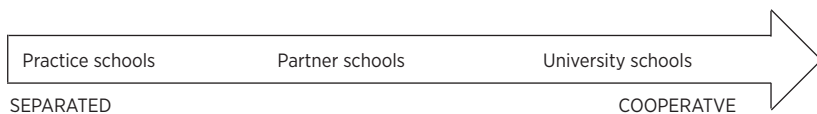


Figure 3. School-university relationship

### *Practice schools*

In the Norwegian context, universities assign students to schools for practice teaching, and there is a clear division between responsibilities between

the school and the university. The university is responsible for teaching the theory, and the schools deal with the practical skills of teaching. A third learning space is not developed; there are two separate learning arenas for the students. In the practice schools, the students are mentored by teachers, school-based teacher educators, who are not required to have any form of mentor education. The communication between the university and the school is mainly written, and there are few face-to-face meeting points other than, perhaps, a pre-practicum information meeting. A university-based teacher educator visits the student teachers to observe what students often call 'an examination lesson', not always a perception shared by the visiting teacher educator (personal experience as head of teacher education in a Norwegian university). However, the final assessment of the practicum, if the student has passed or failed, is likely to lie with the university teacher educator, in consultation with the written report from the school. It is often the university or the government that decides the length of the practicum, the number of lessons to be taught, the focus of assessment, and the practice field that holds the practical expertise is not always consulted. This kind of relationship between the practice field and higher education cannot be characterised as a true partnership with shared responsibilities and rights, and mutual trust in each other's expertise. The power lies with higher education, and the school provides services with or without reimbursement.

### *Partner schools*

The case of what is called 'partner schools' is also from Norway and is initiated when the university sends out a call to schools to apply to become partner schools. Schools have to present their qualifications, such as the number of educated mentors, innovative projects, and to write a brief statement about wanting to work closely with the university. The main objective is that the schools shall be a good arena for the students' practicum. The school principal commits the school to accepting a certain number of student teachers during the partnership period and to allow for a number of teachers per year to attend the credited mentor education program offered by the university. The university offers mentor education, which provides academic credits if the mentor wants to pursue education at a master level. Teacher educators from the university are available for lectures and seminars in the partner schools, and the university organises a two-day seminar for the school principals and the coordinating mentors every year. The schools are also used as contexts for research and development (R&D) projects under the aegis of the university. The partnership contract is for three years, at the end of which a new call is sent out to schools. The 'old' partner schools can re-apply, but they are not guaranteed

acceptance, which means there is an opening for new schools to be involved (University of Bergen, 2015).

This model better resembles a partnership model than the previously discussed practice school model does. There are mutual commitments reflecting various expertise, and there are also multiple meeting points between school-based and university-based teacher educators. They get to know each other, and there are opportunities for developing an understanding of how to achieve the shared goal, developing a better school to improve student learning. When evaluating nearly five years of such a partner school model, the school principals were pleased with the project and said they noticed a positive change in the school (Smith et al., 2010). The school as a whole became more attentive to its own practice, and the dialogue with the university gave them a different perception of how the school and university complimented each other in educating teachers at all three phases of teacher education. However, when all teachers in the school, including those who had not been mentors, were asked about how they had experienced the partnership, it turned out that in some schools they were not even aware that the school was in a partnership with the university (Smith et al., 2010). Moreover, it was still the university that 'owned' the partnership, provided the resources, decided which schools were selected as partners, and had the responsibility for the final assessment of the practicum. The third space of mutual learning of students, school-based and university-based teacher educators, was not formed, and it was still the university which 'taught' the other actors.

### *University schools*

The basic idea behind university schools in Norway is that selected schools have the same status as university hospitals. Learning takes place in both arenas, and the involved actors have dual positions in the university school as well as at the university. R&D projects involve researchers in both contexts, and jointly they pilot new approaches to teaching and teacher education, and there is shared responsibility for resources needed for the joint activities. The concept of university schools takes on different understandings in various contexts. In England, much of the initial teacher education (ITE) is placed in schools, and the universities are obliged to engage in partnerships with schools. Schools do not have to engage in partnership with the university providers of ITE (Taylor, 2008). All schools that are involved in teacher education are called 'university schools' in England. Taylor (2008) acknowledging that compulsory partnerships are diverse (Furlong, Whitty & Whiting, 1996), found in the context of his study, a case of university-school partnership, that:



Partnership is perceived as an experience between the two environments joined by the students. While university teacher educators and mentors interact, there is awareness that the university has less direct contact with (and thus control over) the students, and school experience is viewed as the most valuable experience (Taylor, 2008, 78).

In Norway, the university school is an emerging concept, and three main universities have developed various models, but with some central concepts. The University of Oslo (UoO) and the University of Tromsø/ The Arctic University of Norway (UoT) have formed a partnership with the Centre for Professional Learning in Teacher Education (ProTED) which strives to develop a 'future-oriented knowledge-based teacher education'. Working closely with the practice field is part of the vision, and they have developed a university school model. In the model, there is close collaboration between students, practitioners, and researchers (ProTed Centre for Professional Learning in Teacher Education, 2016), and in Tromsø, also with the municipality. The University of Oslo has 20 partner schools (UoO, Institute for Teacher Education and School Development, 2016), whereas UoT has selected eight schools as university schools in cooperation with the municipality. The four core principles of this kind of partnership are developing the practicum, R&D projects, competence development of teachers and teacher educators, and establishing networks to disseminate the experiences from the project (University of Tromsø /The Arctic University of Norway, 2016). A major factor for both universities is the inclusion of dialogue seminars in the respective teacher education programmes. It is a day where university teacher educators, both pedagogues, and subject didacticians meet with mentors and students to discuss cases and experiences from the practicum in a community of learning. This is a way of operationalising Zeichner's (2010) concept of the third space in teacher education. The dialogue seminar is still in a beginning phase, and there is understandably much work to do to improve it; for example, that university teacher educators see the benefits of the seminar and actively participate. The concept of dialogue seminars is, however, a promising initiative.

The largest university in Norway, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim launched its university school project in August 2015. The project is a partnership with the regional county and the municipality, which selected the two university schools. NTNU's model differs from that of UoO and UoT: only two schools are involved, and it is more in line with the perception of university hospitals. Whereas the main aim of the model developed in Oslo and Tromsø is to improve teacher education, NTNU, and its

partners have placed the motivation and learning of students in schools at the centre, and innovative approaches to school teaching shall be tried out within a safe context. School development and empowerment of teachers are major aspects of the model, alongside strengthening teacher education, which endeavours to integrate subject knowledge, educational and didactical knowledge and practical skills. In other words, it is a serious attempt to reduce students' experience of fragmentation in teacher education. R&D projects are contextualised in schools as well as in teacher education. It is a stated aim of NTNU's university school project that it shall be a win-win project for all partners and that schools and the university need to draw on each other's expertise for development to take place (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2016). The partnership between the university, authorities, and schools in Trondheim is being formed as it is being put into practice, and there is still a long way to go. Thus far, eight teachers from schools have been given a part-time teaching and coordinating position at the university; four school teachers have been offered doctoral scholarships funded by the authorities and the university. Furthermore, all teachers in one school and a third of the teachers in the second school have started their mentor education. The study program is developed jointly by the schools and the university. The head of the project comes from the practice field, and she shares her time between the university and the two schools. Knowledge developed in the project will be disseminated to other schools in the area and beyond, as well as to the academic community. The project started less than a year ago, and it is too early to discuss results; nevertheless, it will be interesting to follow this university school project in the future.

Partnerships in the form of university schools in Norway are a new initiative, and much research is needed to examine whether they fulfil their worthy aims, and what impact they have on education generally and teacher education specifically. The various models described above illustrate possible variations in school-university cooperation. Caution should be made that these are not research-based models; they merely describe current practices in Norway. Future extensive research is needed to document the outcome of the university school projects.

Going back to the working definition of partnerships at the beginning of the paper, that partnerships are built on mutual respect and acknowledgment of diverse expertise, it seems that only the university school models will be on the right side of the continuum presented in Figure 3. The fact that the authorities are involved as partners in some cases is encouraging, especially in relation to resources, commitment, and sustainability. The partnerships do not depend on specific persons but on a shared vision of how to improve education.

## Conclusion

The main argument in this discussion paper has been that teacher education is in need of developing partnerships with other stakeholders in education that goes beyond rhetoric. However, true partnerships can only develop under certain conditions, such as developing a shared vision, commitment, and mutual respect for each other's expertise (Halvorsen, 2014; Sandholtz, 2002). März and Kelchtermans (2013) argue that when introducing changes in education, it is not only the wider policies that form the implementation of the change but to a large extent also the internal politics, meaning the micro-politics of the immediate context. In a partnership, there are various levels of micro-politics involved: those internal to each partner and those internal to the partnership. Thus, power struggles are likely to emerge. Traditionally, the university has been the decisive voice in collaborations with stakeholders of education, but this view seems now to be challenged, by students as well as by the practice field. A conceptual change has to take place among all stakeholders if teacher education is interested in developing partnerships that go beyond rhetoric.

This paper has discussed how teacher education can be strengthened by forming true partnerships among the various contributors to teacher education, other professions, the students and the practice field. This is, as argued in this paper, a limited representation of the range of partnerships in teacher education. Stakeholders of education are also politicians, society, including parents, and in today's globalised world, also education providers beyond national borders. Space did not allow for further elaboration on the wider range of partnerships teacher education institutions could and should initiate and maintain. However, currently it seems to be more than enough to exploit the possibilities for going beyond the rhetoric in establishing partnership within the near context of teacher education.

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## The Discourse of Partnership and the Reality of Reform: Interrogating the Recent Reform Agenda at Initial Teacher Education and Induction Levels in Ireland

JUDITH HARFORD\*<sup>1</sup> AND TERESA O'DOHERTY<sup>2</sup>

Over the last decade, teacher education in Ireland has experienced radical reconceptualization and restructuring at both initial teacher education [ITE] and induction levels, with reform of continuous professional development now in the planning phase. The establishment of the Teaching Council (2006) as a statutory, regulatory body, with a role in the review and accreditation of teacher education, increased the visibility of and policy focus on teacher education. Significant reform of initial teacher education was announced in 2011 that included both an extension of the duration of programmes and, most notably, the period the student teachers were to be engaged in school-based professional development. This increased period has been accompanied by a shift in the understanding of what is involved in practicum and implies a redefinition of the respective roles of the university and the school, and the development of a new form of partnership between both agencies. The period of induction and probation has also become an area of reform with an emphasis on school-based coaching and the evaluation of newly qualified teachers, which devolves decisions on teachers' full recognition and membership of the profession, to principals and colleagues. This shift, which changes the established approach to induction for primary level teachers, has resulted in the withdrawal of cooperation with this policy by the main teacher union and to the implementation process being stymied. Both policy developments bring the concept of partnership within Irish education into sharp focus: a partnership between schools and universities in ITE, but also partnership in policy development and implementation in the case of induction.

**Keywords:** teacher education reform, partnership, policy-making processes, initial teacher education, induction

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## Diskurz partnerstva in realnost reform: preizpraševanje nedavnega programa reform začetnega izobraževanja učiteljev in ravni pripravnštva na Irskem

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JUDITH HARFORD IN TERESA O'DOHERTY

☞ V zadnjem desetletju je izobraževanje učiteljev na Irskem doživelo radikalne rekonceptualizacije in prestrukturiranje začetnega izobraževanja učiteljev [ZIU] ter ravni pripravnštva, ki jih spremljajo reforme nadaljnega strokovnega izobraževanja in usposabljanja, ki je trenutno v fazi načrtovanja. Vzpostavitev Učiteljske zbornice (2006) kot zakonsko predpisanega regulativnega telesa, ki igra pomembno vlogo pri evalvaciji in akreditaciji programov izobraževanja učiteljev, je povečalo vidnost in preusmeritev pozornosti na izobraževanje učiteljev. Znatna reforma začetnega izobraževanja učiteljev je bila sprejeta leta 2011. Vključevala je podaljšanje izvajanja programov in še zlasti opazno obdobja, ko so študentje učitelji vključeni v na šolo usmerjeni strokovni razvoj. To podaljšanje obdobja je spremljal premik v razumevanju, kaj naj obsega praktikum ter implicira redefinicijo vlog univerz in šol pa tudi razvoj nove oblike partnerstva med obema akterjema. Obdobje pripravnštva in poskusne dobe je prav tako postalo področje reform s posebnim poudarkom na šolo osredinjenega mentorstva in evalvacije na novo usposobljenih učiteljev, kar prenaša odločitve o učiteljevem polnem prepoznanju in članstvu v poklicu na ravnatelje in kolege učitelje. Temu premiku, ki spreminja uveljavljen pristop mentorstva, učiteljstvo nasprotuje. Obe usmeritvi razvoja politik izpostavljata koncept partnerstva v izobraževanju na Irskem v izostren fokus: partnerstva med šolami in univerzami v začetnem izobraževanju učiteljev pa tudi partnerstva v razvoju politik in implementacije ob uvajanju.

**Ključne besede:** reforma izobraževanja učiteljev, partnerstvo, proces sprejemanja odločitev, začetno izobraževanje učiteljev, pripravnštvo



## **Introduction**

This paper examines two recent reforms in Irish teacher education and two aspects of partnership: the partnership between universities and schools as a core part of initial teacher education, and the partnership in policy development and implementation in the area of induction. Through an analysis of key documents which underpin the reform agenda, it argues that the partnership metaphor has been loosely employed in the Irish context to denote consensus and collaboration. The absence of any real interrogation of what partnership means, how it can be nurtured, and what supports are required to promote authentic and complementary partnership between schools and universities, or between and within schools means that policy decisions, made at the central level and which are implemented by practitioners, are floundering. It further contends that the ubiquitous nature of the discourse on partnership evident across the policy space legitimises the top-down policy development and reform, in the case of school placement and latterly induction, and masks the lack of any sustainable partnership framework to support these initiatives, a factor that threatens the very essence of the reform agenda.

## **Teachers and teacher education in Ireland**

Teaching in Ireland is an all-graduate profession, with the entry requirements and the number of available places on courses regulated by the State Higher Education Authority, in collaboration with the State Department of Education and Skills. Teacher preparation programmes may be concurrent or consecutive, and both routes retain high status and are over-subscribed, typically attracting a very high calibre of entrant (Harford, 2010). Commenting on the high quality of entrants to teaching in Ireland, a recent report on initial teacher education in Ireland, the Sahlberg Report, noted 'the academic standard of applicants is amongst the highest, if not the highest, in the world' (Sahlberg, 2012, p. 19). Admission to publicly-funded, undergraduate teacher education programmes for all school levels, is highly competitive; primary-level teacher education programmes attract recruits from the top 15% of all academic achievers in the Leaving Certificate Examination (Coolahan, 2003; Heinz, 2008, 2013; Hyland, 2012), while the majority of entrants to second-level teaching are high achievers at the undergraduate level (Harford & O'Donoghue, 2010). Teacher unions and associations hold a particularly strong position in the education landscape and are not just concerned with the pay and conditions of their members. They are also professional organisations that have historically engaged in

policy development and 'facilitate and provide a means of expression of teachers' collective opinion on matters affecting the interests of education and of the teaching profession' (INTO, 2014, p 1). They actively contribute to debates in education, publish research, and issue position papers on matters that pertain to the professional lives of teachers.

The student-teacher body remains largely homogenous, reflecting trends across the USA, Australia, and Northern Ireland, with the majority being white and from the dominant culture (Moran, 2008; Schleicher, 2012). This is despite the fact that Irish society has undergone significant demographic change during the last ten years, with its school populations significantly diversified through immigration (Devine, 2011; Smyth et al., 2009). Although traditionally a homogenous society characterised by mass emigration at various intervals, Irish society has witnessed significant inward migration over the last fifteen years, the result of a growing demand for labour in an expanding economy. Hyland (2012, p. 10) argues that 'the teaching profession in Ireland, especially at primary school level, is less culturally and ethnically diverse than in other OECD countries'. The Catholic-based tradition of education in Ireland and, in particular, the Irish-language requirement for primary level teachers are potential reasons for this (O'Donoghue & Harford, 2011). Similarly, in line with international trends, the majority of student teachers are female (Hyland, 2012), yet the majority of senior management positions in education are held by men (Cunneen & Harford, 2016). Again, this reflects international trends (Fuller & Harford, 2016).

Whilst ensuring high-quality initial teacher education is a key concern across the OECD (Schleicher, 2012), the emphasis on and visibility of ITE on the policy landscape is a relatively recent development in the Irish context. The structure and content of teacher education had remained the same for many decades prior to the policy developments of 2011. At primary level, the dominant route for entry to the teaching profession was the three-year BEd programme, which was introduced in 1974, and offered in colleges associated with and accredited by universities. This programme, although responding to curricular reforms, changing pedagogies, incorporating reflective practice, and implementing the European Credit Transfer system under the Bologna process, remained structurally intact for almost four decades (O'Doherty, 2014). At the post-primary level, the dominant entry route was the Higher Diploma in Education (H.Dip.), a one-year postgraduate university programme, which was established in 1912. Reflecting the diversification of school types and subjects at the post-primary level, the H.Dip., which was rooted in the classical tradition, was supplemented by a number of concurrent teacher education programmes catering for specialist teachers in the applied subjects from the 1970s onward.

Despite the emergence of new ITE providers, the structure and underlying philosophy of Irish initial teacher education persisted for decades. Given the increase in the number of programmes (more than 40 in 2012) provided by nineteen recognised providers, (Hyland, 2012), teacher preparation was fragmented with little consistency in the approach to, and content of, teacher education across the state.

## **The Culture of Partnership in Irish Education**

Partnership in Irish education is rooted in the social and economic planning process that was dominant during the last decades of the twentieth century. This process, premised on an inclusive, consultative and democratic approach to policy development, was best evidenced through the work of the National Education Convention (NEC) in 1993. This two-week convention facilitated structured multi-lateral dialogue involving 43 organisations and set the tone for what was to become ‘a distinctive consultative tradition for education policy’ (Coolahan, 2011). The NEC set out to:

[...] encourage participants to clarify viewpoints: to question, probe and analyse varying perspectives; to foster multi-lateral dialogue and improve mutual understanding between sectoral interests; to explore possibilities of new ways of doing things and to identify areas of actual or potential agreement between different interest groups (Coolahan, 1994, p. 1).

In a dynamic and authentic manner, participants engaged in a robust manner and the NEC, while a ‘celebrated example of the partnership approach to education policy-making’ (Gleeson, 2004, p. 50), was critical to setting the direction of future policy development. Following a similar format, the National Forum on Early Childhood Care and Education was held in 1998, and consultative fora were held on adult and continuing education, which shaped the first coherent policy on lifelong learning. Later, in 2003, a consultative forum was convened which focussed on the teaching career while in June 2008, a consultative conference was held on ‘The Governance Challenges for Future Primary School Needs’. More recently, the working sessions of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism (2011) were public events, available to view live on-line, with some 246 submissions being published. In addition to consulting with stakeholders and individuals, two consultation events were held with children in order to contribute to a better understanding of their experiences of religious education in primary schools (Coolahan et al., 2012). Each of these successive consultative processes created the platform for policy development, but also established an expectation

that significant policy decisions in education would be the consequence of a deliberative process that included authentic consultation with all stakeholders. The inclusion of the 'social partners' in education bodies such as the NCCA established in 1987, is further evidence of the commitment of the state at that time to partnership; while the membership is determined by the Minister for Education and Skills, the 25-member council comprises nominees of school management bodies, teacher unions, parents' organisations, industry and business interests.

However, the process of representation is not always apolitical, and Gleeson (2004, p. 116) has argued that the teacher unions and managerial bodies control the NCCA. Despite the relative power of the various interest groups and the suggestion that a 'strong partnership rhetoric can mask a "political elite"' (Gewirtz & Ozga 1990, cited by Looney, 2014, p. 11), the concept of partnership remains highly valued in Irish education. The fact that so many organisations are represented on numerous fora, such as the NCCA, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and the Standing Conference of Teacher Education North and South (ScoTENS), has enabled the forging over time of strong professional relationships between departmental officials, teacher educators and the teacher unions. These relationships are not 'cosy' but are of the level that enable clear communication, realistic dialogue, and generate opportunities for collaboration. Through a consultative and incorporative tradition (Nicholls, 2015), characterised by 'mature democratic process[es]', Coolahan, (2011) argues that significant policy developments have been negotiated, which have contributed to the modernisation of Irish education. This approach towards policy, based on partnership, reflects a wider policy space. Partnership in teacher education has long been advocated by those involved in policy review. Since Furlong's study (1988) commissioned by the UK's DES in 1982, a partnership approach has become integral to many teacher education programmes internationally (Mutton, 2015). A 'profession based on partnership' is one of the four Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications (European Union, 2008). Close partnerships and collaborative links between schools and initial teacher education providers is a key indicator of successful programmes (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Maandag et al., 2007).

Traditionally, university/college-led teacher education in Ireland has been highly dependent on schools, where the universities assume full responsibility for the planning, delivery, and assessment of the programme, and the schools are the sites for 'teaching practice'. While Irish teachers are co-operative and generous in their guidance of student teachers, it has been recognised for some time that 'there is significant scope for improving the linkages between schools and education departments in the interests of improved teacher education in Ireland'

(Coolahan, 2001, p. 354). Clearly indicating that partnership needed to be enhanced, Kellaghan (2002, p. 121) suggested that, 'the practical knowledge of competent and experienced teachers that could play an important role in students' development is not adequately developed'. Within the Irish context, the centrality of revised and more extensive university-school relationships to quality teacher education programmes had been acknowledged in advance of the establishment of the Teaching Council, and it would seem that, in theory at least, there was a readiness within the system to embrace a new approach. However, a rather loose articulation of what partnership represented, 'the processes, structures, and arrangements that enable the partners involved in school placement to work and learn collaboratively in teacher education', (Teaching Council, 2013, p. 6), the lack of a proper funding structure and a climate of 'reform overload' mitigated against any real cultural shift in partnership models.

### **The Reform Agenda in Initial Teacher Education**

Following an extended period of stability, the establishment of the Teaching Council, the statutory body with responsibility for regulating the teaching profession, in 2006, was a significant development on the education landscape (O'Doherty & Harford, 2016). Universities and colleges had exercised high levels of institutional autonomy in relation to the content and nature of teacher education programmes with little state intervention or regulation. This situation has changed considerably, and teacher education has become the object of state intervention and regulation, in a period when the government is seeking to recapture economic prosperity and competitiveness. In the context of Ireland's poor national performance in PISA, and influenced by economic regeneration and perceptions about international competitiveness, the Department of Education and Skills [DES] decided to extend the duration of ITE programmes to provide additional time for the development of teachers' skills in teaching literacy and numeracy (DES, 2011, July).

The Teaching Council, charged with the remit to regulate the quality of initial and continuing teacher education, has dramatically changed the dynamic and process of reform in Irish education within a five-year period. Within this period, the Council had issued criteria for the accreditation of all programmes and published a series of policy documents relating to the continuum of teacher education across the career cycle. All teacher education programmes leading to registration must be rigorously reviewed and professionally accredited by the Teaching Council. Since September 2012, in order to retain their professional accreditation from the Teaching Council, all concurrent (undergraduate)

programmes of initial teacher education, must be of four years' duration (240 ECTS credits), and school placement must comprise 25% of the programme with a minimum of 24 weeks in schools. Since September 2014, all consecutive (postgraduate) programmes of initial teacher education are of two years' duration (120 ECTS credits), validated at master's level, with a minimum of 40% of the programme and 30 weeks of student time being dedicated to school placement. In practice, this reconceptualisation has led to a detailed articulation of the optimal design and content of programmes, with a renewed emphasis on literacy and numeracy, and enhanced provision in ICT, special education, and assessment, as well as an enrichment of both the duration and nature of school placement within the programmes (O'Doherty, 2014). Although the introduction of master's level teacher education has been widely welcomed (Coolahan, 2013), recent research (O'Doherty & Harford, 2016) suggests that the reform and reconceptualisation of ITE has resulted in greater demands being placed on schools in relation to 'partnership'; that the timing of the reform agenda, as well as the lack of a resource base, is problematic; moreover, that capacity and 'good will' within the system are now under threat.

The partnership between HEIs and schools in support of the practicum component of initial teacher education has always been regarded as a central part of the success of initial teacher education contributing to the calibre of a student teacher who eventually joins the profession. Historically, however, the relationship between schools and HEIs has been an informal one, based on good will. The lack of formalised school-university partnerships has been widely documented (Conway et al., 2009) with some scholars highlighting the fact that student teachers have traditionally been treated as 'fully qualified, professional teachers and entrusted with responsibilities that were not appropriate to their status' (Mullins, 2004, p. 38). One of the key recommendations of the Sahlberg Report is the need to develop more systematic partnerships between HEIs and schools. The Teaching Council has taken up this mantra, recognising that ITE represents the 'foundation of the teacher's career', yet at the same time conceding that ITE has traditionally relied on *ad hoc* relationships between HEIs and schools (Teaching Council, 2011b, p. 11).

Cognisant of the need to provide a more structured basis for effective school-university partnerships, the Teaching Council has called for the development of 'new and innovative school placement models [...] developed using a partnership approach, whereby HEIs and schools actively collaborate in the organisation of the school placement' (Teaching Council 2011b, p. 15). The cornerstone of the reform agenda is a more sophisticated experience of the practicum, which is predicated on an enhanced relationship between schools and

university education departments:

“School placement is designed to give the student teacher an opportunity to learn about teaching and learning, to gain practice in teaching, to apply educational theory in a variety of teaching and learning situations and school contexts and to participate in school life in a way that is structured and supported. It replaces the term ‘teaching practice’ and more accurately reflects the nature of the experience as one encompassing a range of teaching and non-teaching activities (Teaching Council, 2013, p. 6).”

In its *Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers* (2011b), the Teaching Council announced a significant policy shift from ‘teaching practice’ to ‘school placement’ (Sugrue & Solbrekke, 2015, p. 6). Inherent to the revised approach to practicum was the expectation that partnership built on the following principles would be achieved:

- host schools being communities of good professional practice
- greater levels of responsibility being devolved to the profession for the provision of structured support for student teachers. Structured support should include mentoring, supervision and constructive feedback on practice. In that context, students should be afforded opportunities for critical analysis of the experience, as well as observation of, and conversations with, experienced teachers whole school approach to supporting student teachers, under the guidance of principals as leaders of learning
- an enhanced partnership between the HEI Placement Tutor and the Co-operating Teacher

... the school placement should afford student teachers the opportunity to plan and implement lessons and receive constructive feedback. (Teaching Council, 2011b, pp. 16, 17)

The 2011 Policy is explicit on the content, nature, and duration of placement and of the level of partnership required in order to deliver the desired school-based support to student teachers. However, in the specific *School Placement Guidelines* which were subsequently published (2013), the level of expectation was somewhat diluted. The benefits of reconceptualising the school placement experience were identified, namely:

- It will enhance the school placement experience for student teachers
- It will enrich learning outcomes for both current and future learners
- It will deepen the professional satisfaction and improve the status of teachers (Teaching Council, 2013, p. 7).

The *School Placement Guidelines* (2013) are more nuanced than the previous iteration and recognise ‘the goodwill of teachers and other partners and the voluntary nature of their participation’ (2013, p. 10). They further outline the desirability of co-operating teachers and school principals providing structured support to student teachers but acknowledge this support was only possible ‘having regard to capacity’ (p. 15). The *Guidelines* are mostly aspirational, with little or no mention of exactly how any sea change in the school-university partnership model is to be realised, operationalised, or resourced (O’Doherty & Harford, 2016). Particularly absent from the *Guidelines* is any reference to the selection and professional development of co-operating teachers who work with student teachers on school placement. Currently, co-operating teachers are either self-selecting or selected by school principals; the criteria for selection may be linked to their professional and personal capacity to undertake this role, yet it may also be linked to other variables, such as timetabling issues or the need to supplement an ineffective experienced teacher with a student teacher. Schools are not obliged to take student teachers, and increasingly schools at the primary level are reluctant to accommodate students particularly for the extended ten-week placement (Cotrell, 2012). Given the Teaching Council’s requirement that students engage in multiple settings for extended periods, it would appear that inadequate consideration was given at the outset to the scalability of the project being promoted. Based on a survey of ITE providers, Ó Neill (2015) suggests that approximately 8600 primary school placements are required each academic year to accommodate the needs of student teachers. While there are 21,724 mainstream class teachers in primary schools (DES, 2015-16 Key statistics), as many as 25% of this cohort may be ineligible/unable to accept a student teacher at any given time. As a consequence, to accommodate the current needs of initial teacher education, the Council expects that one in every two eligible teachers will accept a student on placement each year, often for an extended period; delivering on this expectation is extremely challenging. At the post-primary level, the demand for classes is no less challenging given the range of subjects and class levels required by students. Such levels of placement are unprecedented in the literature on teacher education and in the partnership literature. While the scale of the practical and logistical elements is of concern, so too is the absence of a dialogue on the essence of teacher education, what is appropriate content, and pedagogy of ITE.

The Teaching Council’s recommendations on partnership in School Placement are premised on the control, management and assessment of placement, as well as the content and thrust of ITE programmes remaining the responsibility of the universities. While there is an assumption that teachers will



comply with requests to accept student teachers, to facilitate the learning objectives as outlined by the ITE provider, and formally mentor the students, there is no suggestion within the documentation that the design and content of ITE programmes would be a shared responsibility. While the limited articulation of the respective roles and responsibilities of the various actors in school placement (cooperating teachers, HEIs, schools, student teachers) is to be welcomed (Teaching Council, 2013), the fact that these guidelines do not address fundamental principles of partnership is of concern. Partnership, as outlined by the Teaching Council, does not promote shared ownership of the process, agree pedagogic principles, require joint strategic planning and implementation of placement, establish clear division of roles and responsibilities, build effective and regular communication processes, or fundamentally demand strong commitment of the partners involved (Mutton, 2015; Wannan et al., 2010). The HEIs dominate the relationship, where they request placements, and schools and individual teachers may grant access to their classrooms. Achieving full placement for students in a 'partnership' process, where there is no shared understanding of the principles of teacher education, an infrastructure to establish real and shared responsibility for school placement is absent, and where traditional goodwill and professional courtesy are the only bases for engagement, is unsustainable in the long term.

### **Reform Agenda at Induction Level**

The Teaching Council's *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education* (2011a), which was the vision document for the reform of initial teacher education, also focused on the induction and in-career development needs of teachers. On completion of their ITE programme graduates are not fully recognised teachers, and must undergo a probation process before attaining qualified teacher status. Traditionally, probation for newly qualified primary level teachers required that they completed a specified period of service within a school, and were deemed competent by the Inspectorate, who inspected and formally assessed the performance of the newly qualified teacher (NQT) on two occasions. At post-primary level, responsibility for probation resided with principals who signed off on the NQT's suitability once a specified period of post-qualification employment had been completed. NQTs were expected to perform at the same level and with the same responsibilities as experienced teachers, from their first day of employment within the system. The *Review of National Policies for Education* (OECD, 1991, p.101) was critical of Ireland's approach to induction, which it deemed 'ad hoc and incomplete', and stressed

that induction should form part of a 'coherent pattern of the professional career and regarded as an essential component of a policy for maintaining the quality of schools and of teachers'. Although teacher unions and ITE providers actively canvassed for support for beginning teachers throughout the 1990s, the National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction (NPPTI) was not established until 2002 (O'Doherty & Deegan, 2009, p. 23). This pilot project, which continued until 2010, was a partnership between the Department of Education, the teacher unions, the HEIs, and the participating schools. While the project experienced several phases and experimented with various approaches, the positive role of mentors within a whole school approach to induction emerged as the primary finding of the project. During this project, induction occurred in parallel with probation, and the Inspectorate continued to assess NQTs' performance as a condition of probation and full recognition. The continued role of the Inspectorate was central to both the acceptance of the project within schools and the development of the mentor-mentee relationship (Smyth et al., 2016, p. 4). Building on the experience of the NPPTI, in 2010, the Teaching Council launched the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT). Although engagement with the programme was initially on a voluntary basis, since 2012, all NQTs have been required to participate in the programme and to attend 24 hours of induction workshops. Scheduled in the late afternoon or evening and located in education centres/outreach venues, the two-hour workshops focus on the following themes: working as a professional; planning and preparation; classroom management and organisation; working with parents; child protection; assessment; behaviour management; literacy; numeracy; differentiation; inclusion; Gaeilge (primary teachers) / transition from primary school (post-primary teachers).

Following a decision of the Minister for Education and Skills, the Teaching Council was charged with establishing common procedures for the induction and probation of teachers at both primary and secondary levels (DES, 2012, p. ix). The Council proposed, as outlined in the Career Entry Professional Programme (CEPP), that the teaching profession and specifically principals of schools would assess and approve the competence of NQTs (Teaching Council 2012). The CEPP proposals were circulated for consultation in January 2012 with the intention that the new programme would be implemented on a phased basis from September 2012. The Council initiated a comprehensive consultation process; between January and March 2012 Council members and the executive met with management bodies, teachers' and principals' representatives, ITE providers, education centre directors, school principals, mentors and the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT). The Council also invited

written feedback and by 27 March 2012, 250 individuals and organisations had made submissions (Teaching Council, 2012, p. 23). Reminiscent of the democratic processes involved in policy development within Irish education, and in evident response to the serious concerns surrounding the proposals described within the revised probationary process, on 2 April the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN, 2012) announced to its members that the Teaching Council had withdrawn the CEPP document.

Committed to revising the induction and probation process experienced by NQTs, the following March the Teaching Council instituted a single model of school-based induction and probation for all NQTs to be piloted over the 2013-2015 period. Under this pilot initiative, called *Droichead* (the Irish word for 'bridge'), in addition to participating in a minimum of 20 hours' professional development workshops, NQTs were supported by a school-based Professional Support Team (PST). The PST comprises a team of experienced teachers, including a principal and mentor, who work collaboratively to support the NQT during the induction process (Teaching Council, 2015). The PST engage in multiple observation and feedback sessions with the NQT, and the process includes both assistance and assessment; the PST provide formative and summative assessment linked to four criteria for full registration as a teacher (Smyth et al., 2016, p. 4). There were more than 300 schools at both primary and post-primary levels registered for *Droichead* with 280 NQTs participating in the process in 2015/6 (Smyth et al., 2016, p. 8). Central to the *Droichead* model is the integration of school-based assistance and assessment, and for successful completion, the NQT was required to have 'demonstrated an ability to practice independently as a qualified, fully registered teacher' (Smyth et al., 2016, p. 8). To satisfy this criterion, a member of staff had to observe the NQT teach on a number of occasions and to make the professional decision on whether or not the NQT had reached a satisfactory level of competence. In a system that has had a culture and tradition in which, since 1819, decisions about teachers' competence have been made by the inspectorate, this represented a significant shift for all concerned. Professional development was provided to the principals, mentors, and staff in participating schools and cluster meetings were held where participants shared their experiences of the pilot. Additional support was also available from the NIPT and an inspector assigned to that cluster (Smyth et al., 2016, p. 6).

A recent review of the *Droichead* programme (Smyth et al., 2016), commissioned by the Teaching Council, found that more than 50% of schools that participated in this voluntary programme had been engaged with the earlier NPPTI and the majority of *Droichead* schools had staff who had previously

been engaged in the mentoring project. Among the mentors surveyed, over a third (37 percent) had previously been a mentor in the school and over half (54 percent) had received mentoring training prior to joining Droichead (Smyth et al., 2016, p. 50). The role of the principal was central to the success of the programme in schools, and a significant minority of principals (four out of ten) had themselves trained as mentors. While the degree of staff buy-in to Droichead varied within and between schools, some degree of staff buy-in emerged as key to the successful implementation of the programme. Similarly, taking part in Droichead had changed practices within the schools, but the extent to which such changes went beyond the core Professional Support Team varied from school to school. The review observed that the dominant focus within Droichead schools was one of support and assistance and that the culture within schools prioritised coaching and involvement of the NQT within the wider life of the school, over assessment (p. 124). Participating NQTs referred to the school-based assessment process as being more 'authentic' than a performance for the visiting inspector (p. 125), and NQTs in Droichead schools reported lower levels of stress and slightly higher levels of confidence than those in non-Droichead schools (p. 201). However, time was a significant challenge within the project; time to have professional conversations, meetings and to conduct observations. Much of the meetings with the PST occurred outside of class time, and only half of schools fully used the release time allocation. More than half of the NQTs said they had met with their mentor more than ten times during the process, and NQTs were observed between two to four times, with a fifth of schools reporting that the NQT had been observed on five or more occasions (p. 199). Overall there were high levels of satisfaction with Droichead among PST members and the NQTs; participation in the process was deemed to have benefits for schools in providing structured support for NQTs, providing CPD for staff and promoting a positive collaborative learning culture within schools.

In the Review's concluding comments, the team referred to the pre-existing network of formal and informal supports in schools and noted, 'Schools with a stronger legacy of teacher collaboration assumed greater ownership of the process and used it to support a school-wide approach to teaching and learning' (p. 204). Elsewhere they observed, 'on average, ownership of Droichead, school-wide support for teaching and learning and adaptation of procedures appeared more established in the primary than in the second-level schools visited' (p. 170). It is inevitable that the decade of engagement with the NPPTI at primary level influenced this level of ownership and engagement with Droichead.

This review of Droichead substituted for a wider consultation in relation to the introduction of a revised policy of probation. Based on the positive review of Droichead, the Teaching Council announced that the process of the school-based concept of induction would be implemented on a phased basis in all schools from September 2016. Given the radical departure from established practices and in the absence of a negotiated agreement on this policy, the INTO balloted primary level teachers, and 91% of voters rejected the roll-out of Droichead. Consequently, the INTO has directed its members '[...] not to co-operate with/participate in Droichead or any form of probation/induction that does not include fully external evaluation for all NQTs, with effect from 1 July 2016' (INTO, 2016). The implementation of a top-down policy, which has not been agreed with teachers, who are opposed to assuming responsibility for the evaluation of their colleagues, does not seem promising. The imposition of a policy that has ignored teachers' concerns has created an impasse in Irish education, and it is unlikely that the current iteration of the Droichead programme, which disrupts the long-standing culture and tradition of probation in schools, will be implemented in autumn 2016.

## Discussion and Implications

This paper has considered two particular forms of partnership that are currently dominant features of the discourse of Irish teacher education. As early as 1984, Alexander identified some of the complexities associated with professional partnerships, and concluded, 'the comfortable language of 'partnership' conceals more intractable issues' (Alexander, 1984, p. 142, cited by Mutton, 2015, p. 201). The 'delicacy' required in the promotion of partnerships is often ignored and the initial step of getting all *relevant* people involved is frequently overlooked (OECD 2006). Within the Irish context, the social partnership processes that evolved as part of policy development since the 1980s have left a strong legacy. There is an expectation in Irish education that consultation is authentic, purposeful, and that reforms are negotiated. Within such an approach, genuine conversations about real issues are demanded, and discussions on values are at the core of such conversations. Such approaches enable the coming to a deeper understanding of the issues and, while not always achieving consensus, provide a well-laid foundation for reform. As outlined in the characteristics of partnership, it is important to create open communication, to develop a common vision for the project, but also to share ownership and responsibility for the project. Parity of esteem in the design of and decision making for projects is a further essential component. 'Partnership' is not just

about adequate consultation, joint goal setting, establishing respective roles and responsibilities, but also about setting a structure in place to support and scaffold partnership. It is also central to the fostering of innovative teaching and learning communities in which there is a bridge between theory and practice and between practitioners and those engaged in academic research (OECD, 2015). In some contexts, partners have moved beyond the inclusion of school and university personnel to also consider the inclusion of business and civil society partners (Halasz, 2016). As Halasz points out, 'the emerging new way of understanding the nature of the professional knowledge of teachers, and understanding the way it is created, shared and acquired sheds new light on the cooperation between schools and universities' (p. 5). It also gives rise to the creation and development of school-university partnerships as a primary strategic field in teacher education.

It is interesting to consider to what extent, if any, the two cases outlined in this paper meet the criteria for 'partnership'. The shift from 'teaching practice' to 'school placement' was announced by the Teaching Council within the *Initial Teacher Education: Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers* (2011) and further expanded upon in the revised *Guidelines for School Placement* (2013); central to this policy was the extension of the time students were to spend in schools, and it became evident that full responsibility for communicating and implementing the policy shift was to be carried by the ITE providers. While the language suggested a radical departure, partnership as a 'pedagogical concept', which focuses on a shared pedagogy and agreed curriculum of ITE was not at the heart of the policy. The dominant model of partnership promoted within the policy is that of 'expert-client' (Mutton, 2015), where the role of the HEIs is privileged over that of the practitioners. Recognising the absence of a systemic approach to school placement, the current Minister of Education and Skills has commented:

The new placement process is based on the development of a partnership approach between Higher Education Institutions and schools. Much progress has been made towards the development of that partnership approach. Based on engagement with the Higher Education Authority, the Teaching Council has identified the need for a forum that includes all HEIs providing programmes of ITE in Ireland, and a clear, time bound commitment to agreeing practical measures, including a national IT-based system, that will enhance the school placement experience for all parties to the process, and facilitate access by students to opportunities for same. *I understand that the HEA and the Council will meet shortly to progress this matter* (Bruton, 2016, emphasis added).

While this commitment to take practical measures to support placement is to be welcomed, there is no reference to initiating a wider consultation, involving teachers, schools or parents in this forum, and the concept of an unequal and unbalanced partnership persists. If a vision for a reconceptualised school placement process is to be developed, where schools are sites for clinical placements and formally recognised partners with initial teacher education providers, enabling students to research and test new methods and approaches in collaboration with class teachers, then the discussion with the partners needs to be deeper and more extensive than proposed. It is also worth questioning why, in a period of radical re-structuring, a more innovative model of HEI school partnership is not being established? Why has the issue of meaningful partnership between schools and universities and resourcing such a partnership never reached the 'active agenda' (Baumgartner & Jones, 2009)? In periods of stability, administrators tinker with arrangements in an effort to bring about incremental improvement without threatening the *status quo* (Baumgarnter, 2011). 'Pragmatic gradualism', where things move forward 'on a gradual path, testing responses, slowing down or speeding up as circumstances permit' (O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 175) suit proximate policy-makers because they can undo any harm that may arise, quickly, unobtrusively and without institutional upheaval. The absence of investment in enabling processes and essential negotiation prior to the implementation of the Reform, creates a significant impediment to realising the desired outcomes. Those most affected by the reform of initial teacher education, the HEIs, and the schools were asked to implement a reform agenda that was to be resource neutral (Sugrue & Solbrekke, 2015, p. 2). At a period of severe austerity, between 2007 and 2015 funding to HEIs was cut by 38%, while student numbers increased by 25% (Boland, 2015). Within this context, no capital was made available to invest in new supports or structures. Those at the 'chalk face', the HEI staff, and co-operating teachers or 'street level bureaucrats' who are operationalising policy change have been marginalised from the design of the new reform agenda. Although individual HEIs have introduced innovative models of working with a small selection of partner schools, there has been no formalised, systematic approach to the kind of professional development and framework for professional development such a reform process requires. Furthermore, there is perhaps a power dynamic that needs to be interrogated. Research evidence indicates that despite the high value attached to collaboration, most school-university teacher education partnerships remain HEI-led (Furlong et al., 2000; Menter et al., 2006). Schools need to be empowered to become more actively involved in leading school-university partnerships. For such partnerships to succeed, they must be meaningful and beneficial to schools. Finally, no

review has been undertaken in relation to the initial teacher education agenda. Such a review, which is continuous, process-oriented and participatory (Brinkerhoff, 2002), is therefore long overdue.

In relation to the introduction of a revised induction/probation process, the initial consultation on the Career Entry Professional Programme (CEPP) was both extensive and thorough, despite the short eight-week period allocated for the process. While CEPP was suspended, with little revision it was recast as 'Droichead' and piloted in schools. The decision to devolve greater levels of responsibility to schools, principals and individual teachers that are at the heart of CEPP and now Droichead, was made by Minister Quinn in 2012, who in haste sought to detraditionalise the culture of teacher induction and probation. Seeking to implement a mutation of European teacher education policy in an Irish context, the state-led change was communicated to teachers, and the failure to engage realistically with them has led to an *impasse*. Asking teachers and principals to comply with a Council's policy, which imposes an additional burden on them in terms of out-of-school time and administration, and which breaks down the traditional collegiality of schools where teachers are expected to assess their peers, at a time, 'when teachers have become the group of Irish civil servants hardest hit by national budgetary cuts (Mulcahy and McSharry, 2012 p.98), has caused high levels of frustration among teachers. The disjuncture between the rhetoric of partnership which is so much part of the language of the Council, and the absence of a willingness by the Council to value real partnership and to support it appropriately, has drained the goodwill of teachers. The Council has failed to recognise that it has a significant role to play in the space between policy development and implementation and that it needs not just be an advocate for teaching, but for teachers. The reality of reform is challenging, and partnership cannot be mandated. Rather it demands all involved to 'come together in new, less hierarchical ways in the service of teacher learning' (Zeichner, 2010, p. 89).

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## Biographical note

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## Scenarios of Mentor Education in Romania – Towards Improving Teacher Induction

MIHAELA STÎNGU<sup>\*1</sup>, EVE EISENSCHMIDT<sup>2</sup>, AND ROMIȚĂ IUCU<sup>3</sup>

∞ The aim of this paper is to examine the induction programme for newly qualified teachers and mentor education in Estonia, providing a comparative analysis of existing Estonian and possible Romanian models of mentoring. While the Estonian induction programme has been in place for more than ten years, induction in Romania is a relatively new and has only been mandatory since 2011 (*National Law of Education 1/2011*). The specifics of mentor professional development within the Romanian induction framework have yet to be explicated. This paper proposes two possible scenarios suitable for the Romanian system :1) long-term regulated academic education (part of master or doctoral level studies), and 2) flexible short-term in-service education. The advantages and disadvantages of both models are examined and ways to overcome some of the disadvantages are identified. Ultimately, the paper proposes that a flexible, needs-driven system which encompasses a degree of choice will best fulfil the professional development needs of teachers who wish to become mentors.

**Keywords:** induction mentors, novice teachers, policy scenarios

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## Scenariji izobraževanja mentorjev v Romuniji – k izboljševanju pripravništva učiteljev

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MIHAELA STÎNGU, EVE EISENSCHMIDT IN ROMIȚĂ IUCU

☞ Namen prispevka je pregled programa pripravništva za na novo usposobljene učitelje in mentorje izobraževanja v Estoniji pa tudi primerjalna analiza obstoječih estonskih in mogočih romunskih modelov mentorstva. Če so programi za uvajanje v Estoniji v praksi že več kot deset let, so programi pripravništva v Romuniji sorazmerno novi in obvezni šele od leta 2011 (*National Law of Education 1/2011*). Značilnosti profesionalnega razvoja mentorjev znotraj okvira uvajanja v Romuniji morajo šele biti razdelane. Prispevek predlaga dva mogoča scenarija, prilagojena romunskemu sistemu: 1) daljše regulirano univerzitetno izobraževanje (v okviru magistrskih ali doktorskih študijskih programov) in 2) krajše fleksibilno usposabljanje v okviru programov izpopolnjevanja. Preučene so prednosti in slabosti obeh modelov ter predstavljeni mogoči načini spoprijemanja z določenimi slabostmi. Nazadnje je v prispevku predlagano, da bi fleksibilen in glede na potrebe orientiran sistem, ki obsega določeno stopnjo izbirnosti, najbolje zadostil profesionalnemu razvoju učiteljev, ki želijo postati mentorji.

**Ključne besede:** mentorji pripravništva, na novo usposobljeni učitelji, scenariji politik

## Introduction

Teachers' professional development has become a priority for policy makers at the EU level, as the most powerful aspect implementing innovative and active pedagogies, such as interdisciplinary teaching and collaborative methods, and to enhance the development of relevant and high-level skills and competences while fostering inclusive education (New priorities for European cooperation in education and training, 2015, p.11). Several measures have been introduced to strengthen teachers' qualification in member states (Strengthening teaching in Europe, 2015). In this context, initial teacher education, the induction of newly qualified teachers, and continuing professional development of teachers have become the subject of discussions and policy developments in member states.

Concerning the induction of newly qualified teachers, one relevant document with regards to the development of clear educational policies at the European level is *Developing coherent and system-wide induction programmes for beginning teachers – a handbook for policymakers*, elaborated by the European Commission in 2010. The document states that there is no single model of effective induction policies. The induction programmes may be voluntary or compulsory, localised or nationwide; they may or may not be linked to probationary periods or to the assessment of teacher competences. This document gives a good frame for the analysis of the context in which an induction system for teachers can be implemented and how to design induction programmes.

A primary focus for researchers for many decades has been on the mentor, as a key figure in induction programmes, who supports the socialisation of novice teachers to the school context and their professional development (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Reoccurring questions concern the role and tasks of the mentor, selection process, and preparation for successful cooperation with the newly qualified teacher (Jones, 2010).

The main criterion upon which mentors are appointed to their positions is experience. Bullough (2005) emphasises the fact that it is not obvious that a good teacher can automatically become a good mentor, or that they have sufficient experience to provide adequate support for teachers in their first year of practice. In order to analyse mentor education in the context of induction programmes, Ulvik and Sunde (2013) conducted a study within a mentor education programme to gain a deeper understanding of mentor preparation and to analyse the relevance of mentor education in the context of induction programmes. They (ibid.) concluded that though mentors fulfil their tasks effectively when they were prepared for this role, mentor training is sporadic and

unstructured. Ingleby and Hunt (2008) state that induction mentors should have a professional status and the professionalisation of the induction mentors is one way to improve the quality of mentorship. Gravey and Alred (2000, cit. in Yee & Fan Tang, 2012) underscore the need to take into consideration two aspects in educating induction mentors: (1) mentoring as a subject in itself (fundamental knowledge about mentoring novice teachers), and (2) professional development of mentors working in different contexts (mentor practice).

Compiling mentor education programmes, the context in which mentor education should take place and the role of mentors in an induction programme need to be analysed. Thereby, in educating induction mentors, we have to consider that mentoring can be approached through identifying goals and focusing on objectives, which addresses educational systems in different countries.

Wang and Odell (2002) define mentoring based on three approaches: 1) humanistic interactions: focus is on novice teacher personal needs and well-being; 2) situated apprenticeship: focus is on adjustment to the school culture, supports the development of teaching skills in particular context; and 3) critical constructivist approach: focus is on transforming teaching in collaborative inquiry. Orland-Barak and Klein (2005) proposed similar approaches to mentorship: therapeutic (orientation to personal growth), apprenticeship (modelling of various behaviours), and reflective (inter-subjective process). From the perspective of beginning teacher's development, mentoring can focus on three dimensions: 1) the professional dimension, the emphasis is on developing teaching competences; 2) the social dimension, the emphasis is on supporting the beginning teacher to become a member of the school organisation; 3) the personal dimension, the process of development of a professional identity as a teacher is in focus, including teacher's self-efficacy, emotions and self-esteem (Eisenschmidt, 2006). Nevertheless, there is no 'one size fits all' solution concerning the preparation of induction mentors, and every country should create their own system that best meets the aims of the national educational system and suits the particular educational context.

When identifying possible mentor education scenarios, we have to consider that any changes or reforms in education must be seen within a more general social and political context, and located within a particular historical, political, and educational tradition (Hartnett & Carr 1995, p. 41). Therefore, regardless of the country specific context, it is not possible to borrow models or scenarios from other systems and implement models in the same way. While planning change and implementing new programs in teacher education, it is necessary to take into account both national contexts, but also learn from others. Thus, it is important to analyse other experiences; the reforms have to be



planned and worked out locally, taking into account the national social, political, and educational contexts.

## **Methodology**

The aim of this paper is to analyse the contexts and models of mentor education in two European countries, Estonia and Romania, and to propose mentor education scenarios for the Romanian context. When identifying mentor education alternatives for the Romanian system, we analysed the experience of the Estonian induction system, which was implemented more than ten years ago. We used the Estonian model as an explanatory case, which supports our reflective analysis.

Firstly, we identified the national regulations concerning induction to determine the status of the mentors and how mentor education is regulated within the two countries. The documents we reviewed are the following: 1) legislation on teacher education in Estonia and Romania; 2) research papers and reports on planning and implementing induction programmes in Estonia and Romania; 3) the European Commission reports on teacher education.

Secondly, we proposed alternative policy scenarios for the Romanian system. We considered that approaches on mentor education depend on local contexts and should support continuity in teachers' professional development through three phases: initial education, induction, and continuing education.

We identified the advantages and disadvantages of the scenarios and proposed a possible scenario for implementation in the Romanian educational context.

## **Teacher Education System and Teacher Induction in Estonia**

Estonia is the northernmost of the three Baltic States with a population of 1.34 million people. Approximately 14,500 teachers are employed in around 540 general education schools (Haridussilm). The Estonian higher education system was reformed in 2006 according to the Bologna regulation into a three-year bachelor level degree and two-year master level degree. According to the policy, teacher education is obtained through master level education offered by two universities. Currently, three initial teacher education models are used: the master level five-year integrated model (class teachers in primary school level), in which subject and educational studies take place concurrently, and the two-phase or consecutive model (for subject teachers), in which a two-year master level teacher education is started

after the completion of three-year subject studies at the bachelor level. Vocational and pre-primary school teachers have to obtain three-year bachelor education.

The one-year induction programme for newly qualified teachers with mentor support has been offered since 2004. The contextual reasons implementing support programmes for newly qualified teachers were described during the preparation process of the induction programme as the following:

1. Studying to become a teacher is not popular among young people, and the number of applicants to teacher education is decreasing, and at the same time the average age of teaching staff is increasing;
2. During the first five working years, many teachers leave school and attempt to find jobs in other fields; thus, the educational system loses educated teachers, and the resources are not used effectively. Newly qualified teachers quit the profession because of the difficulties during their first years of teaching. The reasons for their leaving are focused on the complexity of the teacher's job, inaccurate expectations (idealistic approach to the teacher's work) and acquired initial teacher education that does not meet the real needs;
3. The views and beliefs about becoming a teacher have changed, teachers are lifelong learners and continuing stages should be implemented. A teacher's first-year experience has a strong influence on the development of the teacher's identity and development of teaching competences (Eisenschmidt, 2006).

The Estonian school system is decentralised, and schools are highly autonomous. Additionally, school leaders are responsible for hiring new teachers, planning teachers' workload, and evaluating the need for teachers' professional development and organising activities to support teachers' learning.

The theoretical foundations of the induction programme and mentor education in Estonia were agreed as follows (*ibid.*):

- Schools are learning organisations; teachers form learning communities and support each other's professional development;
- Entering the profession and organisation evolves socialisation processes through which the novice teacher becomes a member of the teaching community.
- The basis for the continuous professional development of a teacher is the readiness to self-reflection. In order to ensure the continuity of the professional development of teachers, it is essential to connect the three stages of development: initial training, induction year and continuous professional development.

The Estonian induction system has partly been influenced by systems and initiatives in England, the Republic of Ireland, the United States, and Nordic countries (ibid.). Practices and initiatives in these countries were analysed from the perspective of teachers' professional development as a continuous process, including education, induction period (socialisation, entering the profession) and continuing in-service education.

According to the education policy, mentors in Estonia should have at least 3-years of teaching experience and have a special mentoring education (Framework Guidelines for Teacher Education, 2000). It is not necessary for the mentor to be a teacher of the same subject, but it is recommended that they teach in the same field and at the same school level.

The mentor's task in the induction program is to support a novice teacher's professional growth and socialisation at school as an organisation. Furthermore, competent mentors can support the school administration to create a cooperative and reflective school culture. The following figure illustrates the mentors' expected activities during the induction period (Figure 1).

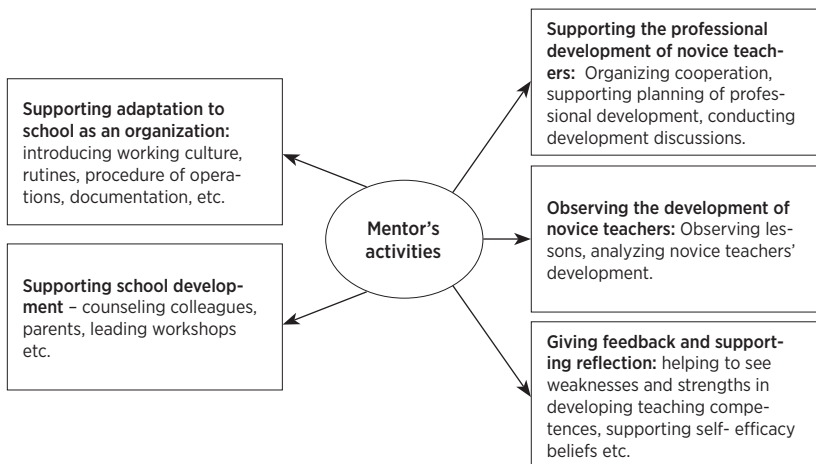


Figure 1. Mentor's activities (adapted from Eisenschmidt, 2006, p. 62; Poom-Valickis, 2007, p. 57)

Acting as a mentor requires the development of certain specific competences. Therefore, the aim of mentor education is to support the acquiring of mentoring- specific counselling competences and formulating attitudes to support collegial learning and professional development (Poom-Valickis, 2007). According to the teacher education policy, universities provide a one-year ECTS mentor education course in the amount of 12, which is financed by

the Ministry of Education and Research. This course is acknowledged as part of teachers' continuing professional development and the participants obtain an academic certification. When creating the content of a mentor education course, the results of research studies addressing the main concerns of beginning teachers were considered. The concept of mentor teachers as teacher educators was followed; specifically, the mentor's role is not only supporting socialisation and providing emotional support but also fostering the novice teacher's professional development and learning through dialogue and reflection. The course consists of the following modules:

1. School as a learning organisation, novice teacher in an organisation, socialisation into the organisation, collaborative learning, and work-place learning;
2. Supporting novice teacher professional development. Mentoring. Mentoring as dialogue. Communicative skills: listening, giving feedback, supporting reflection;
3. Contemporary learning approach (constructive learning process, student-centred learning) (Eisenschmidt, 2006, p. 67).

When selecting mentors, personal characteristics such as commitment to the profession, empathy, and willingness to support colleagues' professional development should be considered (Löfström & Eisenschmidt, 2009). These characteristics are equally important when fostering a good mentorship relation.

## **Teacher Education System and Mentor Education in Romania**

Considering Romanian education statistics, in 2015/2016, there were 237,443 teachers in 7,108 general education institutions (National Institute of Statistics, 2015). According to regulations, preschool, and primary class teachers must undergo a three-year bachelor degree programme in education. Subject and vocational teachers must obtain an integrated five-year master level education.

Based on educational reform in Romania (National Law of Education, 1/2011) there has been a change of paradigm from the concurrent approach in initial teacher education to the consecutive approach. The new law states that initial teacher education includes subject education, which is achieved during three-year bachelor studies and continuing two-year master level teacher education. However, the policy has not been implemented, and initial teacher

education takes place according to the concurrent model. In the context of life-long learning, all in-service teachers have to pass professional development courses based on their personal needs in an amount of at least 90 ECTS every five years. First-time one-year induction in a school, under the guidance of a mentor teacher, is emphasised on a policy level.

The concept of induction and induction mentors in Romania is relatively new and has only gained recognition since 2011 when the new National Law of Education (1/2011) was approved. There are numerous grey areas regarding the implementation of the induction programme, the role of mentor, and specific mentor education. There is no clarity yet, although the policy states that teachers who would like to become mentors need to have at least eight years of teaching experience, and must pass at least one course accredited by the Ministry of Education within the previous five years. According to the legislation, in order to become a mentor, the eligible teacher must pass a specific exam in two phases: 1) giving a lesson or organising other teaching activity; 2) observing other teacher's lessons or teaching activity and analysing it.

Taking into consideration the structure and organisation of the educational system, in Romania, even if the decentralisation of the educational system has been stated in the National Law of Education since 2005 (Decentralization strategy of undergraduate studies, 2005), to date the decentralisation process has not been fully implemented. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and County Schools Inspectorates are in charge of the administration of schools and other educational institutions. Additionally, there are several institutions regulating the field of teacher education. The National Authority for Qualifications is an agency under the governance of the Ministry of Education coordinating the quality assurance of adult education, including teacher education; coordinating the authorisation of training providers; coordinating the authorisation of professional competency evaluation centres for adults, including teachers; and participating in the development of plans and programs of national interest in the qualifications and training of adults including teachers. There is one more participant: the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), as part of the Ministry of Education. The role of this agency is to authorise and evaluate higher education institutes and their programmes.

Concerning the continuing professional development of teachers, Schools Inspectorates organise and guide these activities. To date, there are no regulations about the responsibilities of Schools Inspectorates regarding the induction of newly qualified teachers and mentor education.

To sum up, many unanswered questions remain concerning the implementation of an induction programme for newly qualified teachers. One of the

most crucial aspects of the induction, the role of the mentor and mentor education, needs deeper analysis prior to regulation. Thus, this creates the need for the proposals of possible scenarios, which suit the Romanian context.

### **Induction Mentors Education: proposed scenarios**

One of the central questions regarding designing the mentoring system is: what is the best way to integrate mentor education into the teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) system? We propose and analyse further the following two scenarios: 1) long-term regulated academic education (part of master or doctoral level studies, in which mentor education is one specialisation), and 2) flexible short-term in-service education in which the main focus is on mentoring (Iucu & Stîngu, 2013).

The first scenario (S<sub>1</sub>) is a highly regulated, centralised, academic system, in which the central institution takes the responsibility with multiple roles including authorisation, quality assurance, and guidance (ministry through specialised departments, e.g. National Authority for Qualifications, ARACIS). This creates a unique route of in-service education at the national level (Figure 2). As academic degree programmes (educational master or professional PhD) are standardised and structured on a policy level; as a result, these programmes are will be long-term and less flexible. In this scenario, providers can only be higher education institutions.

The second scenario (S<sub>2</sub>) is a regulated, but more flexible solution (Figure 2). In this case, School Inspectorates are responsible for the regulation of mentor education as one area of teachers' professional development. This institution creates a framework for mentor education programmes, and more precisely, the elaboration of mentor education may be left at the schools' level. In this scenario, the role of the schools would be to identify the needs of the newly qualified teachers and to choose the best option that fits those needs, taking into consideration the framework created by School Inspectorates. This approach is specific on-the-job education and can be considered to be the continuing in-service education of the teachers. Training providers are diverse: higher education institutions, NGOs, Institute of Educational Sciences, private organisations, professional associations, etc. These types of programmes can vary from short-term academic programmes, career training, to mobility programmes that can be of a modular type or short-term programmes.

Criteria	Scenario 1: highly regulated, centralized system	Scenario 2: low regulated system, more flexible
Regulatory Institutions	Ministry of National Education (National Authority for Qualification)	Schools
Providers	Higher Education Institutes	Higher Education Institutes, NGOs, IES, private organizations, professional associations, Teacher' House
Types of programs	Master/Professional Doctorate	Short-term, in-service, modular type
Professionalization route	Less flexible, coherent at national level	Flexible route, but relatively coherent

Figure 2. Proposed scenarios comparison (Stingu, 2013)

We will analyse the advantages, disadvantages of the presented scenarios as well as how to overcome some of the disadvantages.

#### *Long-term regulated academic education*

From the perspective of teachers' professionalism and the prestige of the academic programmes, such as a master (or even doctoral studies) with the specialisation of the mentoring, the highly regulated centralised system is clearly in favour of such a perspective. The option of educating mentors through lengthy academic programmes is justified by a series of advantages for both the educational system and stakeholders (mentors, schools, universities, etc.). Academic programmes provide high recognition for mentors and reflect coherence and continuity throughout all phases of teacher education from initial education to induction and continuous professional development. This regulated system, with a higher academic degree, gives a good basis to create resources and network with academic institutions for mentors (i.e. handbooks, guidance, materials, etc.). Another advantage of such a system consists in the expertise and competence of the academics of the programme. Master education programmes foster the development of a strong research base for mentor education and also facilitate the formation of research capacity of future mentors. From this perspective of a mentor as a researcher, the mentor education will have great potential to support teachers' professional development.

However, considering mentor education as academic master-level education, we can identify some disadvantages. First, this is time-consuming, and there will be a gap of at least two years before the first mentors will have been educated, this approach will be unable to meet the immediate needs of the mentors at schools. Thus, there is an option that when mentorship is needed, the preparation is still in process. While on the other hand, when the mentor graduates, the programme there might no longer be a need for mentorship in

that school. Additionally, it will take several years to educate mentors for all schools in Romania. Second, this scenario is resource intensive. A two-year master level education is expensive and possibly limits the number of future mentors. The third limitation is that academic programmes have a specific structure, and the primary focus of a master level programme is to develop the academic knowledge and research competence of the learners. Mentor education should include some practical training and development of certain mentoring skills. To minimise these disadvantages, modular systems of the master programme with components of field practice as a mentor could be offered.

### *Flexible short-term in-service education*

After analysing the scenario of the short-term in-service education programmes, we can assume that this approach offers a more stable partnership between training providers and schools, thus creating the possibility of developing a community of practitioners through enhanced information exchange. These types of short-term programmes can respond to the immediate needs of the schools, and allow implementing induction programmes in a short time frame, avoiding the previously mentioned two-year gap. The frame of the in-service courses enables the design of the course based on learners' needs and prior competences. One of the disadvantages of this scenario is uncertainty in unstable circumstances. There is a risk of having mentor education programmes vary on levels of quality based on the conditions of an open market of in-service education of teachers, where various institutions and organisations including NGOs can provide mentor education programmes without a well-developed system of accreditation and quality assurance. Additionally, there is a lack of knowledge about mentoring among in-service educators and not enough resources to develop this capacity. In this context, we can raise questions about how to select institutions which can offer mentor education programmes.

Comparatively analysing the two proposed scenarios, we should assume that there is a need for certain flexibility in mentor education. Thus, we cannot delineate which scenario is preferable. In future discussions we should consider the following aspects having strong influence on the system:

- the prior experience and competences of the persons considered to become a mentor;
- individual characteristics of the future mentor;
- the needs of the school where the future mentor will work (short-term needs versus long-term needs).

As mentor education has been a matter of debate in Romania for some



years, there are some initiatives in constructing the content of the programmes for mentor education. For example, at the University of Bucharest, there is a master degree programme titled *Mentoring in education*. The content of this programme includes the following topics: human resources management in education, mentor competences, partnership in education, reflexive teacher, communication and interaction in mentoring activities, and practical approaches to mentoring. Considering the content of the mentor education programme, we need to take into account that there is no frame for mentor education. We should be aware in which context mentor education can take place. In future research, we will aim to identify the best content for mentor education suitable to the proposed scenarios.

## Discussion

Analysing comparably the two national contexts, as well as advantages and disadvantages of the proposed scenarios for the Romanian context and the Estonian example, we need to develop further discussions in two main areas: 1) contextual factors which needed to be taken into consideration planning mentor education, 2) sustainability of the mentoring.

### *Contextual factors*

First, in comparison to the Estonian mentor education approach, the academic scenario proposed for the Romanian system is much more regulated than the education of induction mentors in Estonia. There are several reasons for a decentralised system in Estonia. Based on the *TALIS Survey* (2013), Estonian schools have greater autonomy than in many European countries, and school leaders are responsible for teachers' professional development. Furthermore, headmasters are responsible for selecting and appointing the mentor for newly qualified teachers. In Estonia, mentoring is part of the workload of teachers (teaching hours are reduced or mentoring is considered to be participation in school development activities). In this case, the school leaders' role is very influential, and the effectiveness of mentoring depends on concrete school leadership. In Romania, taking into account the centralised approach, there are several regulations on the state level about teachers' workload, tasks and the role of the headmaster is more limited.

Second, in Romania, teacher education does not require master degree level education, but in Estonia, there is a master level teacher education requirement and almost all teachers have a master degree. This means that many Romanian teachers may be more willing to continue their formal education in higher education to obtain a higher academic degree. Especially in the context

that the 3+2 higher education system is approved on a policy level and is in the implementation phase. The importance of master level education is acknowledged among in-service teachers and in society generally.

Third, we need to look at the lack of motivation among teachers in becoming mentors and their engagement in specific educational paths to becoming mentors in the absence of explicit advantages (financial, status, the disclaimer at the basic norm, etc.). For example, in Estonia teachers historically took part in in-service education. According to the *TALIS Survey* (2013), 93% of teachers took part in professional development courses within the last 12 months. Furthermore, according to the educational policy, every school has to have a professional development plan for all teachers and headmasters who are responsible for supporting teachers' learning. In Romania, this policy has not yet been implemented; thus, this could be taken into consideration when choosing to develop a training programme for mentors.

In future research, we should take into consideration the compiling mentor education programmes in Romania, the free market of training providers that will not guarantee the equal quality of offered courses, and the coherence of induction mentoring according to the national aims. Comparing two countries, Estonia is relatively small (approx. 237,000 general school teachers in Romania versus 14,500 in Estonia); there are two universities responsible for teacher education including induction mentor education. This is not the case in Romania, because there are 83 universities responsible for initial and continuing teacher education and hundreds of private providers of courses in continuing professional development. Thus, it is quite difficult to have the same quality in all programmes within a very flexible framework.

### *Sustainability of the mentoring*

Cooperation between schools and mentor education institutions is crucial for maintaining a successful and sustainable mentoring network at all levels. In Estonia, universities are responsible for mentor education and organising group seminars for novice teachers. The feedback from novice teachers is used as input for the development process of mentor education. In Romania, regardless of the chosen scenario, there is a need to create a connection between educational institutes (higher education institutes, private training providers, NGOs, etc.) and mentors' workplace (schools). Therefore, educational institutes can gather feedback from mentors and representatives of schools to improve their mentor education curriculum.

To balance mentors' individual needs and the institutional or national needs, there should be a focus point in any discussion regarding mentor

education. Thus, we may argue that a centralised approach helps to support changes in the educational system. In a more flexible scenario, it is possible to develop the course according to the needs of participants and focus on professional development of every single teacher. If the state or national educational system aims towards a paradigm shift, a more centralised system is preferred, and mentors as change agents can support the professional development of the new generation of teachers who will adopt student-centred approaches to teaching.

We believe that it is mandatory to approach mentor education from a professionalised perspective and offer flexibility in choosing alternative educational paths for the teachers who want to become mentors.

## Conclusion

The national, social, political, and educational context must be taken into consideration in implementing and developing policies in education. We need to consider how to learn from the practices of other countries without adapting them directly to the certain national context.

Analyzing the Estonian system, we could draw the conclusion that placing continued effort and resources into developing teacher education and mentor education is a worthwhile long-term investment for beginning teachers and for all educational systems in general. After years of coherent educational policy implementation and financial sustainability, mentoring is becoming a natural part of the school culture in Estonia. Continuing cooperation with mentor supports beginning teachers' cooperation with other colleagues and involvement into school development processes (Eisenschmidt, Oder & Reiska, 2013). The most challenging aspect of the induction programme in Estonia is school leaders' awareness and willingness to create a good atmosphere for mentorship at the school level (Löfström & Eisenschmidt, 2009).

Considering possible scenarios for Romanian context, we may conclude that multiple approaches can co-exist in mentor education, but they have slightly different goals and meet diverse needs in the educational system. From the perspective of research-based policy, the development of some pilot projects should be implemented to analyse the possible scenarios in practice. Based on the results from pilot projects, the nationwide system can be worked out.

In this paper, we did not analyse the possible content of mentor education in the Romanian system. Still, in choosing possible scenarios we have to consider these mentor education approaches in the light of concepts on mentoring. For example, in the humanistic approach, as Wang and Odell (2002)

assert, mentorship emphasis must emphasise the importance of emotional support and socialising novices into the organisation and profession. Therefore, we believe that this mentoring approach may be best suited for school-based in-service training for mentors in order to better understand the context in which novices work. The situated apprenticeship perspective puts emphasis on the mentors' ability to articulate practical knowledge (ibid.). Thus, mentors-education should have a more comprehensive approach with emphasis on a well-developed and stable partnership between teacher education, institutions, and schools. The critical constructivist approach (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Wang, Odell, 2002), offers the possibility to better meet national needs, creates the possibility of developing a community of practitioners by enhancing knowledge exchange and creating new practices.

Considering that induction is an essential phase in teachers' professional development we believe that broad discussions are needed at all levels. At a micro-level (individual and institutional), we should identify if and how schools as organisations can support novice teachers and mentoring within the school context, regarding how to select mentors and regulate their workload, how to create a collaborative culture to support newcomers, etc. At a macro-level (national and European levels), we should investigate who mentor educators are, and what the competences should be of mentor educators, and how to allow flexible pathways to educate mentors.

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## Newly Qualified Teachers' Needs of Support for Professional Competences in Four European Countries: Finland, the United Kingdom, Portugal, and Belgium

VILHELMIINA HARJU\*<sup>1</sup> AND HANNELE NIEMI<sup>2</sup>

☞ The first few years in the teaching profession are usually demanding. Although initial teacher education forms an essential foundation for teachers' work, it cannot fully prepare new teachers for the complexities of working life. This study focuses on investigating the need for professional development support among newly qualified teachers to determine what their professional learning needs are and how these needs differ among teachers from four different countries: Finland, the United Kingdom (England), Portugal and Belgium (Flanders). The research data was collected via a questionnaire from 314 teachers, each with less than five years of teaching experience, and both closed and open-ended questions were included. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics and factor analysis to identify the latent variables associated with their needs. Answers to the open-ended questions were used to gain deeper insight into the newly qualified teachers' situation. The results indicate that new teachers need support, especially regarding conflict situations and in differentiating their teaching. In addition, when analysing the profiles of eight support-need latent variables, all of the teachers in the different countries viewed supporting students' holistic development as the most important area. Although the results of this study cannot be generalised, they provide an important overview of new teachers' learning needs that should be taken into account when planning and organising support for them.

**Keywords:** lifelong learning, newly qualified teachers, professional learning needs, teachers' professional competence, teachers' professional development

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## Potrebe na novo usposobljenih učiteljev za podporo pri strokovnih kompetencah v štirih evropskih državah – na Finskem, v Veliki Britaniji, na Portugalskem in v Belgiji

VILHELMIINA HARJU IN HANNELE NIEMI

Prvih nekaj let v učiteljskem poklicu je običajno zahtevnih. Čeprav začetno izobraževanje učiteljev nudi ključno osnovo za učiteljsko delo, ne more v celoti na novo usposobljenih učiteljev pripraviti na kompleksnost delovnega procesa. Študija se osredinja na raziskovanje potrebe po podpori strokovnemu razvoju med na novo usposobljenimi učitelji, in sicer z namenom, da se ugotovi, katere so njihove strokovne učne potrebe in kako se te razlikujejo med učitelji štirih držav: Finske, Velike Britanije (Anglije), Portugalske in Belgije (Flandrije). Raziskovalni podatki so bili zbrani z vprašalnikom, na katerega je odgovorilo 314 učiteljev; vsi so imeli manj kot pet let izkušenj z učiteljevanjem; vprašanja so bila zaprtega in odprtega tipa. Kvantitativne podatke smo analizirali s pomočjo deskriptivne statistike in faktorске analize z namenom identificiranja latentnih spremenljivk, povezanih z njihovimi potrebami. Odgovori na vprašanja odprtega tipa so bili uporabljeni za pridobitev poglobljenega vpogleda v položaj na novo usposobljenih učiteljev. Izsledki kažejo, da na novo usposobljeni učitelji potrebujejo podporo, še zlasti v povezavi s konfliktnimi situacijami in pri diferenciaciji njihovega poučevanja. Poleg tega se je pri analizi profilov osmih latentnih spremenljivk glede na podporo – potrebo pokazalo, da vsi učitelji v različnih državah podporo študentovemu celostnemu razvoju vidijo kot najpomembnejše področje. Čeprav izsledkov raziskave ne moremo posplošiti, pa ti nudijo pomemben pregled učnih potreb na novo usposobljenih učiteljev, ki bi naj bile upoštevane pri načrtovanju in organiziranju podpore zanje.

**Ključne besede:** vseživljenjsko učenje, na novo usposobljeni učitelji, strokovne učne potrebe, strokovne kompetence učiteljev, strokovni razvoj učiteljev



## Introduction

Enormous worldwide changes, such as globalisation and technological change, have an influence on education and on the way in which it is implemented (Bautista & Ortega-Ruiz, 2015). As the field of education becomes increasingly multifaceted, so does the work of teachers (see e.g. Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009; Niemi, 2015a; OECD, 2014). Hence, when newly qualified teachers have their first school teaching position, they face a working life that is both complex and demanding (Jokinen, Morberg, Poom-Valickis & Rohtma, 2008).

This new situation calls for strong professional competencies for teachers. As Darling-Hammond et al. (2009, p. 7) state, 'ensuring student success requires a new kind of teaching'. However, teachers' work is not limited to the classroom: it also includes collaborating with different partners, planning, designing, evaluating one's own teaching, as well as constant studying and learning (see e.g. Niemi, 2012; Niemi & Nevgi, 2014).

Improving students' learning is possible by building school systems that promote teachers' professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Teachers need different types of professional development at different times in their careers (Livingston, 2014). Additionally, learning needs differ among new and more experienced teachers (Scheerens, 2010). Although professional development is important during all career phases, it is particularly essential for newly qualified teachers: a huge learning potential exists during the first few years of work (see e.g. Grimsæth, Nordvik & Bergsvik, 2008) but this critical period can also be very stressful as new teachers confront the reality of teaching (Ballantyne, 2007). As it is not possible to acquire all the necessary knowledge and skills from the initial teacher education, much is still learnt at work, especially the procedural 'how to' knowledge that grows through practice (Knight, 2002, p. 230). Thus, supporting newly qualified teachers and giving them time and space for learning at work are important.

In this study, our focus is on the professional learning needs that newly qualified teachers have. We view professional development as a lifelong process that begins when student teachers enter teacher education programs, continues during the first few years of work, and then spans their entire career (see European Commission, 2010). Our aim is to determine what the professional competences that newly qualified teachers feel they need support or guidance with are. In addition, we examine how professional learning needs differ among teachers from four different countries: Finland; the United Kingdom (UK), especially England; Portugal; and Belgium, concentrating on Flanders.

## The complexity of the teaching profession today

Global socio-economic and technological developments have an influence on teachers' work and the ways in which it is understood (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). Although the main objective, that is student learning, has stayed the same, the profession and the tasks related to it have become wider and more multifaceted than before.

An essential part of teachers' work is teaching. Teachers are expected to master content and discipline; construct, organise and manage classroom activities; choose the best pedagogical methods; and develop and evaluate their own work (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Classrooms today are increasingly heterogeneous. When planning and carrying out teaching, students' different backgrounds and special needs have to be taken into account. (Livingston, 2014.) Advancing equity and treating every student individually is essential (Ewing, 2001). Thus, teaching as a profession contains a strong ethical dimension (Bullough Jr., 2011; Colnerud, 1997; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011).

Over the past few decades, the concepts of knowledge and learning have changed. Nowadays, knowledge is commonly seen as changeable whereas learning is perceived as the active construction of knowledge and as collaborative knowledge creation (see e.g. Lonka et al., 2015; Niemi, 2015a). Consequently, teachers' work is perceived to consist of supporting and facilitating students' active learning rather than transferring information to them. Changes in society as well as in the ways in which knowledge and learning are understood have also generated the need for new objectives for education (see e.g. Ananiadou & Claro, 2009; Commission of the European Communities, 2007). This has led many countries to integrate so-called 21st-century skills into their curricula (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2015) to prepare students for the future by teaching them necessary skills such as ICT literacy, cultural awareness, and learning-to-learn skills (see e.g. Binkley et al., 2012). To put these new objectives into action requires, as Saavedra and Opfer (2012) state, that teachers themselves master the skills and integrate them into their teaching.

Increasingly, teachers' responsibilities are not merely restricted to classroom activities. Teachers may, for example, run managerial tasks, be involved in additional decision-making and take part in developing curriculums (Commission of the European Communities, 2007; Livingston, 2012; Niemi, 2015a, b). Collaboration with different partners is also seen as important. Teachers communicate with parents and share relevant information with them, plan and develop work together with colleagues and extend instruction outside classrooms

by collaborating with representatives of working and cultural life (see e.g. Korhonen & Lavonen, 2014; Kukkonen & Lavonen, 2014; Niemi, 2015b).

The current situation also emphasises the teacher's role as an active learner, with learning and professional development activities undertaken throughout their career (e.g. Commission of the European Communities, 2007; Jokinen et al., 2008; Schulle, Dembélé, & Schubert, 2007). Gained work experience, knowledge, and competencies function as individual resources: enhanced professional competence enables teachers to act, make choices, and affect matters at school (see e.g. Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, Hökkä & Paloniemi, 2013; Vähäsantanen, 2015). The teacher's role as a researcher has also been emphasised (see e.g. Morales, 2016; Wang & Zhang, 2014; Yayli, 2012). Teachers are expected to try out and evaluate new pedagogical strategies, search for and rely on research-based information and carry out study projects together with their students.

### **Teachers' professional learning needs at the beginning of their careers**

The first years of work are often challenging for newly qualified teacher, with much intense discovery, but this can also cause stress as the focus is often on survival (Grimsæth et al., 2008). Entering working life may cause a so-called praxis shock when new teachers confront the reality of teaching (Ballantyne, 2007; Evans-Andris, Kyle & Carini, 2006). Thus, teachers' early work experiences have a huge impact on beginning teachers' attitudes towards teaching (Ballantyne, 2007), influencing their classroom practice and pedagogical choices (Haggarty & Postlethwaite, 2012), professional identity (Rippon & Martin, 2006), as well as their choices regarding staying in or leaving the profession (Kersaint, Lewis, Potter & Meisels, 2007).

Although the first years are intensive, this does not mean that newly qualified teachers would not be capable or competent at doing their job. As Fransson and Gustafsson (2008, p. 13) state, it is important to perceive new teachers as competent, if not as yet experienced professionals, rather than as 'incompetent persons that need help to manage'. Thus, emphasising professional development is not about incorporating newly qualified teachers into the existing culture but is more about supporting them to develop and take the school culture forwards.

Complex, new situations at work can generate different work-related needs for newly qualified teachers. For example, Evans-Andris and colleagues (2006) found that new teachers needed more support and technical assistance as their new job was seen as overwhelming, emotionally draining and it did

not match with their previously held expectations. Consequently, new teachers required more emotional support from their colleagues or mentors alongside guidance in 'technical tasks' such as classroom discipline and behaviour management, organisation and time management, and issues involving parent concerns and interaction. These results parallel the findings from the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), in which new teachers reported the need for more support, especially in classroom management strategies, and improving their professional skills by learning from model teachers (Scheerens, 2010). Furthermore, Ballantyne (2007) highlights the importance of support from colleagues in the first years of work as a teacher.

Sunde and Ulvik (2014) approach new teachers' needs from an entirely different angle: they investigated how school leaders perceive the needs of newly qualified teachers. According to them, the school leaders felt that new teachers need support, especially with information and practical solutions, such as the rules, routines, and duties in the school. Some of the interviewed leaders felt that new teachers should primarily join the existing school culture whereas others highlighted the importance of them finding their own way of teaching and participating in the school community.

As the first years at work have a huge impact on new teachers' wellbeing and working, it is important to find ways to support teachers when they enter working life. To direct the support and guidance in the best way, the specific working tasks or themes that newly qualified teachers feel they especially need help and support with should be examined. As stated at the beginning of the article, the teaching profession includes a wide combination of different skills and knowledge. Mastering them demands long-term development and constant career-long learning. Based on earlier studies and documents (e.g. Commission of the European Communities, 2007; European Commission, 2005; Niemi, 2011, 2012, 2014), which describe teachers' work, we view the teaching profession as containing five dimensions of teachers' professional competences:

1. Designing one's own instruction;
2. Cooperation – teachers working with others;
3. Ethical commitments to the teaching profession;
4. Diversity of students and preparing them for the future; and
5. The teacher's own professional learning.

These dimensions were used as a framework when our study instrument was designed.

## Context of the study

As teachers work in diverse settings, the learning needs they have often differ (Livingston, 2014). Newly qualified teachers working in different countries may thus have varied needs due to such differences, for example, in pre-service teacher education, the requirements and expectations set for teachers' work, and individual experiences and needs. All of the countries examined in this study have different systems of initial teacher education. For example, in Finland, all primary and secondary school teachers gain a master's degree when graduating as a teacher, whereas in Belgium (Flanders), most of the teachers gain a bachelor's degree. In addition, in the UK (England), teacher education is commonly organised around school-led training, whereas in the other countries, teacher education is often organised in universities. The four countries also differ in the ways in which formal mentoring for newly qualified teachers is organised. For example, in the UK (England) and Portugal, mentoring is often offered for all new teachers, whereas in Finland, organising mentoring is voluntary for schools. Thus, variations exist between schools and countries regarding how and if mentoring is organised.

A brief summary of the teacher education and mentoring systems in Finland, the UK (England), Portugal and Belgium (Flanders) is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *A summary of the teacher education and mentoring systems in four countries*

Features	Finland	The United Kingdom (England)	Portugal	Belgium (Flanders)
<b>Teacher qualification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master's degree.</li> <li>• Takes 5 years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Teaching Standards and qualified teacher status.</li> <li>• Most courses include a post-graduate qualification, which is likely to carry master's-level credits.</li> <li>• Takes 1 to 2 years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master's degree.</li> <li>• Takes 4 to 5 years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor's degree (180 ECTS) for pre-school, primary or first-grade secondary school teaching.</li> <li>• Post-graduate teacher education program (60 ECTS) for teaching in a secondary school.</li> </ul>
<b>Pedagogical studies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60 ECTS* pedagogical studies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Postgraduate Certificate in Education courses include pedagogical studies up to 60 credits at level 7.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 18–21 ECTS pedagogical studies.</li> <li>• Between 30–51 ECTS didactics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 ECTS pedagogy studies (in post-graduate teacher education programs).</li> </ul>

Features	Finland	The United Kingdom (England)	Portugal	Belgium (Flanders)
<b>Organising institution of pedagogical studies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universities.</li> <li>Higher education institutions of vocational teacher education.</li> </ul>	<p>The most common are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>school-led training, and</li> <li>university-led training.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universities.</li> <li>Polytechnics (only for primary school teaching degrees).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universities.</li> </ul>
<b>Teaching practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several phases during the programme, a total of ca. 20 weeks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In university-lead training, at least 24 weeks.</li> <li>School-based training is a minimum of 24 weeks but often longer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Between 42–63 ECTS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30 ECTS (in post-graduate teacher education programs).</li> </ul>
<b>Mentoring for NQTs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No formal mentoring system.</li> <li>Schools are responsible for organising the mentoring activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mandatory for all teacher trainees.</li> <li>The school is responsible for organising the mentoring activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mandatory for NQTs** according to legislation.</li> <li>Locally organised according to schools' mentoring programmes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voluntary for NQTs.</li> <li>Schools are responsible for organising the mentoring activities.</li> </ul>
<b>The mentors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usually a more experienced teacher from the same or different school than a mentee.</li> <li>Can have specific training for mentoring.</li> <li>Rewards or compensations depend on a school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each teacher trainee has two tutors: professional and subject tutors.</li> <li>Some schools provide mentors a payment.</li> <li>University-led programme has an additional university-based mentor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More experienced teacher with specific training for mentoring.</li> <li>Works in the same school as a mentee.</li> <li>Not paid.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools frequently ask mentors to follow mentor training.</li> <li>Works in the same school as a mentee.</li> <li>Not paid.</li> </ul>
<b>Participation to mentoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High variations among schools if mentoring is organised.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentoring is provided for all NQTs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The aim is that all NQTs are integrated in a mentoring program.</li> <li>Still some variation may occur in the ways mentoring is actually organized.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentoring is provided for almost 99% of NQTs.</li> </ul>

\* European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System credits

\*\*Newly qualified teachers

## Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine newly qualified teachers' professional learning needs. In addition, we explore how these needs differ among teachers in four European countries: Finland, the UK (England), Portugal and Belgium (Flanders). As the countries examined in this study have differences in their initial teaching education systems as well as in the ways in which mentoring is organised to support new teachers' work, the aim of this study is not to compare the countries with each other, but rather to identify the most important learning or support needs of new teachers. The aim is also to determine what kinds of need profiles for professional competences exist in each of the four countries. The research questions are:

1. What are newly qualified teachers' most important professional learning needs?
2. How do the need profiles of professional competences differ among teachers from Finland, the UK (England), Portugal and Belgium (Flanders)?

## Data collection and participants

The study is part of the European-funded Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project called the 'Outstanding Newly Qualified Teacher Program' (ONTP) for 2015–2017. The aim of the project is to find good practices to support newly qualified teachers, school leaders, and mentors in their work. The partners of this project come from Belgium, the UK, Portugal and Finland.

The data for the study was collected with an electronic questionnaire sent to newly qualified teachers in autumn 2015 and spring 2016. In Finland, the questionnaire was sent to newly qualified teachers who had previously participated in training for new teachers organised by the Trade Union of Education in Finland and through 200 principals in comprehensive and general upper secondary schools in different geographical areas. The principals were asked to forward the questionnaire to the potential new teachers in their schools. In all, there were 145 respondents from Finland. In the UK, the questionnaire was sent to 60 newly qualified teachers studying in a teacher training programme organised by the Teaching School Alliance in the North East of England. In all, 32 teachers responded. In Portugal, the questionnaire was sent to school principals in a region called Lisbon and Tagus Valley. Like in Finland, the principals were asked to forward the questionnaire to the new teachers in their schools. The number of respondents in Portugal was 62. In Belgium (Flanders), 75 new teachers responded to the questionnaire.

## Instruments

The analysis methods used in this study were mainly quantitative: descriptive statistics, correlations and factor analysis with principal component analysis to identify the latent dimensions of professional competences. The qualitative data was used to deepen the understanding of the quantitative findings.

The instrument was used in earlier studies, originally in surveys of Finnish student teachers (Niemi, 2012, 2014) and also in comparative studies of Finnish and Turkish teacher education (Niemi, Nevgi & Aksit, 2016). In the earlier studies, the student teachers were asked: 'How well has the teacher training/teacher education you have thus far participated in made you ready for the teaching profession.' The instrument consisted of 40 questions about teachers' professional competences covering the five dimensions mentioned previously. In the survey for new teachers, the instruction was modified as follows: 'In the teaching profession, you face many kinds of tasks. Even though teachers have graduated from teacher training programs, they still need support, counselling, mentoring or further training for their own professional development. How do you see your own situation? I need support or mentoring in the following tasks.' New teachers responded using a 5-point Likert-scale: *Not at all or very little* (1), *A little* (2), *Somewhat* (3), *Much* (4) and *Very much* (5).

The instrument also consisted of teachers' background information and six open-ended questions with the following instruction: 'In the following open questions, we ask you to describe your experiences of your earlier teacher training, for example, how well it prepared you for these tasks. You may also reflect on what kind of support you would like to have for these tasks and for your professional development.' The themes of the questions were:

1. The teacher's pedagogical work and content knowledge;
2. Facing student diversity and multiculturalism in schools;
3. Cooperation in a school community;
4. Cooperation with different partners and stakeholders outside the school;
5. Ethical questions and one's own educational view or philosophy; and
6. One's own professional development as a teacher.

The data collected from the open-ended questions was mainly used to support the quantitative data. Thus, the quotes presented in the results section are aimed at giving examples of the learning needs described by newly qualified teachers.



## Analysis

The data from each country was analysed separately using descriptive statistics. Based on mean values, the needs were set in descending order to identify the most important ones. This was considered more relevant than directly comparing mean values between countries. In different cultural contexts, people have cultural patterns when using scales, for example, using extreme or moderate values.

After identifying the ten most important needs at the item level, the aim was to reveal latent variables in the data. In the earlier analysis of Finnish student teacher measurements in terms of the structure of the instrument, the five dimensions consisted of 40 items representing the following five dimensions of professional competences (Niemi, 2012, 2014): (1) *Designing one's own instruction*; (2) *Cooperation – teachers working with others*; (3) *Ethical commitments in the teaching profession*; (4) *Diversity of pupils and preparing them for the future*; and (5) *The teacher's own professional learning and growth*.

When analysing the combined Finnish and Turkish data, we concluded that six dimensions should be extracted as the teacher's professional learning was divided into *Readiness for teacher professional development* and *Developing teaching based on one's own educational philosophy* (Niemi et al., 2016).

In the new teacher data, limitations existed for further analysis due to the number of participants in countries other than Finland. Only the Finnish data gave a statistical basis for the factor analysis. As we had previous knowledge about the structure, the Finnish data was analysed using confirmatory analysis by extracting five or six dimensions. It did not provide a clear structure; therefore, a different number of dimensions was allowed. Using principal component methods and oblimin rotations, we accepted eight dimensions based on eigenvalues and the relevance in terms of interpreting the content of the dimensions. The eight components could explain 67.25% of the variance in the items (Table 2). The solution mainly gave the same features as the previous five- and six-dimension models, but some teachers' tasks had slightly more specific content. This model was tested on the other country data by counting Cronbach alpha scores separately for all data sets.

Table 2. *The eigenvalues and rotated sums of squared loading in the eight-component solution*

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation sums of squared loadings
1	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
2	2.479	6.199	44.068	4.305
3	2.046	5.116	49.184	5.627
4	1.765	4.413	53.597	7.827
5	1.625	4.063	57.660	6.488
6	1.521	3.803	61.463	6.602
7	1.309	3.273	64.736	4.156
8	1.022	2.556	67.292	5.297

The accepted model for the component was highly relevant for understanding teachers' competences. The dimension was named based on the strongest items in the component:

1. *Students' holistic support*
2. *Teacher as a researcher*
3. *Work outside the classroom*
4. *Teacher identity*
5. *New learning environments*
6. *Classroom pedagogy*
7. *Interaction with students and parents*
8. *Work in society.*

When comparing this with the earlier five-dimension structure for student teachers, we can see that there are similarities: *Classroom pedagogy* is very much the same as the earlier *Designing one's own instruction* but in the new teachers' data, the teacher's own philosophy is incorporated. The other professional competences were also divided into more dimensions for the new teachers. For example, *Diversity of pupils and preparing them for the future* now contains two latent variables: *Students' holistic support* and *New learning environments*. The analysis indicated that new teachers have more experience about teachers' work, and their assessment was more specific and accurate than that of the student teachers.

The model incorporating the eight latent variables was used as the basis for constructing summative variables for each dataset and analysing reliability. The reliability values were very high for each country at mostly .80 or higher.

The only exception, *Interaction with students and parents* in the Finnish data, had an alpha score of only .56. For Belgium (Flanders), two variables (curriculum development and teacher's post-graduate studies) were deleted before determining the reliability scores and forming the summative variable as there were too many missing values. According to Belgian ONTP experts, these aspects were not relevant as teachers do not have these options or obligations in Belgium (Flanders). This causes a minor limitation, but because countries are not compared directly with each other, the Belgian profiles can be accepted based on the high alpha scores for the latent variables. All of the countries latent variables and their Cronbach alpha scores are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Reliability scores of the eight-component solution for teachers' professional needs*

Dimensions of teachers' professional competences among NQTs	FI	UK	PO	BE
<b>1. Students' holistic support</b>	.89	.91	.91	.84
8. Education of a student's whole personality				
9. Development of your own educational philosophy				
12. Differentiating teaching				
13. Preparing students for readiness for daily life				
14. Preparing students for future society				
36. Supporting a learner's individual growth				
37. Acting in conflict situations (e.g. mobbing)				
<b>2. Teacher as a researcher</b>	.77	.84	.79	.75
25. Working as a change agent in society				
26. Cooperative action research				
28. Post-graduate studies in education				
29. Researching your own work				
<b>3. Work outside the classroom</b>	.77	.74	.82	.71
4. Management of tasks outside the classroom (keeping an eye on students during their breaks etc.)				
6. Administrative tasks (information letters, reports, etc.)				
7. Working with a student welfare group				
10. Confronting the changing circumstances of a school				
11. Developing the school curriculum				
<b>4. Teacher identity</b>	.85	.89	.93	.82
5. Working in a school community with teachers and other school staff				
20. Independent management of teachers' tasks				
21. Becoming aware of the ethical basis of the teaching profession				
22. Commitment to the teaching profession				
23. Lifelong professional growth				
24. Critical assessment of teacher education				

Dimensions of teachers' professional competences among NQTs	FI	UK	PO	BE
<b>5. New learning environments</b>	.80	.88	.83	.84
27. Revising students' learning environments				
32. Confronting multiculturalism				
33. Readiness for media education				
38. Developing applications of modern information technology				
34. Self-regulated learning				
<b>6. Classroom pedagogy</b>	.82	.85	.90	.72
1. Using teaching methods				
3. Evaluating and grading students				
17. Self-evaluation of your own teaching				
19. Planning my teaching				
30. Evaluating students' learning capacity				
35. Critical reflection on your own work				
<b>7. Interaction with students and parents</b>	.56	.79	.73	.71
2. Management of classroom interaction				
16. Promoting the equity of sexes				
18. Cooperation with parents				
<b>8. Work in society</b>	.73	.84	.76	.63
15. Intercultural education				
31. Mastering the academic contents of the curriculum				
39. Cooperation with representatives of work life				
40. Cooperation with representatives of cultural life				

## Results

The first research question asked what the most important professional learning needs of newly qualified teachers are. Table 4 shows the ten most important needs.

Table 4. *The ten most important professional learning needs of newly qualified teachers in four countries*

	Finland	The United Kingdom (England)	Portugal	Belgium (Flanders)
1	37. Acting in conflict situations (e.g. mobbing) M = 3.59 SD = 1.017	37. Acting in conflict situations (e.g. mobbing) M = 2.94 SD = 1.315	37. Acting in conflict situations (e.g. mobbing) M = 3.36 SD = 1.030	12. Differentiating teaching M = 3.64 SD = 1.135
2	12. Differentiating teaching M = 3.50 SD = 1.015	11. Developing the school curriculum M = 2.75 SD = 1.218	12. Differentiating teaching M = 3.33 SD = 1.012	19. Instructional design M = 3.34 SD = 1.057
3	7. Working with a student welfare group M = 3.35 SD = 0.932	10. Confronting the changing circumstances of a school M = 2.72 SD = 1.224	10. Confronting the changing circumstances of a school M = 3.20 SD = 1.108	37. Acting in conflict situations (e.g. mobbing) M = 3.19 SD = 1.194

	Finland	The United Kingdom (England)	Portugal	Belgium (Flanders)
4	27. Revising students' learning environments M = 3.26 SD = 1.028	12. Differentiating teaching M = 2.69 SD = 1.030	14. Preparing students for future society M = 3.16 SD = 1.098	2. Management of classroom interaction M = 3.16 SD = 1.236
5	30. Evaluating students' learning capacity M = 3.26 SD = 0.941	38. Developing applications of modern information technology M = 2.65 SD = 1.018	8. Education of a student's whole personality M = 3.11 SD = 1.002	38. Developing applications of modern information technology M = 3.08 SD = 1.297
6	38. Developing applications of modern information technology M = 3.19 SD = 1.120	26. Cooperative action research M = 2.65 SD = 1.082	11. Developing the school curriculum M = 3.07 SD = 0.981	33. Readiness for media education M = 3.08 SD = 1.219
7	3. Evaluating and grading students M = 3.19 SD = 1.061	25. Working as a change agent in society M = 2.58 SD = 1.025	13. Preparing students for readiness for daily life M = 3.03 SD = 1.154	30. Evaluating students' learning capacity M = 3.07 SD = 1.039
8	6. Administrative tasks (information letters, reports, student transfers to other groups or schools, work diaries) M = 3.17 SD = 0.958	24. Critical assessment of teacher education M = 2.55 SD = 0.850	40. Cooperation with representatives of cultural life M = 3.00 SD = 1.164	3. Evaluating and grading students M = 3.06 SD = 1.089
9	11. Developing the school curriculum M = 3.11 SD = 0.929	3. Evaluating and grading students M = 2.55 SD = 1.150	26. Cooperative action research M = 3.00 SD = 0.991	1. Using teaching methods M = 3.05 SD = 1.026
10	34. Self-regulated learning M = 3.03 SD = 1.030	30. Evaluating students' learning capacity M = 2.45 SD = 0.995	39. Cooperation with representatives of work life M = 2.98 SD = 1.176	27. Revising students' learning environments M = 3.04 SD = 1.252

The results show that the new teachers required support or mentoring, especially for conflict situations. This was the most urgent need in Finland, the UK (England) and Portugal. In Belgium (Flanders), it was third. Differentiating one's teaching and modifying instruction to meet the needs of individual students was seen as challenging in all four countries. It was the second highest need in Finland and Portugal, first in Belgium (Flanders) and fourth in the UK (England). These professional learning needs were also adduced in open-ended questions. As one elementary teacher from Belgium (Flanders) describes: '[Y]ou learn how to handle individual situations [in initial teacher training], but not how to handle realistic situations in a classroom.'

A history/social sciences teacher from Finland agrees:

Managing different difficult situations at work has turned out to be surprisingly challenging. We weren't really prepared for these in the teacher

education. [...] I haven't received any guidance on how to work with students whose language skills in Finnish are poor. It has been a frustrating experience to try out different self-developed ways to help a student with poor language skills in Finnish in a classroom when other students need lots of support as well.

In addition to handling conflict situations and differentiating teaching, many of the other top-ten needs were related to the students' learning capacity and future. In Finland, newly qualified teachers stated that they need support in working with student welfare groups, which are multi-professional groups that help students in difficulties. In Portugal, the challenging competence areas included preparing students for future society, education of a student's whole personality and preparing students for readiness for daily life. One interesting difference between Belgium (Flanders) and the other countries was that Belgian teachers' needs were mainly related to classroom pedagogy, such as support in instructional design, managing classroom interaction, readiness for media education and using teaching methods. In Finland, the UK (England) and Portugal, new teachers were more focused on confronting the changing circumstances of a school, developing the school curriculum, revising students' learning environments and cooperative action research.

In the top-ten list, many countries referenced information and communication technology or new learning environments. A new teacher from Finland commented:

Teacher education [was] quite ok, but seldom corresponds to praxis. The big problem, at this moment, is that digital methods are put to use concentrating on devices, not on pedagogy or even content. The result is a mess. Expensive devices are bought, but nobody tells us what to really do with them.

In many open-ended descriptions, the main message was that the pre-service teacher training was good but did not fit the real work in schools. ICT is introduced primarily as a tool that is not connected with pedagogy or even content.

The second research question focused on what kinds of need profiles for professional competences are required from teachers from four countries when all the items in the questionnaire are included. The eight need components were analysed with descriptive statistics to determine the means and standard deviations (Table 5). The difference between the profiles of the support needs can be seen in Figure 1.

Table 5. *New teachers' support needs as combined variables for the four countries*

Needs of support for professional competences	FI M (SD)	UK M (SD)	PO M (SD)	BE M (SD)
1. Students' holistic support	3.01 (.78)	2.40 (.86)	3.09 (.84)	2.81 (.75)
2. Teacher as a researcher	2.32 (.80)	2.41 (.87)	2.85 (.82)	2.53 (.83)
3. Work outside a classroom	2.97 (.70)	2.41 (.78)	2.79 (.87)	2.38 (.78)
4. Teacher identity	2.03 (.68)	2.05 (.77)	2.46 (1.02)	2.36 (.75)
5. New learning environments	3.00 (.77)	2.32 (.85)	2.82 (.81)	2.88 (.94)
6. Classroom pedagogy	2.82 (.70)	2.21 (.76)	2.62 (.92)	2.98 (.74)
7. Interaction with students and parents	2.64 (.72)	2.25 (.92)	2.58 (.88)	2.66 (.92)
8. Work in society	2.51 (.73)	2.16 (.72)	2.84 (.83)	2.74 (.84)

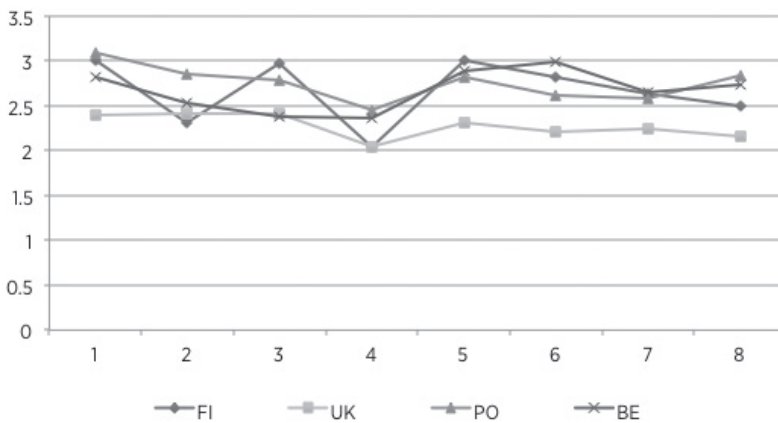


Figure 1. Profiles of newly qualified teachers for the eight components of support: 1. *Students' holistic support*, 2. *Teacher as a researcher*, 3. *Work outside the classroom*, 4. *Teacher identity*, 5. *New learning environments*, 6. *Classroom pedagogy*, 7. *Interaction with students and parents*, and 8. *Work in society*.

We can see that the highest needs are related to the students' holistic support. The latent variable consists of the following items: *Education of a student's*

*whole personality, Development of your own educational philosophy, Differentiating teaching, Preparing students for readiness for daily life, Preparing students for future society, Supporting a learner's individual growth, and Acting in conflict situations* (e.g. mobbing). This value-bound competence also incorporates the teachers' philosophical component. Teacher as a researcher was high in the UK, and student support and research capacity was also on the top of needs in Portugal. Teacher as a researcher was among the lowest needs in both Finland and Belgium (Flanders). In the Finnish data, working outside the classroom was a high priority, as it was in the UK (England). Only in Portugal did teachers' work in society rise to the top of the country-based profile. We can summarise the findings of the need profiles as follows: student support is the strongest need in all four countries, but there are also differences, which are probably related to pre-service teacher education as well as the tasks for which teachers are responsible. If teacher education provided good competences, new teachers' needs might not be very high. Alternatively, if teachers are changing and new demands are emerging, more support is also needed among new teachers.

## Discussion

In this study, we have examined the professional learning needs and support for those needs among newly qualified teachers in Finland, the UK (England), Portugal and Belgium (Flanders). As the analysis revealed, there are several similarities among the learning needs mentioned by teachers from different countries. One relates to acting in conflict situations, for example, when mobbing occurs, which is a surprising yet typical situation for teachers. However, conflict situations are often unique, and student teachers can never be completely prepared through teacher education programs. Knight (2002) emphasises how it is not possible to acquire all the necessary knowledge and skills from the initial teacher education. Many aspects of competence can only be developed through participating in activities in the working community. Thus, support at a school level is needed to foster new teachers' confidence to act in the complex situations encountered in schools.

The analysis also showed that differentiating their teaching was a challenging competence. Although teacher education offers basic, theoretical knowledge about special and multicultural education, managing classroom activities may still be hard. In heterogeneous classes, multifaceted knowledge, and skills, as well as cooperation with colleagues, are often needed to support every student's learning effectively.

Earlier studies (e.g. Ballantyne, 2007) have highlighted the importance of



collegial support during the praxis shock of the teacher's early career, and Sunde and Ulvik (2014) noted the need for support especially with information and practical solutions, such as the rules and routines of the school. Evans-Andris et al. (2006) found that new teachers' needs included overall support and technical assistance for example with classroom discipline and behaviour management. In our study, the most important needs are not related to technical or practical issues. Support is needed more for problem solving (e.g. in conflict situations) and to help students learn by making learning relevant through differentiating teaching. Our findings reveal that new teachers have needs of support and learning for revising learning environments and working as change agents in society that are far beyond mere technical support and information delivery.

The analysis of different countries' need profiles also revealed that the new teachers felt they needed more support in terms of supporting students holistically. This implies that the new teachers' main focus is on students. As Moir and Gless (2001) state, the essential aim in supporting new teachers should be to foster their abilities to offer all students in the classroom the experience of high-quality teaching and to help students to learn successfully.

Teachers' work is not only limited to the classroom. Nowadays, it is also increasingly expanded outside the class and school (see e.g. Korhonen & Lavonen, 2014; Kukkonen & Lavonen, 2014). The results of this study indicated that newly qualified teachers felt they needed support either for working in society or working outside the classroom. As influential agents in society, teachers need to learn how to collaborate with different partners such as parents, colleagues and other societal partners (Niemi, 2012, 2014).

The analysis of different countries' need profiles also revealed that the teachers in the UK (England) and Portugal felt they needed more support in applying research activities in their work as teachers are active explorers and developers of their work (see e.g. Morales, 2016). The new teachers in Finland did not report this need, which may result from the fact that in that country initial teacher education includes several courses on research studies and thus already prepares teachers for research work during their pre-service period. Instead, new teachers in Finland and Belgium (Flanders) felt they needed more support in working in and organising new learning environments. This may reflect the changes schools are facing through increasing digitalisation.

Newly qualified teachers' professional learning needs can include a variety of competences. Here, the needs teachers' felt were important included broad competences, such as supporting students' comprehensive growth, but also more specific ones, such as acting in situations involving mobbing. As newly qualified teachers are not a homogenous group (see e.g. Livingston, 2014), it

is important to explore the particular learning needs of each new teacher when planning mentoring activities for them.

### **Limitations and future research**

This study has some limitations. First, the data analysis was based mainly on average levels. Thus, the variations between different respondents were not taken into account and hence, learning needs could vary considerably between different respondents.

Second, as surveys employing the data-collection method force respondents to choose between set options, the respondents may have to select an option that does not fully describe their situation. In the Finnish questionnaire, unlike the questionnaires in the other three countries, teachers were forced to answer all the questions and thus could not leave any questions blank. Thus, they had to choose an option even though it may not have truly described their experience.

Third, as the study was implemented in four different countries, there may be some cultural or individual differences in the way certain questions were understood. As clarifying questions could not be asked, there is no certainty regarding the respondents understanding the questions in a similar way.

Fourth, the quantity of data varied among different countries. The sample size was quite low, and thus, no generalisation can be made. Hence, the present study offers an overview of the professional learning needs of newly qualified teachers in general rather than providing a representative need profile for each country. More research should be done to gain a more representative picture of new teachers' learning needs. In addition, different methods, such as interviews and observations, should be used to gain a more comprehensive view of the learning needs of newly qualified teachers.

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## **Biographical note**

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## Pre-service Home Economics Teachers' Attitudes on Selected Aspects of Practical Teaching

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FRANCKA LOVŠIN KOZINA<sup>1</sup>

∞ This paper presents the results of a study conducted among pre-service home economics teachers from the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana with different levels of practical experience in teaching. The pre-service Home Economics teachers in the 3rd year of their studies had just completed their first class of teaching experience in contrast to the pre-service teachers from the 4th year of their faculty studies, who had conducted more teaching lessons. The results showed that the 4th-year pre-service teachers had fewer doubts and problems concerning the planning and conducting of a lesson. They also statistically significantly agreed that they are sufficiently prepared to teach than the 3rd-year pre-service teachers are. The results showed that the majority of the pre-service teachers agreed that the feedback from their colleagues was helpful for their professional development. The results suggest the importance of practical teaching experience in the context of professional development and the intention to continue a career in education. However, the results also revealed some critical points in the teacher's development of competency. The results suggest problems related to the application of theoretical knowledge on the children's development in practice and problems related to classroom management in specific situations.

**Keywords:** class management, peer learning, pre-service teacher, professional development, teaching experience

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## Stališča študentov gospodinjstva o izbranih vidikih poučevanja

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FRANCKA LOVŠINA KOZINA

☞ V članku so predstavljeni izsledki raziskave, izvedene med študenti gospodinjstva Pedagoške fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani, ki so se med seboj razlikovali po obsegu praktičnih izkušenj poučevanja. Študentje tretjega letnika so ravno končali prve nastopne ure, medtem ko so študentje četrtega letnika opravili že več nastopnih ur. Rezultati so pokazali, da so imeli študentje četrtil letnikov manj težav z načrtovanjem in vodenjem učne ure. Statistično značilno so se tudi bolj strinjali, da so dovolj pripravljeni za poučevanje kot študenti tretjega letnika. Rezultati so pokazali še, da se je večina študentov strinjala, da jim je bila povratna informacija njihovih kolegov v pomoč pri njihovem profesionalnem razvoju. Predstavljeni izsledki kažejo na pomembno vlogo praktične izkušnje poučevanja v kontekstu profesionalnega razvoja učitelja in namere o nadaljevanju kariere na področju izobraževanja. Rezultati so pokazali tudi nekatere kritične točke v razvoju učiteljevih kompetenc. Nakazujejo se težave, povezane s prenosom teoretičnega poznavanja značilnosti razvojnih stopenj učencev v prakso in z vodenjem razreda v specifičnih situacijah.

**Ključne besede:** izkušnje poučevanja, profesionalni razvoj, kolegalno učenje, vodenje razreda, študent-učitelj



## Introduction

One of the global trends in teacher education is a shift to a more practical approach (Moon, 2007). Throughout teaching practice (the systematic guided mentoring process), the mentored student should acquire the teaching knowledge, experience, and skills to become a competent teacher. Labare (2004, p. 45) also asserted the importance of emotions: 'Another characteristic of teaching that makes it difficult is the way it requires teachers to establish and actively manage an emotional relationship with students.' Sutton and Wheatley (2003) noted that several negative emotions in teaching (anger, anxiety, helplessness, stress, etc.) could also appear. Emotions can negatively impact the student's efficacy and self-confidence, but they can also heighten the intrinsic motivation to teach. According to the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), three fundamental psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) should be satisfied in order to foster self-motivation (intrinsic motivation) and well-being (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

Teaching practice provides students an in-depth understanding of themselves, aids in developing skills of planning, leading, evaluating, and assessing their suitability for the teaching profession (Valenčič Zuljan & Vogrinc, 2012). It is vital that learning through practice often takes place without the student even realising that they are learning (Juriševič, 2007).

Korthagen (2011) developed a so-called 'realistic approach to education', which emphasises concrete, practical problems the teachers experienced in real contexts, and the promotion of systematic reflection, ('gestalt') as the starting point for professional learning, the integration of theory and practice and the integration of several disciplines. Selvi (2010, p. 167) discussed the importance of teachers' competences in the teaching-learning process because: 'Teachers' competencies affect their values, behaviours, communication, aims and practices in school and also they support professional development and curricular studies.' With this in mind, it is fascinating to see how teachers perceive different competences for their teaching success. Malm (2009) studied educators' opinions on what competences/qualities they considered to be essential to developing teachers from students during their teacher education. The result of this study showed that it was crucial for educators to develop teaching skills, communication skills, leadership qualities, and cognitive capacities (to develop the reflective practitioner). Competences called 'didactic competence' and 'developing children's self-confidence and personality' were not perceived as being very important.

Fuller (1970 in Akbari, 2007) stated that teachers go through three stages of development. In the first stage, the focus is on themselves; in the second stage,

the attention is on classroom management and the maintenance of discipline; it is only in the third stage that the teacher has enough confidence in teaching that they can think about improvements in the students' achievement. Therefore, it is imperative to consider how and when to start reflective practice. The development of the capability of professional reflection is crucial. According to Harford and MacRuair (2008), professional reflection is the essence of a teacher's professional development, because it gives an individual the possibility to change within existing teaching practices (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988), and allows teachers to better understand their students' goals and needs (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999) or, according to Larrivee (2000, p. 293), teaching as a reflective practitioner can help individuals to overcome the possibility of remaining 'trapped in unexamined judgements, interpretations, assumptions, and expectations'. Korthagen and Lagerwerf (1996) stated that the premature introduction of reflective teaching could have inhibitory effects. However, when it is integrated in a proper way, it is a very helpful tool for professional knowledge development of the pre-service teachers. The pre-service-teacher may reflect on feelings for a situation, on teaching strategies, on students' behaviour, and other elements. They can think about what they are doing or 'reflect-in-action' (Schoen, 1983). Education through practical teaching and peer learning is also crucial. Pearson and Stephenson (2005) examined the impact of cooperation between colleagues on reflective thinking. They found that teachers, through conversations with their colleagues, obtain a 'deeper understanding' of their professional development.

In the available literature (OECD, 2005), the problem that many students do not enter the teaching profession is evident. Rots, Aelterman, and Devos (2014) conducted a study in which they tried to identify the predictions of the teacher education graduates' choice of job entry. Their study validated (in addition to initial motivation and labour market factors) the importance of teacher education.

The main goal of teacher education in Slovenia is to provide pre-service teachers with good theoretical knowledge and adequate teacher training through which they can connect theory and practice, develop the necessary teaching skills, routines, and self-confidence. Teaching practice within the subject Didactics of Home Economics in Slovenia occurs in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year (two-week duration) and 4<sup>th</sup> year (two-week duration). The subject Home Economics is taught in the 5<sup>th</sup> year (35 hours/1 hour per week) and in the 6<sup>th</sup> year (52.5 hours/2 hours per week) in primary school. According to current legislation, this subject can also be taught by a primary school teacher in the 5<sup>th</sup> year (frequently realised), but they cannot be mentors to students of the subject. Therefore, problems with the realisation of conducting teaching lessons appear.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years, before pre-service teachers go on their two-week teaching practice, they teach one hour in the presence of a university teacher. Each pre-service teacher must also observe five colleagues teaching. This teaching experience is organised as follows:

- Step 1: university teacher obtains teaching topics from a primary school teacher;
- Step 2: pre-service teachers prepare written material for the lesson, send it via e-mail with possible explanations and questions to the university teacher; the university teacher gives the pre-service teachers feedback and suggestions for improvement;
- Step 3: pre-service teachers carry out a teaching lesson in the presence of the university teacher and five colleagues;
- Step 4: pre-service teachers reflect on their teaching experience and obtain feedback from the university teacher and their colleagues.

The main purpose of the present work was to determine the pre-service teachers' doubts and problems during the preparation stage, their feedback on the realised teaching lesson, their attitudes on their readiness to teach, and also their attitudes towards their colleagues' role in the practical teaching process. This study also aims to examine the adequacy of the existing practical teaching education in the process of the pre-service teachers' development. The difference between the 3<sup>rd</sup>- and the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service Home Economics teachers was considered. The research questions are as follows:

- Is there a significant difference between the 3<sup>rd</sup>- and the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service Home Economics teachers' sense that they are well prepared to teach?
- Is there a significant difference in the students' sense of their colleagues' role in the practical teaching process between the 3<sup>rd</sup>- and the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service Home Economics teachers?
- Is there a significant difference between the 3<sup>rd</sup>- and the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service Home Economics teachers in the case of the students' attitudes towards professional self-development and motivation to a career in the teaching profession?

## **Method**

This study focused on the pre-service Home Economics teachers at the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana. The research was conducted among all the 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service Home Economics teachers (N=57).

The pre-service teachers were surveyed at the end of the winter courses (after the obligatory teaching practice in the presence of a university teacher). The sample thus consisted of the pre-service teachers with different levels of practical experience in teaching. Fifty-two questionnaires were returned. The majority of the surveyed pre-service teachers were female (96%). The surveyed pre-service teachers were on average 22.4 years old. The sample included 23 (44.2%) 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers and 29 (55.8%) 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers. The 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers had no teaching experience before observation, which is in contrast to 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers, who had, on average, independently conducted 8.59 teaching lessons.

The questionnaire consisted of questions related to (1) the pre-service teachers' opinion on the knowledge of the students' development stages, (2) the doubts and problems faced by the pre-service teachers before and during the performances, (3) the peers' role in the practical teaching learning process, and (4) the pre-service teachers' view on the impact of practical teaching experience on their willingness to become a teacher. The attitudes were measured using the 5-point Likert's scale, where '1' indicates strong disagreement and '5' strong agreement. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested. Cronbach Alpha was 0.711, which indicates that the reliability of the questionnaire is acceptable. The data was statistically processed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (IBM SPSS). Frequency counts were run on all items. For the data analysis, a descriptive analysis was used, and to test the departure from normality the Shapiro-Wilk test was used. The Mann-Whitney U-test was calculated where the significance level of  $p < 0.05$  was used (Milenković, 2011).

## Results

For pre-service teachers, it is very important to be familiar with the developmental characteristics of the school children for whom they must prepare lessons. They must prepare appropriate materials, choose the right teaching methods, effectively plan the methodical steps, think about how they will state rules, implement discipline, and how they will make possible modifications to various class conditions, among other factors. The first encounter with 'real' children can be stressful for pre-service teachers. For this reason, it is crucial for them to be able to connect their theoretical knowledge to the psychological/developmental characteristics of the children with lesson planning (didactical – methodological aspect).

## Pre-service Teachers' Doubts and Problems Before and During Conducting of the Teaching Lesson

The results (Table 1) revealed that the 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers statistically agreed to a greater extent with the statement that they doubted whether primary school children would listen to them ( $U=218.50$ ,  $p=0.02$ ). The third year pre-service teachers also statistically more frequently reported problems with the planning of the organisation of lessons than the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers did ( $U=226.00$ ,  $p=0.03$ ). Interestingly, the results also showed that the 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers agreed more with the statement that they had a clear idea of the psychological/developmental characteristics of children for which they must prepare lessons than the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers did, but the difference was not statistically significant ( $U=280.00$ ,  $p=0.30$ ). It can be assumed that the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers had experience with children, who reacted differently than they had expected, and caused doubt about their theoretical knowledge about children.

As can be seen from Table 1, the pre-service teachers did not report problems with selecting appropriate teaching methods. They had more problems with time management of the planned lesson. The 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers ( $M=3.91$ ;  $SD=1.08$ ) agreed more that they were afraid they would have time management problems than the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers ( $M=3.59$ ;  $SD=1.25$ ). The 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers were more afraid of a conflict situation in which they would not be able to react properly than the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers were. However, the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers agreed to a greater extent that they were afraid they would make some professional (content) mistake.

Table 1. Pre-service teachers' view on the preparation stage of teaching practice

Statement	3 <sup>rd</sup> year		4 <sup>th</sup> year		Mann-Whitney Test	
	M	SD	M	SD	U	p
Before my lesson, I considered whether the children would listen to me.	3.70	1.14	3.07	1.10	218.50	<b>0.02</b>
In the preparation stage, I had the most troubles with planning the organisation of the lesson.	2.83	1.26	2.14	1.12	226.00	<b>0.03</b>
I have a clear idea of the psychological/developmental characteristics of the children.	3.35	1.19	2.97	1.29	280.00	0.30

Statement	3 <sup>rd</sup> year		4 <sup>th</sup> year		Mann-Whitney Test	
	M	SD	M	SD	U	p
I was afraid that I would have time management problems.	3.91	1.08	3.59	1.21	284.00	0.16
I was afraid that I would make some professional (content) mistakes.	3.39	1.11	3.59	1.21	307.50	0.30
I was afraid of a conflict situation, in which I would not be able to react properly.	3.04	1.43	2.38	1.25	306.50	0.30

Time management, clear instructions, and clear explanations are of great importance for the successful realisation of a teaching lesson. The results (Table 2) showed that the pre-service teachers do not report problems with the clarity of the role statement (time limitations, guidelines) or clarity of statements, but statistically fewer 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers had limited time for a particular activity than the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers did ( $U=239.00$ ;  $p=0.04$ ). The 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers also statistically agreed to a greater extent that they had problems with statement articulation ( $U=216.50$ ;  $p=0.01$ ). Those pre-service teachers who did not have limited time for a certain activity more frequently stated that they had problems with discipline in the classroom.

Table 2. *Pre-service teachers' view on problems during teaching lessons*

Statement	3 <sup>rd</sup> year		4 <sup>th</sup> year		Mann-Whitney Test	
	M	SD	M	SD	U	p
I had problems with the clarity of guidelines.	2.04	1.02	1.66	0.93	254.00	0.05
I did not limit the time needed for a particular activity.	2.04	1.18	1.41	0.68	239.00	<b>0.02</b>
I had trouble with statement articulation.	2.57	1.16	1.86	0.95	216.50	<b>0.01</b>

The results revealed that the 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers statistically ( $U=158.00$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) agreed to a greater extent that the most appropriate way of explaining a new lesson was via PowerPoint presentations. It may be assumed that younger pre-service teachers were more occupied with several new aspects of teaching and were more uncertain about the correctness of their behaviour. In the reflection stage (in the presence of the faculty teacher), the students' main argument for using PowerPoint presentations was that they felt 'safer' when they had written some key information. The result also revealed (Table 3) statistically significant differences in the pre-service teachers' need for more didactical-methodological knowledge. The 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers more

frequently stated that they needed more didactical-methodological knowledge ( $U=185.00$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) and knowledge on conflict resolution ( $U=245.00$ ,  $p=0.03$ ).

Table 3. *Pre-service teachers' view on what they need to become more successful teachers*

Statement	3 <sup>rd</sup> year		4 <sup>th</sup> year		Mann-Whitney Test	
	M	SD	M	SD	U	P
I want more knowledge about teaching methods.	4.48	0.66	3.66	1.07	185.00	<b>0.00</b>
I want more knowledge about methods of discipline.	4.39	0.65	4.03	1.05	279.50	0.24
I want more knowledge about conflict resolution.	4.57	0.78	4.21	0.94	245.00	<b>0.03</b>

The results showed that the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers ( $M=4.24$ ;  $SD=0.63$ ) agreed more that they are sufficiently prepared to teach as opposed to the 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers ( $M=3.17$ ;  $SD=1.26$ ). The difference was also statistically significant ( $U= 169.50$ ,  $p=0.00$ ).

### **Pre-service Teacher's Attitudes and Perceptions on a Colleague's Role in the Practical Teaching Experience**

Cooperation with colleagues is a key element of the studies as well as later in the teacher's school environment because of the development of reflective practice, which allows for professional and personal growth. The importance of the reflective practice in professional development is described by Akinbode (2013, p. 72) this way: 'My experiences of dialogue through guided reflection within the community of inquiry and of shared reflection on a common event with a colleague have supported my process of transformation.'

Pre-service teachers were asked to provide information related to their perceptions of the role of their colleagues in planning, realising the teaching lesson, and in the closing stage of the teaching experience (evaluation).

The results (Table 4) revealed that more 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers talked to their colleagues in the preparation stage about their ideas and about how to realise their teaching lesson than the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers did ( $U=244.00$ ,  $p=0.04$ ). The 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers further agreed that through the observation lessons of their colleagues, they gained more valuable and useful ideas than the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers did ( $U=237.50$ ,  $p=0.02$ ). The 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers also statistically agreed more that after their

lesson their colleagues reminded them about the errors they did not even realise they had made ( $U=231.00$ ,  $p=0.02$ ). Both the 3<sup>rd</sup>- and the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers agreed that after the lesson their colleagues gave them some useful feedback. Slightly more 3<sup>rd</sup>-year students agreed with this statement, but the difference was not statistically significant. The 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers also agreed more that the feedback from their colleagues was helpful for their professional development.

Table 4. *Pre-service teachers' views on peer learning in practical pedagogical training*

Statement	3 <sup>rd</sup> year		4 <sup>th</sup> year		Mann-Whitney Test	
	M	SD	MD	SD	U	P
Before my lesson, I talked to my colleagues about my ideas on how to realise my teaching lesson.	3.17	1.15	2.45	1.50	244.00	<b>0.04</b>
Through the observation lessons of my colleagues, I gained valuable ideas, which I will use in the future.	4.35	1.19	4.03	0.90	237.50	<b>0.02</b>
The presence of my colleagues during my lesson disturbs me.	1.39	0.78	1.62	1.04	307.00	0.52
After my lesson, my colleagues reminded me about the errors that I did not even realise I had made.	3.52	1.47	2.90	1.34	231.00	<b>0.02</b>
After the lesson, my colleagues gave me some useful feedback.	3.91	1.31	3.86	1.12	309.50	0.32
The feedback from my colleagues was helpful for my professional development.	4.57	0.78	4.31	0.89	274.00	0.10

### Practical Teaching Experience and Motivation for a Career in the Teaching Profession

Carter, Orr, McGriff, and Thompson (2014, p. 213) state that: 'The classroom management experience plays a vital role in how student or novice teachers view the notion of pursuing a career in education.' In the present research sample, 32 (62.7%) pre-service teachers agreed that Home Economics was not their first choice for their study. There were also statistically significant differences between the 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers. More 4<sup>th</sup>-year



pre-service teachers reported that Home Economics was not their first study choice ( $U=201.00$ ,  $p=0.01$ ), but when the pre-service teachers were asked if they had thought about another occupation, the difference in answers between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers was not statistically significant (Table 5).

Table 5. *Pre-service teachers' study choices and motivation for a career in the teaching profession*

Variable	3 <sup>rd</sup> year		4 <sup>th</sup> year		Mann-Whitney Test	
	M	SD	MD	SD	U	P
Home Economics-first study choice	3.09	1.70	1.90	1.58	201.00	<b>0.01</b>
Thinking about choosing another occupation.	1.83	1.11	1.69	1.13	308.50	<b>0.67</b>

The results showed that only 7 (13.7%) pre-service teachers, who stated that the Home Economics programme was not their first study choice, agreed that it was confirmed that they had not chosen the right profession and that they were thinking about other careers through the practical teaching experience. The results also showed that 40 (77.0%) pre-service teachers (17 (73.9%) 3<sup>rd</sup>-year pre-service teachers and 23 (79.3%) 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers) agreed that they acquired professional self-confidence throughout the practical teaching process. The majority of the pre-service teachers, 30 (76.9%), agreed that they acquired enough professional self-confidence not to think about another occupation through the practical teaching experience. There was no statistically significant difference between the 3<sup>rd</sup>- and the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers. The results suggest the importance of practical teaching experience in the context of professional self-confidence development and the intention to continue a career in education.

## Discussion

The aim of this research was to determine the possible differences between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service Home Economics teachers in students preparing and conducting the teaching lesson. The results showed that the pre-service teachers with more teaching lessons showed less confidence in knowing the developmental characteristics of the children for whom they must prepare lessons. It can be assumed that they have similar problems as new teachers do,

who are faced with inconsistencies between their ideals about teaching and their initial teacher experience (Flores, 2006). These findings can also suggest a gap between the pre-service teachers knowing the facts related to the children's personal development, and the student's capability of applying factual knowledge, which also suggests that some improvement in the preparation stage of teaching practice should be made.

The Slovenian researchers Valenčič Zuljan, Zuljan, and Pavlin (2011, p. 493) determine that in the evaluation of learner-centred teaching approaches: 'the practical realisation of one's own lesson and the preparation for a lesson was attributed the highest importance.' The result of the present study showed that the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers, on average, had fewer problems related to planning and realising their teaching lesson. However, the results also showed that, in accordance with Fuller (1970 in Akbari, 2007), the pre-service teachers achieved the second stage of development in which attention is on classroom management and the maintenance of discipline (they wish to have more knowledge on conflict resolution, disciplining, etc.). Practical teaching experience is essential in the development of teaching competences (subject and professional competences), but the pre-service teachers' self-confidence is also a critical dimension: 'Student teachers should feel well-prepared to handle the challenges they will face in the classroom' (Cartre, Orr, McGriff, Thompson & Willis, 2014, p. 209). The results showed that the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers agreed to a greater extent that they are sufficiently prepared to teach. It can be assumed that practical teaching experience positively impacts the pre-service teachers' perception of the professional preparedness to teach.

Reflection is vital to student's development. One of the six basic principles of the core reflection (which is the basis of a realistic approach to education), exposed the importance of colleagues in reflection; it says that the colleagues' support is more effective than that of the mentors. In this process, the model of collaborative learning can be developed, which can later be applied and used in practice (Korthagen, 2009). The result of the present study highlights the importance of collaborative learning. The results showed that the majority of the pre-service teachers agreed that the feedback from their colleagues was helpful for their professional development and that by observing other students' lessons they get valuable ideas for their teaching. The results also showed that the 4<sup>th</sup>-year pre-service teachers in the preparation stage less frequently talked to their colleagues about their ideas on how to realise their teaching lesson. This can suggest a student-teacher's growing self-confidence and desire to be independent. However, more research should be done to come to a conclusion regarding this.

For this study, we observed the critical point, which can be problematic in overcoming the gap between theory and practice. The results, as expected, showed the pre-service teachers' progress in communication skills, leadership qualities, didactical-methodical skills, but evidence was found that there were problems with development skills related to class management in specific situations and with skills related to the knowledge and understanding of developmental principles, the differences and the needs of individuals. Nevertheless, the fact is that the number of hours devoted to practical teaching work is quite small. It can be assumed that the extension of time for teaching practice can successfully reduce the problems identified in this study. Some improvements of strategies to prepare the pre-service teachers to show the appropriate reactions in critical class situations should also be considered.

The aim of the present study was also to research what influence the teaching experience has on the pre-service teachers' attitudes towards professional self-development and motivation for a career in the teaching profession. The result showed that in the present research sample, a very high percentage of the pre-service teachers, 32 (62.7%), agreed that Home Economics was not their first choice for their studies, but only 7 (13.7%) of them stated that (through the practical teaching experience) it was confirmed that they had not chosen the right profession and that they were thinking about other careers. These results suggest the high motivational value of the teaching practice for entering the teaching profession.

The results also showed that more 4<sup>th</sup>-year students agreed that through the practical teaching process, they acquired professional self-confidence. The results suggested the importance of practical teaching experience in the context of class management and motivation for a career in the teaching profession.

## **Conclusions**

Practical teaching represents a form of experimental learning in which the pre-service teachers test what they have learned in a real situation. The results of the present study highlight the importance of the practical teaching experience for the professional development of pre-service teachers. The results also revealed some critical points in the pre-service teachers' professional development. There is a need to consider improving some teaching strategies that will help students to manage critical situations (disciplinary problems, conflicts among children or children and teachers, etc.) successfully. The results also showed a gap between the pre-service teachers' factual knowledge of the developmental characteristics of primary school students and the ability

to apply this knowledge in practical work. For resolving these problems, more study cases and the analyses of video lessons should be prepared. There is also a need to reconsider the concept of practical training in the context of the duration of the teaching practice.

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## Recognition in Programmes for Children with Special Needs

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∞ The purpose of this article is to examine the factors that affect the inclusion of pupils in programmes for children with special needs from the perspective of the theory of recognition. The concept of recognition, which includes three aspects of social justice (economic, cultural and political), argues that the institutional arrangements that prevent 'parity of participation' in the school social life of the children with special needs are affected not only by economic distribution but also by the patterns of cultural values. A review of the literature shows that the arrangements of education of children with special needs are influenced primarily by the patterns of cultural values of capability and inferiority, as well as stereotypical images of children with special needs. Due to the significant emphasis on learning skills for academic knowledge and grades, less attention is dedicated to factors of recognition and representational character, making it impossible to improve some meaningful elements of inclusion. Any participation of pupils in activities, the voices of the children, visibility of the children due to achievements and the problems of arbitrariness in determining boundaries between programmes are some such elements. Moreover, aided by theories, the actions that could contribute to better inclusion are reviewed. An effective approach to changes would be the creation of transformative conditions for the recognition and balancing of redistribution, recognition, and representation.

**Keywords:** recognition, patterns of cultural values, children with special needs, inclusion

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## Pripoznanje v programih za otroke s posebnimi potrebami

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MARJETA ŠMID

☞ Namen prispevka je analizirati dejavnike, ki vplivajo na vključevanje učencev (inkluzijo) v programih za otroke s posebnimi potrebami s perspektive teorije pripoznanja. Koncept pripoznanja, ki vključuje tri vidike socialne pravičnosti – ekonomskega, kulturnega in političnega –, zagovarja, da na institucionalne ureditve, ki učencem s posebnimi potrebami ne omogočajo partnerskega sodelovanja v življenju vrstnikov v šoli, ne vpliva samo distribucija, ampak nanje vplivajo tudi kulturni vzorci vrednot. Študij literature je pokazal, da na ureditve šolanja otrok s posebnimi potrebami vplivajo zlasti vzorci kulturnih vrednot (ne) zmožnosti in manjvrednosti ter stereotipne predstave o učencih s posebnimi potrebami. Zaradi velikega poudarjanja učnih sposobnosti za akademsko znanje in ocene se manj posveča dejavnikom rekognicijskega in reprezentacijskega značaja, kar onemogoča izboljšanje nekaterih pomembnih elementov inkluzije. Vsakovrstna participacija učencev v dejavnostih, vidnost učencev zaradi dosežkov, slišnost učenca in problem arbitrarnosti pri določanju meja med programi so nekateri med njimi. Ukrepi, ki lahko pripomorejo k boljšemu vključevanju otrok s posebnimi potrebami v šolo, so analizirani s teoretičnega vidika. Učinkovit pristop k spremembam bi bil oblikovanje transformacijskih pogojev za pripoznanje in uravnoteženje redistribucije, rekognicije in reprezentacije.

**Ključne besede:** pripoznanje, kulturni vzorci vrednot, otroci s posebnimi potrebami, inkluzija



## Introduction

Slovenia is included in European and global processes of inclusion. The formal framework for the inclusion of children with special educational needs (hereinafter referred to as children with SEN) in primary school was given with the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act / ZUOPP / (2000) (hereinafter referred to as the Placement Act). The current Placement of Children with Special Needs Act / ZUOPP-1 / (2011, 2012) and the Rules on the organisation and work methods of commissions for the placement of children with special needs (2013) (hereinafter referred to as the Rules on the work of commissions) provide as a rule, for children with minor mental disabilities, an education in an adapted basic school programme with lower educational standards (hereinafter referred to as LES) (Rules on the work of commissions, 2013, Article 9), and for children with moderate, severe and profound mental disabilities an education in a special programme (hereinafter referred to as SP) (*ibid.*, Article 10). The most diverse and the largest is a group of pupils who receive educational programmes with adapted implementation and additional professional assistance (hereinafter referred to as APA) (*ibid.*, Article 7). The APA programme is implemented in regular classes (the Placement Act, 2011, Article 18, paragraph 2). The adapted LES programme is implemented in primary schools in regular classes and classes with adapted programmes and in schools that are established and organised for the implementation of these programmes, as well as in institutes for the education of children with SEN. The SP is implemented in schools and extra classes near schools that are established and organised for the implementation of adapted educational programmes and SP education, institutions for the education of children with SEN and social care institutions (*ibid.*, Article 18, Item 4).

Hočevar (2010) shows the indicators of inclusion in Slovenia, which must be taken into consideration, are the methods of evaluation and promotion (standards of knowledge), financing methods, school culture and climate (the need to introduce counselling for teachers, pupils/children with SEN, peers, parents, environment), legislation that regulates the field of special needs (difficulties in implementing the Act) and teacher training (the need for training about children with SEN in all profiles of future teachers). In the analysis of the education of children with special needs in Slovenia, Opara et al. (2010) highlighted the problem of the network of institutions for the education of children with special needs, the lack of adequate staff, especially the special teachers and rehabilitation teachers for different types of deficiencies. In primary schools with adapted programmes, the importance of their transformation into professional and support centres was emphasised. Fields to which attention must be

paid are the help for children with SEN in the preschool period, the integration of different disciplines and the overhaul of lower vocational education, which is decreasing in importance (Opara et al., 2010). The same authors (ibid.) identify the lack of authority which would provide and coordinate the process of the education of persons with special needs. They propose a new definition of placement procedure, the elimination of ambiguities and shortcomings of the legal bases and documentation, and further projects on simultaneous implementation of the adapted programme with a lower educational standard and an equal educational standard (Opara et al., 2010).

Furthermore, the provision of the legislation that allows transitioning between programmes (Placement Act, 2011, Article 17) is not carried out in practice. In the framework of the 'Stimulating Learning Environment for Ensuring Equal Opportunities in Education' project, the National Education Institute Slovenia (NEIS, 2015) has prepared a questionnaire for the involved primary schools with an adapted programme on the transition of children with SEN from the LES programme to the regular educational programmes. The project and its questionnaire have not been offered to regular primary schools; the information on the transition was thus one-sided. According to De Silva (2013, p. 419), who refers to Meijer, the 'behaviour and social and/or emotional problems, combined with dealing with differences or diversity in the classroom are the most challenging in the area of pupils' inclusion in European classrooms.' With this De Silva indicates an extremely problematised area of inclusion, i.e. the existence of poor interpersonal relationships between different pupils and the need to improve them. This is confirmed in practice, and the research has also often expressed the need for additional attention in shaping interpersonal relationships among peers (Brenčič, 2011; Estell et al., 2008; Kellner, Houghton & Douglas, 2003; Prah, 2011; Webster & Carter, 2013). The other highly problematised area in the inclusion is the knowledge assessment of children with SEN. In the research, the authors describe a fairly successful inclusion of the various groups of children with SEN, also in the learning area (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008; Novljan, 2005; O'Rourke & Houghton, 2006; Schmidt & Čagran, 2005). Learning outcomes are not high, but sufficient for the pupils to show progress. Nevertheless, Končar and Lakič (2004) have established the presence of fear and anxiety of school in pupils who attend the LES programme, precisely because of the low educational achievement. Expert analysis of the results of the Slovenian national assessment of knowledge in the APA programme has consistently showed over the years the low achievement of children with SEN, compared to their peers without special needs (Košir, 2008; RIC, 2014), which may be because of programmes that are too difficult and the inadequate

functioning of the support structures of schools. The low results of children with SEN in national assessment indicate inconsistency with the findings of the research that indicate good achievements of children with SEN. Difficulties in the assessment and manner of implementing work with the children with SEN in the class are significant. The authors Anastasiou and Kauffman (2011, p. 380) and McOuat (2011, p. 125) warn that a pupil with SEN in the class is not the same as the other twenty-five, who also require the teacher's time. The individualisation in classes is hardly realised, if we believe that in inclusion all pupils should, even by force, make progress according to the same criteria. Individualisation is also often wrongly equated with working with individuals (Rutar, 2011a, p. 174), when it mostly means taking into account everything that individuals bring into the learning situation (Rutar, 2011b, p. 53).

The research of the effectiveness of the inclusion remedies, and even determining whether a certain intervention can be described as inclusive at all, are also and in particular affected by the participants in each study (Lindsay, 2007). In studies, the most involved are children with learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties (from mild to severe), the physically disabled, deaf and hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired pupils, children with emotional and behaviour disorders, and children with mild, moderate, and severe intellectual disabilities. Comparisons between them cannot be made directly since in each study we need to determine exactly which pupils were involved. Moreover, the authors of the research have established an extraordinary diversity in defining individual areas of inclusion, in the terminology used, methods, approaches, and types of research, and consequently diversity in the results and findings (Koster, Nakken, Pijl & van Houten, 2009). For example, in the field of interpersonal relationships, authors (Koster et al., 2009) have explored the concepts of social participation, social integration, and social inclusion. They reviewed sixty-two research articles and found that there is an overlap in the use of these three concepts because they are used as synonyms. The research of inclusion is also aggravated due to the absence of a strong concept or theory of inclusion (Armstrong D., Armstrong A. & Spandagou, 2011; Jurišević, 2011; Winkler, 2011). The 'formidable set of factors' may represent a difficulty in implementing inclusion' (Lindsay, 2007, p. 5) and a range of indicators, which are to be taken into account for effective practice and research, however, at the micro level; the teaching staff with their abundance of work might be discouraged in implementation of these factors. Teachers often do not know how to bring inclusion into classrooms. De Silva (2013, p. 431) states the dilemma of teachers that 'the university is talking about inclusion, but the question is what is really good for the child, whether to teach her in an excluded environment or

put her into an environment where she is time after time rejected by her peers.’ De Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2011) stated that teachers must be trained to work with children with SEN, and should at least attempt to accept inclusion as a part of their value system and not only as a content or method, because they have the greatest impact on the success of inclusion in the classroom.

The theory that highlights the inclusion of particularly vulnerable groups in society more comprehensively, and that can better cope with the problems of the inclusion of children with SEN in school practice, is the theory of recognition (Artiles, Harris-Murri & Rostenberg, 2006; Bingham, 2006; Fraser, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2003a; Higgis, MacArthur & Kelly, 2009; Keddie, 2012; Kroflič, 2010a, 2010b; Rutar, 2011a). In addition to the equitable distribution of goods, for the best performance of the individual (redistribution, also known as the economic dimension), it puts the importance of proper recognition in the spotlight, where a person is viewed in a positive light because of the achievements and recognition in interpersonal relations (recognition or cultural dimension), and the importance of the environment in which the various participants are allowed all manner of participation and decision-making (representation, also called the political dimension). The critical theory of recognition placed the distribution requirements at the centre of ensuring social justice (Fraser, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2003a; Honneth, 2003a; Keddie, 2012). The essential difference between the redistributive dimension, within the meaning of recognition theory, and pure forms of distribution in the conventional sense, is the highlighting of distribution, which extends over the entire range of social relations, including those which are usually ‘treated as cultural’ (Fraser, 2003a, p. 86; Honneth, 2003a). There is an inadequate distribution due to inadequate economic structures of society, and the recognition reflection discovers inadequate distribution as a result of institutionalised forms of society because of the existing cultural values, which is one of the essential contributions of recognition theory. The finding that not only economic injustice exists, but also that cultural injustice is equally unfavourable, is the reason for the formation of the theory. Recognition requires such an interpretation, presentation, and communication, which enables a group or an individual to achieve parity of participation<sup>2</sup> with peers in social life (Fraser, 2000, p. 115). Parity of participation necessarily involves transforming oneself, which is an essential element of recognition (Fraser 2003a; Galeotti, 2009). Regarding educational institutions (kindergarten, school), the transformation that creates conditions for changing

2 Fraser’s expression ‘parity’ means ‘the conditions of being a *peer*, of being on a *par* with others, of standing on an equal footing’ in a given activity or interaction (Fraser, 2003a, p. 101, note 39; 2000, p. 113).

oneself and own values was identified by the authors Bingham (2006) with critical thinking about oneself and the wider social context, Higgins et al. (2009) with transformative diversity, Rinaldi (2006) with the concept of visibility, and Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn and Christensen (2006) with the transformation of identity. Cultural injustice is connecting the theory of recognition with complex problems of inclusion. We have found that there is research that addresses the views of teachers (e.g. Čagran & Schmidt, 2011; De Boer, Pijl & Minnaert, 2011); however, there are still no papers that attempt to tackle the problem of inadequate patterns of cultural values in relation to inferiority.

First, the question arises of what exactly those cultural values of the society that are the basis for institutionalised arrangements in such a way that some of its members or groups have no possibility for cooperation with their peers in social life are. It is important to understand what the institutionalised society forms represent in the light of theory. They represent any form of social arrangement, in particular, legislation, policies and public institutions in which citizens can exercise their rights (Fraser, 2000, p. 115). The institutionalised forms that are highlighted in this article are the APA, SP, and LES programmes. The sought patterns of cultural values that affect the recognition of an individual or a group are derived from social and cultural patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication:

Examples include cultural domination (being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien and/or hostile to one's own); non-recognition (being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one's culture); and disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions) (Fraser, 1997, p. 14; also Fraser, 2003a, p. 13).

Inappropriate patterns of cultural values affect the status of the group, which is set at a disadvantage and which is consequently prevented or impeded from participating in social life.

In practice, we often witness arrangements of the schooling and treatment of children with special needs in which they are prevented from full participation in the life of class and school, and they are not sufficiently academically successful, are not accepted and cannot make decisions; we have established that these arrangements are influenced by patterns of cultural values, including in Slovenia. We cannot implement good inclusion without considering the latter; the following questions arise: which cultural patterns of values hinder the participation of children with special needs and how; what dangers for inclusion can be identified through the concept of recognition from the

economic, cultural, and political points of view, and what remedies can improve these practices of inclusion/participation of children with special needs?

With the help of literature, taking into consideration the concept of recognition through the analysis of redistribution, recognition, and representation, the paper will first show how to discover the arrangements that are affected patterns by cultural values, what are the dangers in inclusion, and below, which remedies can prevent them.

### **Effects of patterns of cultural values**

In the field of education of children with SEN, inferiority is a powerful cultural prejudice. The 'marginalised knowledge' stands behind this idea (Danermark & Coniavitis Gellerstedt, 2004; Keddie, 2012, p. 272). Behind the idea of the inferiority of children with SEN is a hidden idea of the superiority of the majority population (Keddie, 2012).

Preconceived notions of inferiority can be seen in the incorrect placement of the children with SEN in programmes. In Slovenia, insistence on the placement in too demanding programmes is present to a greater extent (Krek & Metljak, 2011; Rovšek, 2009, 2013). LES or SP programmes are avoided above all, and children are being placed in other groups of children (Rovšek, 2013). Parents do not want their children to be classified as children with SEN, particularly not as children with minor or moderate mental disabilities, and do not want placement in separate schools, which are also under the influence of inadequate patterns of cultural values. Parents have no say in choosing the school, because the location of the programme implementation is established by a decision of the commission for the placement of children with special needs. Universalistic terms, such as 'mental disability' and 'special programme', are probably no longer appropriate since they arouse reluctance; however, the relevant legislation applies them. Galeotti (2009) recommended the constant changing of the universalistic terms until the use of them no longer makes anyone feel affected. Although the placement into the LES or SP programme is reasonable, however, the law and expert opinions have no effect or, as it is critically stated by Rovšek (2009, p. 358): 'The system and practice allow enrolment of any child with special needs in almost any programme.' Inadequate patterns of cultural values prevail in both parents, and (it also happens) in teachers.

Examples of incorrect recognition, which leads to feelings of inferiority and is reflected in avoidance of visibility (e.g. avoidance of activities) and subsequently to retention of subordination, was observed by Higgins et al. (2009) and Čačinovič Vogrinčič (2013). Higgins et al. (2009) found that, for example,

a pupil with speech impairment preferred to be quiet among other healthy pupils, so that her deficiency would not be evident. Another pupil wrote a letter because she did not dare to speak out loud about why she was late for class.

In the area of redistribution, the objective of economic conditions is such a redistribution of goods so that all individuals or groups in society are guaranteed the best resources for development and realisation of their abilities, which allows them to participate in social life (Robeyns, 2009; Solveig Reindal, 2010). In the educational system for children with SEN, identifying their skills is one of the main areas that affect the distribution of resources. Addressing the children with SEN as incapable or capable carries the risk of incorrect or insufficient provision of redistribution resources for the development and implementation of capabilities, and prevents their participation (Kroflič, 2010a). One of the consequences of such a view of children with SEN is the insistence on the traditional way of teaching, which puts the teacher in the role of an active mediator of knowledge, and the pupil in the role of passive receiver, simply because in the traditional view of teaching a child is not yet mature and is not able and competent to learn in an active way (Koren, MacBeath & Lepičnik-Vodopivec, 2011). Active learning in contrast to traditional learning is based on social learning, which is absolutely associated with communication, social networks, and relationships (*ibid.*). In doing so, the impaired children are doubly disadvantaged. Firstly, because they are children, and secondly, because they are impaired children and additionally seen as incompetent, and incapable of equal communication as the rest are. The testimonies of impaired children point to their constantly proving that they are capable of doing something and know how to do it; however, lower grades are reserved for them (Higgins et al., 2009, p. 478-479). They must demonstrate their inabilities in order to obtain certain rights; this is an example of the norms and standards for children with SEN. A significantly reduced number of students is possible in the framework of LES programmes and in SP (Rules on norms, 2007, 2008, 2014), and a significant lowering of educational requirements is possible in the LES programme (Adapted educational programme..., 2003, 2013). In the mainstream primary school programme of an equal educational standard, the right, for example, to the pre-written material, extended time to solve the assignments or to use a tablet computer is related to the educational programme with adjusted implementation and APA. With the latter, the pupil gains the right to receive an individualised programme in which the adjustments are written down. Therefore, the rights to adjustments in the classroom are related to the programme.

Another example of redistribution demonstrating the ability of SEN children is granting the possibility to attend certain options of educational

programmes. The pupil in the LES programme who achieves equivalent educational standards in a particular subject area shall acquire the right to transition at this subject (Placement Act, 2011, Article 17); however, this is rarely exercised in practice. The reason may be the absence of a continuum of help with the transition, and the operationalisation of the transition is also not determined with regard to regulations or otherwise.

Keddie (2012) and Higgins et al. (2009) believe that the teacher training system also shows some inappropriate patterns of cultural values in the treatment of children with SEN. Some teachers are more oriented, for example, towards the knowledge of mathematics, and others towards specific skills for working with children with SEN. Even teachers believe that they do not need additional knowledge in higher classes (e.g. in mathematics) in order to teach children with SEN, while others believe they need no in-depth knowledge about children with SEN, which reflects their low expectations (Lingard, 2007; Keddie, 2012, p. 270). One of the most important theoreticians of recognition in the field of education, Keddie, believes that high expectations of teachers towards pupils' knowledge are a part of the economic right, i.e. the redistribution that is provided by teachers (2012, p. 270). The problem of economic redistribution can be seen in programmes that have a curriculum that is not accessible to all, because the availability of curriculum is an element of redistribution (Higgins et al., 2009; Keddie, 2012). As a result, an overly demanding programme does not allow pupils to demonstrate their skills sufficiently and prevents them from achieving academic success and positive visibility.

Furthermore, the representation may be under the influence of the dominant patterns of cultural values of inability and inferiority, which puts children with SEN in a subordinate position. Good representation represents all kinds of cooperation of children with SEN in the classroom and in the school community and enables them to make decisions about themselves. The right of children to be provided with opportunities for participation in decision-making in matters relating to themselves, their actions and learning have been part of the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1989 (Articles 12 and 13). Within the theory of recognition, the 'voice of the child' is determined by the authors Smith (2007, p. 14), Higgins et al. (2009, p. 474), Rutar (2011a), Kroflič (2010a, 2010b) and Bingham (2006). Higgins et al. (ibid.) and Kroflič (ibid.) note the right of a child's voice to be heard as distinct from the majority. There is ample evidence that children with learning disabilities with lower abilities to communicate often experience involuntary communication embargo and the deprivation of the right to express their opinion, the right to participate, and the right to independent decision-making about themselves (Higgins et al., 2009). Higgins et al. (ibid.) note that



these points are particularly critical at the interpersonal level in the classroom, in the lesson and school activities, and in activities outside school. Failure to exercise the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) on the right to the voice hinders children with SEN in inclusion to educational programmes and their right to active participation in the educational process and, therefore, in relevant social contexts. Higgins et al. (2009, p. 476) named the elements of dimensions of representation as 'agency'. The researchers Olli, Vehkakoski and Salanterä (2012), who conducted an extensive analysis of the literature on the agency of pupils with SEN, have found that exercising the agency of children with SEN is strongly linked to the previous condition of capability. Regarding a pre-requisite of capability, neither the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) nor the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) are exceptions. In the first case, the right to express her/his own views is ensured only to a child who is capable of forming those views; in the second case, the right is linked to the age and maturity of the child. In both cases, the conventions are promising many rights to children, but at the same time, they give adults the power to decide who can use those rights (Olli et al., 2012, p. 794).

Analysis of the representational dimension also allows a critical look at the contexts or areas where participation takes place. Initially, the dimension of representation in the part that relates to the framing failed to attract more attention of authors who focus on children with SEN in their papers. Primarily, the main problem was posed by the lack of opportunities to participate in the wider community, as provided by the respective school framework (Higgins et al., 2009; Kogovšek et al., 2009). Honneth (2003b, p. 185) and Kogovšek et al. (2009) have accentuated the importance of extending opportunities to participate and thus the importance of a broader framework of inclusion. The opinion that the impaired children are 'passive, incompetent, sensitive and are all the same' (Kroflič, 2010a, p. 8) may be the reason that schooling is designed in a way that participation is not possible for them at the outset; thereby the spaces of participation are narrowed. We have found that the abilities of children with SEN are a criterion by which the institutional rights are also allocated in the area of representation. For example, skills and academic performance are the criteria by which the right to participation in separate individual programmes is acquired, where the child's voice can be heard much better (Keddie, 2012).

### **Dangers for recognition are dangers for inclusion**

Discussions of recognition theory currently take place in two directions; the first is based on the identity model of recognition and the other on the

status model of recognition, on which the above three-dimensional model of the theory is based. Despite the general acceptance of identity policies, which emphasise the reciprocity of recognition for self-development and the right to one's own original identity, from the perspective of the theory, treating the recognition policy as being equal to identity policy presents a problem (Fraser, 2000, 2003a). The identity model treats the incorrect recognition only as a harm in the cultural field. As a result of the excessive emphasising of identity, Fraser (2000, 2003a) has firstly defined two dangers of recognition. The first is the displacement of redistribution needs, i.e. clouding of the origin of redistribution injustices, also the evasion of their connectedness with recognition needs. The second danger is the highlighting of providing the possibility of identity forming as the sole criterion of fair recognition, causing the reification of group identities. Unlike the identity model, the status model does not emphasise a specific group identity, but the status of the individual as a full partner in social interaction. The criterion for assessing the performance of recognition is, therefore, the parity participation or guaranteed participation in advance, in recognition as well as redistribution and representation (Fraser, 2003a, p. 38).

The risk of displacement can also occur when dealing with children with SEN. Thus, a great deal of human and material resources can be invested in better learning achievement, while disregarding the importance of the material resources necessary for successful inclusion into other activities of class or school and relationships, which was also found by Slovenian researchers. Frequently, the objective of lesson adjustments is only to improve the academic aspect of education, while the re/habilitation aspect of the treatment is given insufficient sensitivity (Kogovšek et al., 2009, p. 408). Pretnar (2012, p. 154) believes that exposing only educational indicators as key in determining the success of school is in conflict with the enforcement of inclusivity: 'The latter is bad, if a child with SEN is only included among peers without the environment being prepared for the child and without receiving a proper support'. Rutar (2011a) draws attention to the excessive emphasis on formal organisational remedies, which might mean investing too much effort in the direction that certainly at least the children do not wish for, if we consider that they mostly wish to be accepted, to have the opportunity of participation, to be welcome and appreciated in the group.

In the lowering of standards and in the creation of different criteria in achieving academic achievement within the curriculum, Keddie (2012, p. 270) identifies the problem of displacement of resources, names different 'measuring sticks', and emphasises the need for the 'same measuring sticks' of educational achievement. Different informal standards appear in the same program: one is applied for one group of pupils and the other for the other pupils. Different

measuring sticks prevent certain pupils from being more successful and therefore prosper better in life. Kavkler, Košak Babuder, and Magajna (2015, p. 46) have also observed a reduction in the difficulty of the tasks: 'In the teaching and testing processes, the school's education professionals often merely reduce the complexity and abstractness of assignments instead of enabling children specific adaptations in reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling (e.g., adjustments in study materials, the use of study and technical aids, longer times, etc.)'. They emphasised the need for better adjustments instead.

Reification (in our case, it can be understood as management with children with SEN) can be interpreted in a way that the lower performance of children with SEN is either due to the cultural background or the inability of the child to do the school work and less a consequence of economic regulation. In the background of such definitions is the tendency of the majority for the specific treatment of children, or possibly the non-treatment of children (Turnšek, 2008). The contribution of children with SEN and questions about children with SEN in schools can be presented with the lack of aesthetic sense. Children with SEN are bereft of 'aesthetics', if culturally inclusive teaching is reduced to representation in which the identity of children is deprived of complexity, which also leads to reification (Keddie, 2012, p. 270). The results of the Slovenian research of authors Ozbič and Žolgar Jerkovič (2007) have shown general misconceptions of future teachers about children with SEN, oversimplification and generalisation of their personality, and orientation to the disorder as if they are without the need for participation. Inclusion would be much more successful if teachers would know the actual capabilities of children with SEN (in the case of the research of the deaf, hard of hearing) and would not lean on stereotypes and misconceptions (ibid.). Stereotypical and superficial descriptions of children in LES and SP, which incorrectly inform the wider community about their abilities, contribute to stigma both on the interpersonal level as well as at the level of the institution. Reification can be seen at the school level. Highlighting the special needs of pupils brings several advantages to adults, guardians or educators, especially with regards to distribution. Due to such rights (e.g. in school to lower criteria in the classroom or more hours of APA), children with SEN may be held in inappropriate programmes. In reification, the 'desirable' membership or biodeterminism and paternalisation are seen (Keddie, 2012, p. 274) or, for example, the 'ordered' choice (Batistič Zorec, 2010). It is likely due to help from the deployment of teachers in the programmes of APA, LES or SP. Teachers who teach in regular school (APA) have no contact with pupils in the LES or SP and vice versa. Within the programmes, everyone is holding to their work and does not want to accept new work.

In terms of the identity model, due to non/highlighting the characteristics of an individual or a group in comparison with others (descriptions of differences), the ways of participation may be provided or places where individuals or groups participate may be restricted; therefore, the right in the political field is under threat (Fraser, 2003a; Olson, 2008). Olson (2008) notes that the avoidance of visibility and patterns of cultural values are deepening the disrespect, especially if the boundary between groups is arbitrary. The participation itself is arbitrary, and thus of a political nature (Olson, *ibid.*, p. 252), where the right to participate on the basis of differences is provided to participants by a third party, the non-involved, or the stronger one. In LES, APA and SP programmes, the condition of arbitrariness is fulfilled; namely, the boundary between them is identifiable, and thus the spaces of participation are too, so the pupils and guardians should have a choice regarding participation in them.

### **Corrective remedies**

Remedies that would aid in understanding and eliminating problems and injustices are divided into the affirmative and the transformative (Anderson, 2008; Christensen, 1996/2004; Fraser, 1997, 2003a; Galeotti, 2009). The aim of affirmative remedies is to correct the inadequate consequences of social arrangement without disturbing the basic social framework that generates injustice or may even cause new ones (Fraser, 1997, 2003a). Remedies aimed at the correction of inappropriate consequences with the reconstruction of the basic generative structural framework are the 'transformative remedies' (Fraser, 1997, p. 23; Fraser, 2003a, p. 74). Affirmative remedies in the APA programme are the adjustments, which are mostly determined in two ways: the first is the determination of adjustments with a decision (Placement Act, 2011, Article 30), and the second with an individualised programme (*ibid.*, Article 36). Adjustments are extremely important but are not sufficient to create the transformative conditions, which means that users can become accustomed and dependent on them in the long run (Galeotti, 2009). Recipients of the remedies are aware that their achievements can be the result of pre-allocated choices without their own contribution, which may lead to stigmatisation and subordination (*ibid.*). Although with the adjustments, we want to reduce the differences between pupils, we are establishing new ones with them. Therefore, caution is important when evaluating the achievements of children with SEN, so that they are not the result of pre-allocated choices, but are a reflection of actual knowledge.

Kogovšek, Ozbič, and Košir (2009) have found that the inclusion of children/pupils/students is usually reduced solely to the presence of a child with

minimal adjustments. This represents only declarative inclusion without structural and deep changes to the system, which does not take into account the whole person (in the case of the deaf/hard of hearing), but is changing only some superficial elements of education (Kogovšek et al., *ibid.*, p. 406).

The most commonly adopted affirmative remedies are education (Fraser, 2003a) and coping with diversity (Anderson, 2008). Much was promised for the hour of advisory services (Placement Act, 2011, Article 8, second indent), which is an additional remedy of education of children with SEN, but we still do not know its practical effect, especially since the concept of assessment of advisory services was modified during its application in practice (Kovšca, 2014; Šoln Vrbinc, Jakič Brežočnik, Arnuš Tabakovič, 2014). The remedy of advisory services is otherwise remarkable because, in the original idea (Kovšca, *ibid.*) and for the first time within Slovenian legislation, the redistribution would not be devoted only to academic knowledge, but also to participatory processes of children with SEN. There is a likelihood that the advisory service exists only on paper, because the additional distribution was not realised. Therefore, the practitioners of educational institutions often see it as unnecessary; it brings them additional administrative work, and it does not contribute to the quality of work with children with special needs. Having additional education of the environment of children with SEN, with operationalisation and creating a continuum of assistance, the transition between programmes might be more easily established. It is important to understand that the 'cultural curriculum', which serves only for information about diversity, represents an affirmative remedy, which symbolises integration more than the essence of inclusion. It is important to say that the correction of affirmative remedies brings the possibility of choice (Fraser, 2003a).

More desirable are the transformative remedies that change the structures that cause problems. An essential element of the transformative remedy is the fact that better regulation is provided in the principle (Fraser, 2003a, p. 77). We may take into consideration the authors Artiles, Bal, and Thorius (2010, p. 250), who have defined the 'transformative curriculum'. Intersubjective conditions are formed with them, by which information is provided about difference, and everyone changes the awareness of oneself (Artiles, Kozleski et al., 2006; Bingham, 2006; Higgins et al., 2009; Rinaldi, 2006). The change of oneself, therefore, one's own attitudes and values, however, happens only voluntarily or spontaneously (Bingham, 2006). Bingham (2006) and Kroflič (2010) have identified concrete transformative techniques for direct work with pupils. According to Bingham (2006, p. 327), the positive recognition 'is gained through talking better about (and to) Others, through better writings, and through better representational practices', and according to Galeotti (2009) with public

argument. Recognition improves when the aid is universal and is basically given to all the disadvantaged (Fraser, 2003).

In contrast, highlighting and exposing the individual to demonstrate the necessity of certain material goods is a powerful tool for the majority or certain members within the group, in order to achieve power and the consolidation of the reification of individual or group. Fraser (2003) therefore recommends determining who benefits from the participation and proposes to carry out a double reflection on the benefits of cooperation within and between the groups. One effective regulatory tool against subordination and to determine the types of benefits of participation could be the instrument 'Response to Intervention' (RTI), described by Artiles et al. (2010, p. 251). RTI includes the analyses of social area and institutional pressure that have not been made until now and were not taken into account. RTI analyses the dominational patterns of the environment, the role of capability assessment, the role of the cultural and linguistic background of the pupil, and the role of the mediator power (ibid., p. 255). Kavkler, Košak Babuder and Magajna (2015, p. 46) have also expressed the need for the evaluation of the implementation of help in the school, after determining that the effectiveness of either implementing adaptations in the teaching process or providing additional assistance is never the subject of evaluation, unlike the performance of children with severe specific learning difficulties.

Compared with the programme of APA, in which the adjustments were awarded an affirmative character, adjustments in the programme LES and SP are structural in nature and given at the baseline (Rules on norms, 2007, 2008, 2014; Adapted educational programme..., 2003, 2013; Special programme..., 2014), therefore, bear the positive characteristics of transformative remedies. Differences between pupils in the same room (in the classroom) are reduced to a minimum, but only within programmes. The favourable ratio for pupils outside the classroom no longer applies. Nevertheless, at some point, the APA, LES and SP programmes can stigmatise the pupils, because they have to demonstrate significant need beforehand in order to receive those programmes. Therefore, the remedy for broadening the circle of inclusion to the widest possible space, both inside and outside the school (Honneth, 2003a; Kogovšek et al., 2009, West-Burnham, 2011) would contribute to a greater impact on pupil achievement, to a broader recognition and at the same time to increased possibility of the revaluation of cultural values.

## **Conclusion**

By analysing the three areas of the concept of recognition, we found that the Slovenian system of allocating help to children with special needs and

placement in programmes is based on differentiation and the demonstrating of in/capability (Kroflič, 2010; Lesar, 2008), which complicates the positive recognition of children with SEN. We note that the patterns of cultural values of non-compliance, inferiority and in-/capability are affecting the cooperation of children with SEN and their acceptance among peers. Research shows that children with SEN are silent pupils, are reluctant to be verbally exposed, have difficulties sharing their thoughts; this is especially so for pupils with speech and language difficulties (Čačinovič Vogrinčič, 2013; Higgins et al., 2009). Pupils do not make decisions about themselves in the classroom, and also not outside the classroom (Higgins et al., 2009). The possibility of children with SEN to make decisions would therefore mostly exist on paper, rather than be implemented in practice (also Kodele and Lesar, 2015). Common are the hidden effects of cultural patterns of inferiority and inability, which are related to the participation of children with SEN, in which we do not perceive the need of such children to demonstrate the achievements or the need to be involved in all sorts of extended school activities, which makes them invisible. The stereotypical descriptions of children with SEN do not contribute to the acceptance and understanding of their complexity as an individual (Keddie, 2012; Ozbič & Jerković, 2007). Inadequate patterns of cultural values are reflected in lower or inferior knowledge (e.g. the name of the programme 'lower educational standard', also 'marginalised knowledge', Keddie, 2009, p. 272) and in the low expectations of teachers. According to Higgins et al. (2009, p. 478), some teachers believe that children with SEN need only basic knowledge; therefore, there is a belief that their teachers also need only basic knowledge and that anyone could teach children with SEN (Higgins et al., 2009, p. 478). Traditional teaching methods do not encourage the formation of social relationships, maintain passivity and subordination and do not create transformative conditions of recognition in places where they should be mostly present, particularly in the classroom (Artiles, Harris-Murri & Rostenberg, 2006; Bingham, 2006; Koren et al., 2011; Lingard, 2007).

Using the concept of recognition, we determined three dangers of inclusion: displacement, reification, and a narrow context of participation. Participation is possible mostly within individual programmes. Displacement was seen in disregarding the connection between economic conditions and all kinds of participation of the pupils. In the area of assessment of children with SEN, different measurements of academic achievements may appear on the one hand and grades without credits on the other. The reification or management of children with SEN is reflected in paternalisation, biodeterminism, stereotypical notions of children with SEN and in keeping children with SEN in unsuitable programmes due to the benefits provided for guardians or educators. The

avoidance of identity of children with SEN in the LES and SP programmes and in the type of school also occurs.

Disadvantages, which are the result of economic arrangements, are the insistence on the traditional teaching (which requires the least resources), difficult accessibility of adjustments (accessible mostly only with decision act provided by the commission for the placement of children with special needs), and the fact that we do not have the operationalisation of the transition from the LES programme to the mainstream primary school programme of an equal educational standard.

Separate legislation and regulations are governing the structural differences only within individual/separate programmes (e.g. significantly lower number of pupils and lower standards in programmes of LES and SP). The allocation of material rights is subject to the verification of capability; however, pupils' specific strengths could be taken into account.

With the help of the theoretical definitions, we formed the premise: 'I am a child with special needs, but I am visible, I have a voice, I am heard, I am successful, I have friends, I am observed, I have achievements, I may participate in the classroom, in extracurricular activities and beyond.' To achieve this goal, it is necessary to revert to remedies of a transformative character, which are placed at the baseline and are for example: organisation of joint activities, the use of active and collaborative ways of working, rewarding according to actual achievements, to possibility of additional education of the environment of a child with special needs, to provide visibility, voice and agency to each child, and the creation of transformative conditions in the classroom, at school and outside of school. For the realisation of all kinds of participation of pupils with special needs and to raise their achievements in schools, we need redistribution (additional resources, change of methods of work), recognition (change of oneself, attitudes and values) and a better representation (participation in the widest possible activities, actual decision-making, children are heard). In particular, balancing all three areas of recognition, taking into account the effects of patterns of cultural values, is recommended.

The three-dimensional model of social rights is particularly topical when the distribution problems are at the forefront of society. All the elements of social justice must be considered even more, as it more easily comes to the deepening of subordination also in the cultural field, due to distribution and political problems.

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## Biographical note

**MARJETA ŠMID** (MA in Science) is professor of defectology for people with physical and mental disabilities. She monitors and investigates lessons in the three programmes for the children with special needs in elementary school, publishes contributions and participates in the preparation of these programmes. She implemented the learning workshops, study groups for teachers, the innovation projects and she is mentor newly appointed head teachers.

## Building Partnerships by Bridging Cultures, Contexts, and Systems – Reflections on TEPE 2015

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MARCO SNOEK<sup>1</sup>

### **Building bridges**

Building partnerships implies building bridges between different and sometimes isolated worlds. And building bridges is something the Scots are good at! However, passing the famous and impressive Forth Bridge and approaching Dundee, I was also reminded that bridges can collapse, as the nearby Tay Rail Bridge did in 1879. So there was no better place to have the annual conference of the Teacher Education Policy in Europe Network than Dundee. They know the importance of building sustainable bridges between different worlds. Without such bridges, no partnerships between these worlds are possible.

### **Input and inspiration**

The conference theme ‘Building Partnerships’ was elaborated in three keynote presentations, over 70 presentations, a panel discussion, and many professional dialogues during the breaks. Professor Hannele Niemi, the chair of the TEPE board, identified teacher education as part of an ecosystem, in which different actors and subsystems are dependent on each other. One actor or subsystem cannot survive without relations with other actors in the educational world or in society as a whole. Professor Kari Smith from Norway did a great job by creating a conceptual framework during the first keynote as a starting point for the discussions. She emphasised the importance of shared goals, shared responsibilities, mutual respect, and shared power. From her experience with teacher education in Norway, she gave inspiring examples of partnerships at different levels, such as the Norwegian national PhD school for teacher educators (NAFOL) and the international forum for teacher educator development (INFOTED).

On the second day, Professor Ronald Sultana from Malta emphasised the perspective from Southern Europe, where education is a matter of life and death. In this context, collaboration with partners outside the world of

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education is essential. NGOs can be of great value in strengthening the societal responsibility and social engagement of (teacher) education. In the third keynote, Gillian Hamilton gave a concrete example of to where partnerships can lead by presenting the Scottish College for Educational Leadership.

Partnerships can bridge several subsystems. The keynotes illustrated that partnerships in teacher education can focus on relations between teacher education institutes and

- students
- other departments within universities
- other higher education institutions
- international partners
- the practice field
- teachers and teacher councils
- policy makers
- NGOs
- and (tomorrow's) society as a whole.

This broad variety of partnership was illustrated by presentations during the four rounds of parallel sessions offering a wide source of inspiration and food for thought for the participants.

### **Personal reflections**

It is impossible to summarise all the discussions that took place during the keynotes, the parallel sessions, the panel and during the breaks. So I will restrict myself to some personal reflections and questions that came up during the conference, and that require further discussion within or outside the TEPE network.

First of all, my impression is that we need a stronger analysis of the dynamics and conceptual elements of partnerships. For me, the concepts of boundaries and boundary crossing (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Engeström, 2001; Wenger, 1998) are helpful in this. In my opinion, building a partnership is not about integrating two subsystems into one, nor is it about formal agreements and criteria that need to be met to be considered as a partner in a partnership. However, it is about creating spaces for a shared professional dialogue where participants from different subsystems meet, exchange their understandings and interpretations of issues and create opportunities for mutual learning based on mutual respect. Several presentations referred to such 'third spaces' (Zeichner, 2010) or 'boundary zones'. I think that it is essential to elaborate



how such third spaces and boundary zones can be developed, and to identify and share successful examples. This is especially necessary in the partnership between teacher education institutes and policy makers, which is the key focus of the Teacher Education Policy in Europe Network. The relation between TEIs and policy makers is problematic in many countries. However, during the conference, several examples of ‘collaborative policy making’ were presented, such as the collaborative response that was given to the Donaldson report in Scotland, and the European Commission’s working group Schools where policy makers and teacher educators engage in learning dialogues on key policy issues.

Another key topic for partnership is the partnership between universities. Kari Smith opened with the quote from Churchill: ‘United we stand, divided we fall’. In several countries, teacher education is under pressure. When universities attempt to withstand this pressure on their own, they will fail. Only when universities join forces and are collectively willing to take responsibility for the quality of teacher education in a country as a whole will they provide a valid and convincing answer for policy makers. To provide that valid and convincing answer we need to understand the concerns of policy makers and ministers, but we need to provide our own answers to these concerns, answers that are informed by research and do justice to the key challenge for education: to support the development of children in terms of knowledge, skills, values, and identity. Governments, ministries and policy makers are concerned with answers that guarantee the system-wide quality of education. The response of universities also needs to cover such a system-wide perspective and can’t restrict itself to institutional levels.

When universities adapt themselves to the dominant market approach and participate in the competition rat race in getting students and research funds, they are doomed to lose their collective voice. Kari Smith again showed how Norwegian universities were able to change the rules by refusing to enter into competition by drawing up, nationwide, a shared proposal for a PhD research school for teacher educators that could not be ignored by the government.

Several presentations showed how teacher education institutes are under pressure. In part, this pressure can be explained by the failure of teacher education institutes to have a shared voice towards policy makers and to show how they perform at a system-wide level. Of course, this is not only a challenge for teacher education institutes, but also for policy makers. After all, a partnership is a responsibility of two partners. Teacher education institutes and policy makers are connected to each other. How the two systems of teacher education practice and teacher education policy can be bridged in such a way that the

bridge will not collapse, and that connections can be turned into commitment, can be a key topic for the next TEPE conference.

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## Biographical note

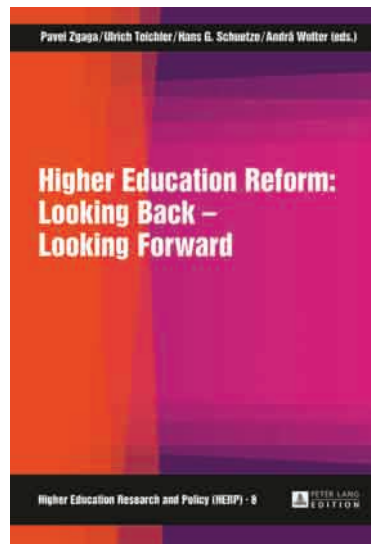
**MARCO SNOEK** is professor Teacher Learning and School Innovation, Centre of Applied Research in Education, Amsterdam University for Applied Sciences, and a member of the TEPE board.

Zgaga, P., Teichler, U., Schuetze, H. G., Wolter, A. (Eds.) (2015). *Higher Education Reform: Looking Back – Looking Forward*. Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 430 pp. ISBN 978-3-631-66275-5.

Reviewed by DARKO ŠTRAJN<sup>1</sup>

After reading this book one is bound to realise that a point of no return has been reached in higher education; still, looking back on different academic traditions – which involves memory, history and some important genealogies – is very much indispensable. However, the past cannot provide all of the answers regarding what looms as yet another reform in the near future. While a new wave of global reform is rather certain, as it were, its outcome is in many respects very unclear. From the texts in this book one can conclude that the reform will be a series of sometimes possibly antagonistic confrontations between actors, players and “stakeholders”. Above all, the notion of academic life and work is being transformed into a kind of myth, and there are multiple reasons for this. Among researchers in the enormously complex field of the exploration of higher education such awareness seems to be clearly accepted. The volume being examined here may well serve as evidence of the above claims. Published as Volume 8 in the series “Higher Education Research and Policy (HERP)” in Peter Lang’s Edition, it is one of the results of a number of international activities such as networking, conferences and other forms of research cooperation in this crucially important field. Apart from the Introduction, the book consists of eighteen studies spread over five thematic “sections.”

In the Introduction, the editors give a brief overview of the last four or five decades of changes in the domain of higher education. They emphasise the *massification* of higher education as one of the crucial phenomena. More recent



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transformations in particular are, in their view, linked to the neoliberal framework that has introduced into this area monstrosities such as *marketization*, *privatisation* and *rankings* of universities. Along with these developments came a thoroughly changed “role of the academic profession” as well as a metamorphosis of students from “learners” to “consumers” (p. 11). On the list of decisive influences, the editors also include *internationalisation*, which has pushed reform to supra-national levels. Of course, the role of research has changed as well, due to the demand for evidence-based policies. The introduction provides a condensed and clear cognitive mapping of the whole field, preparing the interested reader for the very rich content that follows.

Section A (Changing Contexts and Directions) begins with Ulrich Teichler’s chapter dealing with the future of higher education. After pointing to the main trends such as internationalisation, professionalization and the “incorporation of higher education into a system of life-long-learning” (p. 33), the author’s analysis uncovers different possible scenarios of the future and points to open questions and dilemmas concerning already known dubious trends such as the “rate race” for success, assessment inflation, destructive competition, subordination under external demands, political pressures, and so on. Peter Scott is no less generous in exposing the impasses and paradoxes that appear when we attempt to consider the future of higher education. His chapter is a search for answers regarding the meaning of a supposed transition from mass to market higher education, with the author outlining the many uncertainties associated with the contexts and policies that produce a “confusion of roles and responsibilities” (p. 62). The last contribution in Section A, written by Pavel Zgaga, shifts the focus to the level of a particular environment. The author stresses the importance of discerning specificities in the case of South-East Europe, which cannot be simply categorised as an area of former communism. Broader historical changes have been strongly expressed in the area of higher education, which has undergone all of the aforementioned transformations, such as massification, privatisation, etc. However, local answers to challenges, especially in the “wave of reform” triggered by the Bologna process, are interesting because they demonstrate the importance of a good reading of the past in order to develop appropriate policies for the future within the global world.

After the Introductory Note by Hans G. Schuetze, in which the author clarifies some notions and concepts as well as commenting on the chapters that follow, Section B (Changing Environments and Missions of Higher Education) begins with Marek Kwiek’s reflection on reforming European universities, which he connects to the reform of European welfare states. His hypothesis that “higher education will be reformed mostly from outside rather than mostly

from the inside” is substantiated in the whole chapter by demonstrating that higher education is a part of the public sector subject to grave pressures. The next chapter, written by Shinichi Yamamoto, is a narrative on Japan’s history of reform, which is also succinctly represented through tables and data. The article then focuses on recent reform in the context of the “bubble economy” crisis, the aging population and the declining number of young people. The author concludes by observing that the “reform process is continuing with no prospect of ending” (p. 130). China’s higher education is marked by rather rapid massification and by the world’s highest current level of enrolments. W. James Jacob and John N. Hawkins wrote their contribution on the basis of their research in China, which comprised hundreds of interviews with higher education administrators. They identified five main trends in Chinese higher education: structural reforms, finance, continuing education, mobility and quality assurance. Andrä Wolter takes a deeper look at diversity as, presumably, a result of the massification of higher education. His findings, arrived at using a great deal of evidence from “Eurostudent” research, show differences between countries in which massification has brought about changes in social mobility, gender equality, etc., and other countries in which the growth in enrolments has not transformed the structure of “academic self-reproduction”. The case of Germany is emphasised in particular.

Section C deals with the exceptionally interesting topic of academic freedom. Rolf van Lüde gives a clear historically founded view on the nature of the Humboldtian concept of academic freedom and points to marketization, which installs a “new managerialism” at universities, as an influential agency that decomposes this not only German tradition. Rosalind M. O. Pritchard very vividly displays the fate of the three Humboldtian unities – of research and teaching, of teachers and learners, and of knowledge – in the British context. As she finds that the German model of academic freedom “has not fared especially well in Britain”, she concludes with the claim that “The German model is more needed and could be more helpful in the reconstruction of British higher education than ever before” (p. 209). William Bruneau, who also introduced the whole section by defining the notion of academic freedom, contributes an exhaustive chapter on academic freedom in North American higher education. He writes about the five main philosophically based defences of academic freedom and, significantly, finds that the reason for their insufficiency is to be found in the “logic of the concept of utility” (p. 221). He therefore points to managerialism as “no ordinary threat”, providing some specific examples that illustrate his point.

Globalisation and privatisation are the key areas of discussion in Section D. At the beginning of his Introductory Note, Germán Álvarez-Mendiola

appropriately observes that “Markets in higher education has become predominant in the world. Gone is the era of the domination of the state and academics in university affairs” (p. 235). In co-authorship with Mitzi Danae Morales Montes, Álvarez-Mendiola has also written an overview of trends in private education in Mexico. The authors highlight governments’ “‘benign neglect’ toward the private sector” (p. 252), while, to a degree, applauding policies of the expansion of public sector higher education in the country. Wietse de Vriesand and again Álvarez-Mendiola make use of the concept of “third degree path dependency” to analyse problems of “resistance to change” in higher education reform in Mexico’s universities. The following contribution by Hans G. Schuetze is critical, but descriptive enough for the reader to grasp historical and other facts. The chapter presents an overview of higher education in Canada and the United States, with the relationship between private and public institutions being shown in the light of certain differences between the two North American federations.

Andrä Wolter introduces Section E by reflecting critically on the very meaning of the notion of “lifelong learning”. Ulrich Teichler accepts that there is a need for lifelong learning, for reasons that mainly stem from changes in the areas of work and employment (due to the neoliberal rationale and economic regime), but he first finds significant discrepancies between expectations and the actual changes in the university in the 1990s, and goes on to discover new discrepancies in this respect in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well. Anna Spexard’s chapter connects to Teichler’s position and his understanding of the concept of lifelong learning. Presenting persuasive evidence, she supports the finding that political discourses on lifelong learning and the actual implementation of appropriate policies do not correspond very well to each other. However, she admits that “lifelong learning gained prominence in European policy debates” (p. 336). Spexard observes some influences within the Bologna reform process that help certain practices of lifelong learning, but concludes that there is a lack of adequate data for any definitive claim. Maria Slowey links the concept of lifelong learning to demographic problems and, consequently, to the question of access to higher education institutions. After an overview of certain significant data, she suggests ten “Principles for an Age Friendly University”, which could also be read as a set of recommendations for policy making. Very instructive is yet another contribution by Andrä Wolter in the form of a case study of Germany, examining the social, economic and demographic circumstances. On the basis of ample statistical evidence and empirical facts, the author views Germany as a “delayed nation” in this respect. Finally, Maureen W. McClure analyses “Massive Open Online Courses” and conflicting narratives in higher

education policies related to this phenomenon, which is implemented with new communication technologies. The author illustrates her point with Gartner's theory of the "Hype Cycle," which shows the rise from the "technology trigger" to the peak of inflated expectations, from which there is a fall due to disillusionment. Then comes a new slope, which reaches a "plateau of productivity." Online courses are still an open opportunity for higher education and, as the author says: "How they will be positioned within institutions matters" (p. 397).

Overall, the book makes very interesting reading, containing a great deal of high quality information, which, naturally, could not be more extensively covered in the present text. The most important aspect of the whole volume is, however, the fact that it gives voice to researchers of higher education who tend to critically contextualise their concepts, findings and data. The book as a whole quite clearly suggests that there is a serious tension between higher education institutions, their traditions and inner tendencies, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, policies that are generated by broader social developments within the framework of neoliberal trends and domination.

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