TEACHER EDUCATORS: FROM "THE HIDDEN PROFESSION" TO REVEALED PROFESSION

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge about the EU policy regarding teacher educators is of significant interest to both scholars and stakeholders of higher education. The authors of this paper have identified four key areas where the analysis of current trends and the formulation of relevant questions for discussion seem to be particularly important for those involved in teacher education and training. These are the development of our knowledge basis about the EU initiatives on teacher education in Europe, the EU policy regarding teacher educators, the challenges and new trends characterising the role of teacher educators in the initial education and the professional development. This study also concentrates on teacher educators' status, their profile of core values and areas of competence that underpin teacher educators' diverse and multifaceted roles.

The paper uses literature review as a basis in identifying critical parameters for the EU policy analysis and its implementation to higher education sector. The European expert study made some very specific proposals for the definition of a teacher educators' competence profile, making a distinction between first-order and second-order knowledge, skills and attitudes and defining key competence areas. Two key actions to support teacher educators in Member States are characterized: to develop an explicit profile of the competences required by teacher educators; to reinforce collaboration between all the key actors in all phases of teacher education.

Key words: EU policy; key competence areas; first-order; second-order knowledge; teacher educators.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher education is a crucial element in the modernization of European education and training systems. Many countries recently implemented reforms which include quality assurance processes or are engaged in continuing the introduction of new measures and the adoption of national frameworks (European Commission, 2017, p. 50).

Higher education institutions providing initial teacher education could be strengthened as hubs for educating both teachers and teacher educators, and for conducting research into teacher competence development and effective teaching and learning methods (The Council conclusions on effective teacher education, 2014, p. 183/23).

The quality of education and professional development of teachers is fundamentally determined by the quality of those people who are responsible for their learning, that is, teacher educators (Teacher education and teacher education policies, 2014, p. 12). Teacher educators are called on to play a key role in modernising education as they face the challenges of new skills requirements, rapid technological developments and increasing social and cultural diversity.

BACKGROUND

On the basis of an extensive study in the 1990s, Wilson (1990) concluded that in Europe systematic training or coaching of teacher educators was almost completely missing. The book "The lives of teacher educators: in their words" by Ducharme (1993) is considered to be one of the first and leading publications having the teacher educator as its object of study (Lunenberg, Dengerink, & Korthagen, 2014, p. 2-4).

Recent researches on the professional development of teacher educators have contributed to our understanding the induction of new teacher educators (Velzen, Klink, Swennen, & Yaffe, 2010; Boyd, & Harris, 2010) in the context of main trends in teacher education across Europe: improving teaching through reforming pre-service, the "turn to the practical" and remodelling Initial Teacher Education for student teachers; focusing on teacher educators and mentors (Murray, 2016).

There is much emphasis nowadays on the fact that the profession of teacher educator is a specific one. The majority of studies have focused on "roles, behaviour and professional development of teacher educators" (Lunenberg, Dengerink, etc., 2014). They guide the development of teachers and student-teachers' classroom practice and their research activity, so teacher educators need to develop their research skills and a researcher identity (Roberts, 2014). While working on their doctoral thesis, teacher educators move temporarily from the semi-academic world of teacher education into the academic world of universities (Swennen, Geerdink, Volman, 2017).

L. Shagrir identified three principal factors (personal, institutional, social) that motivate teacher educators to develop professionally (studying for a doctoral degree; professional advancement ambitions; and collaboration with colleagues) & three main factors that delay teacher educators from engaging in professional development (schedules, lack of interest and motivation and the policy and culture of institutes for teacher education) (Shagrir, 2017).

In some publications authors dwell on different issues, regarding to teacher educators' activity in EU countries.

El. Rebecca, for exmple, proposes flexible models of professional development and recommends new professional standards for teacher educators in further education in England (Rebecca, 2016). M. Snoek, A. Swennen and Van der Klink (2011) studied policy measures aimed at enhancing the professionalism of teacher educators in 16 European countries and found that European Union policy documents pay limited attention to the quality of teacher educators. However, the authors noted, the professionalism of teacher educators received more policy attention at the level of individual Member States.

Using England as an example, because the position of teacher educators varies internationally, P. Boyd & El. White (2017) grounded two definitions of teacher educators: school-based teacher educator and university-based teacher educator by explaining that in "some cases they may specialise in pedagogy or in the teaching of a specific curriculum subject" (p. 126).

The findings "Literacy Teacher Educators: Preparing Teachers for a Changing World" (ed. by C. Kosnik, 2013) brings together the perspectives of 26 literacy teacher educators from four countries: Canada, US, UK, and Australia.

The articles report on the study of Flemish teacher educators developing professional roles (Meeus, Cools, & Placklé, 2017) and English university-based teacher educators (Vincent, King, Webb, 2017); professional standards for teacher educators in the Netherlands (Koster, & Dengerink, 2008); the formal and situated learning of beginning teacher educators in England (Harrison, & Keon, 2008).

We concluded from our study that knowledge about the EU policy regarding teacher educators is of significant interest to both scholars and stakeholders, especially for non-EU countries, that have ratified the Bologna Declaration. Consequently, this research *aims* to examine different activities within the European Union related to teacher education and teacher educators development.

METHODOLOGY

The focus was on the extent to which European policy documents identify the development of teacher educators as a topic of policy concern. This study investigated whether this attention within European policies does indeed exist.

To establish the context of the problem we used a review of documentation concerning the EU policy regarding teacher educators' development. A literature review of scholarly articles, books relevant to a particular issue expanded the scope of our study. Data collection was mainly qualitative and was carried out by using the key sources of information: documents of the European Council, the Council of the European Union (The Council), The European Commission (EC) & The Education Committee (Committee).

THE EU POLICY ON TEACHER EDUCATION AND TEACHER EDUCATORS SUPPORTING: THE PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT

A considerable amount of policy documents and recommendations at the level of the Council, the EU Council and the Committee is issued on the topic of teacher education, teacher educators' training and their development.

Before starting the analysis, we need to give some explanations. The European Council defines the EU's overall political direction and priorities. The Council is responsible for coordinating member states' policies in specific fields, such as: education, culture, youth and sport. EU Council adopts EU policy frameworks and work plans in these areas which set out the priorities for cooperation between member states and the Commission. The Education Committee prepares items (cover all levels of education and training) for discussion by EU education ministers.

We first turn our attention to the fact, that education and training, being one of the policy priorities of the European Union, is closely connected with other key European policy areas: social, innovation, research, enterprise (European Commission, 2007, p. 4).

The European Council held a special meeting on 23–24 March 2000 in Lisbon to agree a new strategic goal for the Union in order to strengthen employment, economic reform and social cohesion as part of a knowledge-based economy. The Lisbon European Council conclusions called upon Member States to take steps to remove obstacles to teachers' mobility in Europe, to attract high-quality teachers and through greater transparency in the recognition of qualifications and periods of study and training (Lisbon European Council, 2002, art. 26).

In 2001 the Commission of the EC adopted a long-term work programme to ensure high and rising standards of learning for everyone in Europe, making the best use of resources, by introducing quality assurance into schools and training institution (European Commission, 2001, p. 6–13).

The Council Resolution on lifelong learning invited the Member States to improve the education and training for teachers and trainers involved in lifelong learning so that they acquire the necessary skills for the knowledge society (Council Resolution, 2002).

A set of Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications was tested in 2005 at a European Conference of senior policy makers, experts in the field of teacher education and major stakeholders (European Commission, 2005).

The common European principles describe a vision of a European teaching profession (well-qualified, placed within the context of lifelong learning, mobile, based on partnerships) in a professional continuum of lifelong learning which includes initial teacher education, induction and continuing professional development.

In 2006 the European Council recognized the key factors in achieving high quality learning outcomes: the motivation, skills and competences of teachers, trainers, other teaching staff and guidance, as well as the quality of school leadership.

The European Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning sets out eight key competences which individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment. They are: communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression (Recommendation of the European Parliament, 2006).

In order to support Member States in their reforms of Teacher Education, the Commission recommended Higher Education institutions to promote the professionalisation of teaching, teacher education programmes in the Bachelor, Master and Doctorate cycles of higher education. Links between teacher educators, practicing teachers, the world of work and other agencies need to be strengthened (European Commission, 2007, p. 14–15).

It is worth noting that in the Council conclusions on the professional development of teachers and school leaders (6 November 2009) the term "teacher educator" is used t to refer to high quality teacher education programmes (The Council conclusions on the professional development, 2009, p. 9).

The peer learning Cluster "Teachers and Trainers" conceived of a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) as a first attempt to map out the field of policy concerning teacher educators. The PLA adopted as a working definition of Teacher Educator, argued the various profiles of teacher educators as a very heterogeneous group. Based upon information about the countries taking part in the PLA, their competence-based standards for teacher education and for teacher educators (Austria, Portugal, the Netherlands), experts grounded the areas of expertise or knowledge, required by teacher educators (Education and Training 2020 programme, 2010).

The features of teacher educators' work were discussed at the European Commission's peer learning conference on the Teacher Education profession (Education: Policy Support for Teacher Educators, Brussels, 26–28 March 2012). The Conference emphasised the need to raise awareness of the important role of teacher educators and to ensure that national policies support the development of the profession.

The outcomes of the Reykjavik and Brussels PLA resulted in the document "Supporting the Teaching Professions for Better Learning Outcomes". The specific document refered to the peer learning suggested a number of systemic conditions that would enhance the effectiveness of the work of teacher educators (European Commission, 2012, p. 58). Staff Working Document also suggested two key actions to support teacher educators in Member States: developing an explicit profile of the competences required by teacher educators and reinforcing collaboration between all the key actors in all phases of teacher education. Member States should specify competence based criteria for entry into the profession, 2012, p. 64).

The European Commission report Supporting Teacher Educators for Better Learning (2013), for the first time in the pan-European policy agenda, positioned teacher educators themselves as a major factor in achieving improvements in teacher education and consequently, schooling (Murray, 2016, p. 11). Thanks to the EC consistent educational policy the profession of teacher educators has been defined. Policy measures that could support this professional group including the definiton of their competence needs were identified (European Commission, 2013b).

The issue of the quality of teacher educators has been identified by the EU Member States and the EU Commission as being an important contributor to the overall quality within education systems. This key point was stressed at the conference "Integration, Innovation and Improvement – The Professional Identity of Teacher Educators" (Ireland, 2013). The Conference explored the concept of the teacher educator along its historical continuum, from the more traditionally understood area of initial teacher education to emergent areas such as mentors, cooperating teachers on school placement and continuing professional development (CPD) providers (Integration, Innovation and Improvement..., 2013).

In 2014 the Council of the European Union in its conclusions on effective teacher education recognised the potential of teacher educators. The term teacher educator is used in this document to describe all those who actively facilitate the formal learning of student teachers and teachers, whether at the level of initial teacher education or continuing professional development (The Council conclusions of 20 May 2014, p. 5).

The Council's conclusions acknowledged that teacher education programmes, should be sufficiently flexible to respond to changes in teaching and learning; should draw on teachers' own experience and seek to foster cross-disciplinary and collaborative approaches. The Council, among the other initiatives, invited the member states to promote: the development of comprehensive professional competence frameworks for teachers; effective digital teaching and learning by ensuring that teacher educators acquire a sufficient level of digital skills; the mobility of prospective teacher educators (The Council conclusions, 2014, p. 22–24).

The Communication from the Commission "Improving and modernising education" (7.12.2016) was a part of a larger package of actions to support young people. The renewed efforts to improve and modernise education are closely linked to and partly built on the New Skills Agenda for Europe, which was launched in June 2016. The Agenda focuses on equipping more people with better skills, making better use of existing skills and improving skills intelligence and information (European Commission, 2016).

SUPPORTING TEACHER EDUCATORS ACTIVITIES IN EUROPE

Professional cooperation of various associations (such as the Association for Teacher Education in Europe – ATEE; European trade union committee for education – ETUCE) and networks (such as the Thematic Network on Teacher Education – TNTEE; Teacher Education Policy in Europe – TEPE) have produced a remarkable amount of common and comparative knowledge about professional development of teacher educators in Europe.

Association for Teacher Education in Europe "ATEE" increases and supports cooperation between institutes engaged in teacher education both inside and outside Europe, stimulates dialogue, communication, exchanges and co-operation between teacher educators, researchers, students, teachers and any other natural persons and/or legal entities involved in teacher education, research and innovation.

ATEE consists of several working groups or Research and Development Centres (RDC). RDC 'Professional development of teacher educators' (PDTE) was raised in 2004 to improve the professional development of teacher educators and to strengthen the position of teacher educators. To contribute to this aim PDTE groups produce and distribute knowledge about professional development of teacher educators by engaging in joint studies (projects) and activities. It is worth emphasizing some results of their activity.

"Becoming a Teacher Educator" (2005) is a book for those who want to become engaged in teacher education. It provides theoretical insights, experiences of experts and practical recommendations to teacher educators. In the policy paper "The Quality of Teachers (2006)" the ATEE contributes to the debate on teacher standards by making seven recommendations concerning the identification of indicators of teacher quality. The results of this project "Experiences of Beginning Teacher Educators" (2004-2008) were presented at the ATEE 2008 conference in Brussels (Velzen, Klink, Yaffe, 2010).

The 42nd annual ATEE Conference (23–25. 10. 2017) focused on rapid changes and increasing complexity of today's world bringing about new challenges and

growing demands on education system. Contemporary work of gifted educators, the Conference marked, is of importance to development of field of Gifted Education (GE). That's why one of the conference subtheme was Gifted educators and Gifted Education (42nd Annual ATEE Conference, 2017).

Ark of Inquiry is a research and development project funded by the European Commission, involving 13 project partners from 12 countries. Ark of Inquiry project aims to raise awareness of pupils to Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) by promoting an interest in science through inquiry learning. In the context of Ark of Inquiry project, teacher educators and researchers play a key role in facilitating teachers' professional development in inquiry-based learning and teaching. Based on this idea the project is aimed at developing general guidelines for teacher educators and researchers on how to support teachers in inquiry learning instruction and in applying the materials during and after the training programme Open-ended assessment instruments, questionnaires, interview protocols and other web-based materials facilitate teachers' professional development in inquiry-based learning and teaching (The Ark of Inquiry project website).

In 2004, the ETUCE launched the Campaign "Europe Needs Teachers!" as an excellent platform to draw attention to teacher education at EU level by recommending three main priority areas of action.

This policy paper (2008) presents the ETUCE's vision of teacher education in the 21st century, deals in detail with professional development and working conditions of teacher educators. Teacher educators should be able to provide student-centred education in close cooperation with other colleagues; should be educated to Master's level in higher education; should be given the opportunity to undertake proper lifelong learning of their own career development (Teacher Education in Europe, 2008, p. 34–36).

TEACHER EDUCATORS' PROFILE & COMPETENCES: GENERALIZED DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT

In the last two decades knowledge about teacher educators, their professional development has grown. They are increasingly seen as a special professional group with "specific competence needs" (Teacher education and teacher education policies in the EU, 2014 : p.12).

European Commission (2013b) has recognized Teacher educator as a key profession because of the roles Teacher educators play in every education system, being responsible for teaching and coaching future, beginning and experienced teachers (Lunenberg, Dengerink, & Korthagen, 2014, p. 5).

Teacher educators are sometimes called "the hidden profession" (Livingston, Oana Iucu) because the title relates to a very heterogeneous group. The various profiles of teacher educators include academic staff in HEI who teach pedagogy or didactics, university lecturers in all the different subjects that future teachers study, researchers in education and allied fields, teaching practice or school placement supervisors, heads of department, curriculum developers, experienced teachers who act as mentors to beginning teachers in schools, professionals who offer continuing professional development (CPD) training courses for teachers and school leaders, policy makers (Integration, Innovation and Improvement, 2014 L, p. 4); tutors (counselors coordinators, mentors, guides etc.) supervising prospective teachers at the "on-the-job" qualifying phase; networks of supporters in the "on-the job" qualifying phase (Teacher Education in Europe, 2008, p. 34).

An inclusive definition of teacher educator has been adopted by the European Commission: "Teacher educators are all those who actively facilitate the (formal) learning of student teachers and teachers" (the European Commission, 2013, p. 8).

According to the Commission staff working document "They are present at every stage of the teacher's lifecycle, teaching and guiding them. They should model and exemplify in their daily teaching what it means to be a professional learner-centred teacher who undertake the key research that develops our understanding of teaching and learning" (European Commission, 2012, p. 52).

The evidence we gathered in our evaluation indicates that significant efforts have been done by The European Commission to work out recommendations on how teacher competences should be defined, reflecting the emerging consensus on the major elements of knowledge and understanding, skills and dispositions needed for effective teaching.

Here we give a few more details about the structure of *teacher educator's* competences. The European expert study made some very specific proposals for the competence profile for teacher educators, making a distinction between first-order and second-order knowledge, skills and attitudes and defining key competence areas.

First-order competences concern the knowledge base about schooling and teaching which teacher educators convey to student teachers - as related to subjects or disciplines.

Second-order competences regard the knowledge base on how teachers learn and how they become competent teachers; focus on teachers as adult learners, the associated pedagogy, as well as organisational knowledge about the workplaces of students and teachers (2013b). They represent distinctive features of the profession reflecting, researching, communicating, modelling and teaching about the act of teaching (European Commission, 2012, p. 55).

European Commission (2013b) suggested & grounded five key competence areas: knowledge development, research and critical thinking competences; system competences (i.e. managing the complexity of teacher education activities, roles and relationships); transversal competences (crossing and re-crossing boundaries of different professional learning contexts, ; leadership competences (inspiring teachers and colleagues; coping with ambiguity and uncertainty); and competences in collaborating, communicating and making connections with other areas (European Commission, 2013b; European Commission, 2012, p. 55).

A 2017 study on the role of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in preparing teachers for diversity recommend that comprehensive ITE curricula should be combined with targeted approaches to better prepare student teachers for diversity (European Commission, 2017). While teacher educators are key, - is stated - they were found to be rarely prepared to teach ITE curricula for diversity. In this context beyond these basic elements (pedagogical theory, subject knowledge, classroom practice), teacher educators should also encourage and challenge future teachers to develop the competences and attitudes they need for collaborative school practice and career-long professional development. In the same vein, ITE programmes need to change so that teachers are better prepared for diverse, multicultural and multilingual classrooms and for using new technologies with confidence to enhance learning (European Commission, 2017, p. 35).

CONCLUSIONS

The paper shows the complexity of problems in teacher education and teacher educators development in the society. Thanks to the EC consistent educational policy the profession of teacher educator has been defined. In summary, the following factors, working together, are thought to have contributed to the EC achievements: a focus on research relevant to the teacher education, teacher educators' competences.

We concluded from our study that knowledge about the EU policy regarding teacher educators is of significant interest to both scholars and stakeholders. The quality of their teaching has a direct effect upon learners' attainment to realise their full potential both as individuals and as active members of the European society. To do that, they need to develop their own competences which include first-order and second-order knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Our further research will be aimed at studying Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and teachers' early career support in the EU countries.

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