

**WHAT IS A “EUROPEAN TEACHER”?**  
**A Discussion Paper**  
**European Network on Teacher Education Policies (ENTEPE)**

**What is ENTEPE?**

ENTEPE exists to promote cooperation among European Union Member-States regarding their role in initial, in-service and further teacher education policies, in order to contribute to:

- Raising teacher education quality so as, in turn, to raise the quality of education and training in the European Union in a way which responds to the challenges of lifelong learning in a knowledge-based society.
- Developing a European dimension of education in teacher education programmes.
- Improving the public image of the teaching profession and mutual trust in the teaching qualifications awarded by Member-States.
- Promoting teacher mobility in the European Union.

To attain its goals, the Network develops opportunities to learn from other members on teacher education policies, by analysing and comparing policies and issues, as well as by sharing good practices through several kinds of activities. The Network uses an open frame of reference for informal exchange and shares knowledge on the basis of written and oral presentations related to specific challenges and issues on teacher education policies<sup>1</sup>. One of the outcomes of such exchanges are discussion papers – such as “What is a ‘European Teacher’?” - which are made available to a wider audience.

**Introduction to this *Discussion Paper***

Throughout society, Europe has become an increasingly important reference point. For teachers, responsible for preparing future generations of Europeans, this is perhaps even more the case. ENTEPE aims at developing a European dimension of education in teacher education programmes. However, whilst European teachers work within a European context, we still know very little about their “Europeanness”, in other words what constitutes a teacher within an understanding of European professionalism.

This discussion paper will serve as a springboard for further discussions about future roles of teachers in Europe and will contribute to raising awareness for a new expectation of what constitutes a European teacher, i.e. a teacher working within a European context of professionalism. This might help in creating a “European space” in teacher education activities, where ENTEPE sees potential for professional development. The title question has been used to make this endeavour more explicit and is not intended to create a “standardised teacher model”. If there is unity in diversity through national identities, the question remains, what makes a teacher “European”?

---

<sup>1</sup> For further information see: <http://www.pa-feldkirch.ac.at/entep/>

The discussion paper first looks at general teacher competences required to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The second part presents findings from a study into future demands on teacher competences by the Expert Group A on Teacher Education in the *Education and Training 2010* process. The third part summarises elements which the members of ENTEP have collected in view of what constitutes a “European Teacher”.

## **1. Teacher competences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (*a research perspective*)**

---

The data submitted by national representatives of ENTEP for this paper indicate some tension between what constitutes a “good” teacher in general<sup>2</sup>, with skills appropriate to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and a “European teacher”. The general view is that a European teacher must have the same basic skills as any good teacher. Firstly, he or she should have a profound knowledge of his/her subject area and have the skills to teach the students<sup>3</sup> successfully. The following skills could be expected (according to Perrenoud, 1999<sup>4</sup>):

- organizing student learning opportunities;
- managing student learning progression;
- dealing with student heterogeneity;
- developing student commitment to working and learning;
- working in teams;
- participating in school curriculum and organization development;
- promoting parent and community commitment to school;
- using new technologies in their daily practice;
- tackling professional duties and ethical dilemmas;
- managing their own professional development.

Since a teacher’s knowledge and skills depend on his/her continuous learning and development, he/she should deal with current research and be aware of general social changes.

## **2. Changing dimensions of the role of teachers and trainers (*EU experts’ perspective*)**

---

Members of the Expert Group of Teacher Education concerning the EU Objectives 1.1 2010 cited the following changes in competences formally required of teachers (and trainers) in their countries in recent years. These changes were introduced in response to issues of student intake, teaching environment, and contextual factors including general social trends and developments in the labour market. Members were also invited to identify what further changes were likely to be required in the coming years in response to these issues. The following items were summarized in a synthesis report<sup>5</sup>.

### **Impact of social changes**

<i>Promoting new learning outcomes</i>
--

---

<sup>2</sup> Quality criteria cited refer either to research-based findings or to collections of challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (such as Expert Group A in Teacher Education for the EU Objectives 2010).

<sup>3</sup> In this paper pupils and students are used interchangeably.

<sup>4</sup> Perrenoud, Ph. (1999). *Dix nouvelles compétences pour enseigner*. Invitation au voyage. Paris: ESF.

<sup>5</sup> See Synthesis report of the first homework of the Expert Group on Objective 1.1: Improving the education of teachers and trainers (WG1.1/02/002).

- Contributing to citizenship education of students/trainees  
*Such as*
  - Living in a multicultural, inclusive and tolerant society;
  - Living according to sustainable lifestyles regarding environmental issues;
  - Dealing with gender equity issues in family, work and social life;
  - Living as European citizen;
  - Managing his/her own career development;
  - Etc.
  
- Promoting the development of competences of students/trainees for the knowledge and lifelong learning society  
*Such as*
  - Motivation to learn beyond compulsory education;
  - Learn how to learn/learning in an independent way;
  - Information processing;
  - Digital literacy;
  - Creativity and innovation;
  - Problem-solving;
  - Entrepreneurship;
  - Communication;
  - Visual culture;
  - Etc.
  
- Linking the development of new curriculum competencies with school subjects

### **Diversity of student intake and changes in the teaching environment**

#### *Working in restructured ways in the classroom*

- Dealing with social, cultural and ethnic diversity of students
- Organising learning environments and facilitating learning processes
- Working in teams with teachers and other professionals involved in the learning process of the same students

#### *Working "beyond the classroom": in the school/ training centre and with social partners*

- Working in school curriculum, organisational development and evaluation
- Collaborating with parents and other social partners

#### *Integrating ICT in formal learning situations and in all professional practice*

### **Increasing levels of teaching professionalisation**

#### *Acting as professionals*

- Acting in an investigative or problem-solving way
- Assuming greater responsibility for their own professional development in a lifelong learning perspective

This – by no means complete - list points to more or less general (new) competences required by any (future) teacher – with the exception of particular reference to European citizenship. These can therefore be seen as a basis for the discussion of general competences for future European teachers.

### 3. “Europeanness”

---

Teachers in the European Union do not only educate future citizens of their particular member country, but also support them in becoming future generations of European citizens. They work within a national framework, which emphasises the need for a national identity as a basis for transnational awareness within a European society. The term “European Dimension” has been used to balance national and transnational values in educational policy making.

This discussion paper goes further by looking closer at what constitutes the ‘Europeanness’ in the teaching profession. From this perspective the European dimension is made up of many different facets deeply rooted in the socio-political and cultural context of a growing European community. From a policy point-of-view this overview does not aim at creating the format of a ‘European super teacher’, but intends to point to European issues which are potentially of particular significance in future discussions.

a) *European identity*: A European Teacher has certain values which show that he or she is not just a national teacher but one who teaches “beyond” the national curriculum. He/she would see himself/herself as someone with roots in one particular country, but at the same time belonging to a greater European whole. This co-existence of national identity and transnational awareness provides a valuable perspective on questions of heterogeneity. Diversity within unity is therefore a key aspect of a developed European identity with an open mind toward the world at large.

b) *European knowledge*: A European Teacher has some knowledge of other European education systems and, possibly, of educational policy matters on the EU level. He/she values his/her own education system and views it in relation to other European ones. He/she has a knowledge of European and world affairs. A European teacher is aware of European history (histories) and its (their) influence on contemporary European society.

c) *European multiculturalism*: A European Teacher engages with the multicultural nature of European society. He/she has a positive relationship with his/her own culture and is open towards other cultures. He/she knows how to behave in other cultures in a confident and non-dominant way. He/she works with heterogeneous groups, sees heterogeneity as valuable and respects any differences. He/she copes with the challenges of the multicultural aspects of the knowledge society, and works to promote equal opportunities.

d) *European language competence*: A European Teacher speaks more than one European language with differing levels of competence. He/she experiences other languages in initial and further teacher education and is able to teach subjects in languages other than his/her first language. He/she spends some time in a country with a language different from his/her first language, and also communicates in a number of languages with colleagues and people from abroad.

e) *European professionalism*: A European Teacher has an education which enables him/her to teach in any European country. He/she has a “European” approach to subject areas in his/her teaching and links up cross-curricular themes from a European perspective. He/she exchanges curricular content and methodologies with colleagues from other European countries. He/she pays attention to and learns from different teaching and learning traditions. He/she uses examples of research from other countries to understand and explain professional issues and

teaches accordingly. Teacher education is now working towards a new professionalism with a European perspective (e.g. it does not restrict teaching practice to national boundaries). Many teaching subjects already build on the rich history of a European tradition, and this can be usefully exploited. Joint programmes and degrees offered by educational institutions in European countries can enhance the development of European professionalism, as can many of the opportunities offered by modern technology.

f) *European citizenship*: A European teacher should act as a “European citizen”. He/she should show solidarity with citizens in other European countries and shares values such as respect for human rights, democracy and freedom. His/her critical teaching should foster autonomous, responsible and active citizens of a Europe of tomorrow. Aspects of the school curriculum may be developed in a teaching area possibly entitled “European Studies”, or ‘Europeanness’ could be integrated across the curriculum.

g) *European quality measures*: If there is something like a European Teacher, there must be some way of comparing the formal features of Europe’s teacher education systems. Suggestions reach from formal assessment of systems to informal exchanges and cross-cultural visits. The Bologna process is an important step towards academic comparability and achieving an overarching qualification framework across Europe. An increase in compatibility between European qualifications and in transparency of graduate achievement is central to the Bologna/Copenhagen processes, and would also remove obstacles from teacher mobility.

#### **4. Mobility as a goal**

---

A European Teacher experiences the benefits of the European Union in part through easy mobility. This mobility encompasses studying abroad and learning languages as well as getting acquainted with other EU countries’ cultures. He/she may seek employment in other countries and use exchange programmes offered by the European Union. This contributes towards the creation of a Europe of different languages and cultures, and nurtures cultural diversity as a vision for living together in the future.

A European Teacher facilitates mobility among his/her students by enabling them to have physical and virtual contact with peers in other European countries. Classroom or school exchanges and EU programmes are means to enrich the process of mutual learning and growing toward a new understanding of European citizenship. This helps prepare for Europe-wide employability and, eventually, workplace mobility.

In the European classroom, modern information and communication technologies (ICT) are more than just technical devices for playing and searching for superficial data. Instead, they offer effective tools for communicating across linguistic and cultural borders, enlightening the staid and predictable classroom routines produced by monocultural approaches. Virtual mobility in finding and disseminating information is seen as a vital prerequisite for physical mobility, and is also very effective in transnational communication.

#### **5. Student competences**

---

Although student competences are included in the extensive list of teachers’ competences in 2, some aspects will be discussed here as they were specifically mentioned in the national representatives’ reports. These submissions indicate that the European Teacher generally

favours competence-oriented teaching styles as a means to achieve his/her aims and objectives. Nevertheless, students should be able to react to different teaching styles and learning traditions.

The diversity and multicultural make-up of schools can help children feel at home with Europe's developing complexity and pluralism. It is part of the teacher's role to prepare students for community life and work. Learning about multicultural values means acquiring an extensive general and artistic culture, learning foreign languages, and developing some knowledge of European and world affairs. A European Teacher encourages students to develop this general culture, along with a critical perspective, so that they may become autonomous, responsible and active citizens.

This culture forms a basis for the acquisition of skills that enable students to move around, live and work in different European cultures. As well as familiarity with different cultures, a European Teacher also needs to be able to analyse complex intercultural issues in order to enhance cross-cultural learning processes.

## **6. Suggestions for policy making and implementations**

An ENTEP discussion paper is only as good as it informs the policy discourse. Therefore this discussion paper is meant to be a starting point for further discussions about future roles of teachers in Europe and will contribute to policy issues on different levels towards a European development of teacher professionalism. The following areas can be regarded as relevant on different levels in the advancement of this issue.

### **a) European level**

- European qualifications framework
- Common European Principles
- Recommendations to member states in teacher education
- European programmes (SOCRATES)

### **b) National**

- Content of teacher education programmes
- Definitions of competences and how they are evaluated
- Evaluations of initial/continuing progressive development (What is evaluated?)
- Accreditations of studies in other European countries
- How to use European programmes bilaterally

### **c) Institutional**

- Institutional policies on European/international cooperation
- How to ensure “ownership” of projects at institutional level
- How to promote mobility programme and ensure credits/recognition
- Joint programmes, masters/doctorates
- Content of programmes