Mobility and the European Dimension in Teacher Education

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1. Introduction

Again and again, the time comes when we have to reflect on the road behind us and to consider our future path. There are several signals and symptoms that indicate we are living in such times: also with regard to teacher education in Europe. A lot has changed within teacher education as well as in its broader societal and political context during the last two or three decades. On one hand, teacher education has responded to the challenge of quality education for all while, on the other, it has extended its traditional social responsibility – the advancement of national education – by becoming involved in the process of Europeanisation (European co-operation in the broadest sense).

When from this perspective we compare teacher education in Europe of the late 1980s and of today, at least four important characteristics can be identified:

- **Teacher education** is no longer an isolated training area but is (and should be considered as) an integral part of higher education and research sectors;
- higher education (and research) systems in 46 European countries are on the way towards a common European Higher Education and Research Area (the Bologna Process as a ‘convergence process’; European Research Area initiative etc.);
- the Europeanisation and internationalisation of teacher education in particular is a much more complex and complicated process than Europeanisation and internationalisation in higher education in general; and
- a consideration of these issues is not an exclusive European affair but should also be seen as important from the global point of view.

After two decades of changes and developments, teacher education in Europe is again being challenged by new developments on a large scale. Is it able to continue to compete? A lot of hard work was done in the 1980s and 1990s in systems and institutions across Europe; yet, it seems that it has produced a kind of tiredness – as if teacher education needs some rest now to enjoy the results it was fighting for in previous years. I fear this could be a terrible mistake. Teacher education has caught the advanced wagons of the ‘academic train’ but could easily remain forgotten at a small, remote rural railway station as the ‘train’ continues along its way very fast and driven by complex processes, e.g. Europeanisation, globalisation, academic competitiveness etc.

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1 The EHEA (European Higher Education Area) is an initiative of the national ministries of education (today 46 countries: a circle much broader than the European Union with its current 27 member countries) with the important involvement of ‘partners’ (e.g. European University Association, the National Unions of Students in Europe etc.) while the ERA (European Research Area) is an initiative of the European Union. The Berlin conference of the Bologna Process (2003) agreed that both initiatives should be linked together; however, in political and administrative terms there is still a certain discrepancy (or at least a difference) between them as there is also a difference between the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Process (i.e., the agenda ‘Education and Training 2010’ as an important part of the Lisbon Process).
In this paper, we will address these new challenges and focus mainly on issues of mobility and the European dimension with regard to teacher education. However, this is impossible without establishing the broader context.

2. Establishing the context: some dichotomies on Europe and education

Modern higher education systems – as well as education systems in general – were established as national systems, i.e., not as ‘universal’ (as in the Middle Ages) or ‘global’ (like perhaps tomorrow’s) systems. In the modern period, the specific troubles people can encounter as they try e.g. to gain recognition of their qualifications in another system have provided ample evidence that the national character of education systems in principle contradicts the ‘universal’ character of human knowledge, understanding and skills. On the other hand, today it seems that it also contradicts the ‘global’ character of the economy. Yet both contradictions are not necessarily based on the same grounds.

These contradictions are being more and more discussed today. As a result of the dominating economic globalisation, the differences of national markets are disappearing; national markets are increasingly levelled to the global market. Parallel to this process and pressed by a globalising labour market, national qualifications are also being levelled on the global scale. On the other hand, in the globalising world of today the concept of universal knowledge is taking on a new meaning and bringing new opportunities (e.g. cultural globalisation).

International co-operation in (higher) education has long traditions; for a long time it was mainly co-operation and a relatively marginal exchange between different systems. It has changed substantially since calls for fewer obstacles and greater mobility (and compatibility) between systems were made somewhere in the 1980s. Yet, obstacles and incompatibilities still exist today.

In this regard, Europe – being divided for centuries but associating in various modes today – could be a particularly interesting case. Since the early 1990s, European national (not only) education systems have encountered new challenges: the European ‘internal internationalisation’ (as the Europeanisation process could be also called) entered various agendas; including in education. Two main political determinants of these developments can be identified: an agreement within the ‘small’ European Union of previous times that ‘[t]he Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging co-operation between member states and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action’ as well as deep political changes in Eastern Europe symbolically represented by the fall of the Berlin Wall. However, it is impossible to present in this text all the details of and repercussions for the broader area of education.

Since 1999, the most distinctive expression of the Europeanisation process in the context of higher education has been established as the Bologna Process: ‘building a common European higher education area until 2010’. It has been a response answer to ‘internal’ (i.e. European) challenges, first of all, a call for the convergence of different and at some points even incompatible national systems but, simultaneously, it has been also a response to global processes (e.g. the issue of competitiveness and attractiveness in higher education on the global scale). Two years remain to the mentioned important deadline; European higher education systems have already achieved a more comparable and compatible level. There is a strong consensus that the Bologna Process has contributed a lot to this goal.

However, there is broad evidence that European ‘coming together’ in (higher) education opens also a number of new dilemmas. Step by step, the Europeanisation of national systems

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2 Maastricht Treaty (1992), Art. 126.
has become a matter of fact (not so much due to traditional bilateral ‘inter-national’ co-
operation but due to genuine European co-operation in education and research, e.g. through
Erasmus, Tempus, research framework programmes, etc.). Despite an obvious progress, it
can’t be foreseen today that at certain points European countries jealously stick with their
traditional national systems. This is particularly true when we analyse teacher education as a
part of higher education and as the key point at which Europe would really need more
compatibility – not only to strengthen mobility but also to strengthen cultural dialogue by
means of education.

As mentioned in the introduction, teacher education is considered here to be part of European
higher education at large. Therefore, to address more detailed questions on teacher education
in the Europe of today it is important to check, at least briefly, at which point the Bologna
Process has arrived to date. What are the main challenges to higher education in Europe
which might also importantly refer to teacher education?

Much has been written about the general aims and features of the Bologna Process and it will
not be repeated here. European countries and their higher education institutions are already
deep in the ‘second half of the game’; EHEA as well as the ERA have now been announced to
be established by 2010. It is no secret at all that a lot of questions remain to be answered at
governmental and institutional levels. The Trends 4 Report of 2005 already found that
’some institutions chose to use the opportunity which the Bologna process presented in a
very proactive manner, trying to optimise the institution’s position with the help of the new
framework for structural changes, while others refrained from reviewing their teaching and
learning processes until it could no longer be avoided’ (Reichert, Tauch, 2005, p. 41).

Both proactive and passive approaches to pan-European dynamics in higher education,
encouraging as well as concerning points can be found running parallel to each other.
Discussions do not only take place at a general level of higher education systems at large but
also at more down-to-earth horizons and in concrete areas (disciplines, professions). This is
also the case in teacher education. The Tuning project, for example, identified ‘an
anomalous situation with regard to Teacher Education within the context of the
implementation of first and second ['Bologna'] cycles of degree awards. [...] Although
students may have accumulated a total of 240-320 ECTS in order to obtain their initial teacher
education qualification, in a number of countries 300+ ECTS accumulated in this way does
not result in a second cycle award’ (Gonzales, Wagenaar, 2005, p. 77). On the other side, it
has also been noted that ‘whilst European teachers work within a European context, we still
know very little about their ‘Europeanness’ (Schratz, 2005, p. 1).

The question ‘What is a European Teacher’, as Michael Schratz noted in his discussion paper
for the ENTEP, ‘is not intended to create a “standardised teacher model”’. This position is

3 See the official Bologna website: http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/.
4 There has been constant monitoring of the Bologna Process since 1999; the so-called ‘Trends’ reports
(provided by the European University Association) are among most important sources to analyse and comment
on its developments and achievements.
5 The Tuning project (launched in 2001) is described as ‘the universities’ contribution to the Bologna Process’;
over 100 representatives of European universities joined together to develop new approaches to teaching and
learning in a number of disciplines and/or study areas (including education and teacher education) and to bring
into ‘tune’ previously incompatible study paths from various institutions. Tuning has also produced echoes
outside Europe, e.g. in Latin America. – See http://www.relint.deusto.es/TUNINGProject/index.htm.
6 The final Tuning findings will soon be available as the project is ending in 2008; check the Tuning web site for
news.
7 ENTEP: European Network on Teacher Education Policies; an initiative of Ministries of Education from EU
not limited to teacher education only but is an underlying principle of the Bologna Process as well as of any other ‘Europeisation agenda’ today. Diversity is often stressed in today’s discussions as ‘the European richness’; a real matter of concern is the incompatibility of systems and systemic obstacles which hinder the mutual enjoyment of this ‘richness’. Both the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Process deny that any progress towards a common European Higher Education Area would be possible if trans-national (legal) harmonisation is taken as the starting point and in a top-down approach. This would be simply politically incorrect within the European reality of today. On the contrary, it is usually stressed that ‘Bologna’ is a voluntary action of European countries and institutions and that the European dimension should not be an argument in favour of hard standardisation and/or implementation of ‘a single European model’; neither in the case of education systems generally nor of teacher education in particular. Instead, the Lisbon Process promoted the ‘Open Method of Co-ordination’ (OMS) and mutual learning from best practices which is very important within the Education and Training 2010. Therefore, Europeanisation processes and the Bologna Process in particular do not aim to transferring existing (legal) responsibilities for education to a trans-national body. National responsibility for education is a characteristic feature of all countries and will remain so at least for a reasonable period of time. The political reality in Europe (in the EU-27 and even more in the EU-46) depends on independent country states. Within the EU, a clear consensus has been reached that ‘[t]he Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging co-operation between Member States’ (as already quoted above) while ‘fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organization of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity’ and ‘excluding any harmonization of the laws and regulations of the Member States’. However, the issue is not so easy. It is true that there is no trans-national legal harmonisation ‘from above’ – but there is an obvious ‘bottom-up’ process of the voluntary harmonisation of systems. It seems absolutely necessary with regard to the highly consensual contemporary political goals, at least within the EU: ‘In the new Europe of the knowledge society, citizens should be able to learn and work together throughout Europe, and make full use of their qualifications wherever they are’ (Council…, 2002, p. 42). Yet, the process of strengthening the convergence and compatibility of national higher education systems is gradually shifting certain responsibilities – willingly or not – to a trans-national (European) level.

Let us consider an example. At the Bergen meeting (2005) a proposal was presented that ‘a European register of quality assurance agencies will be produced’ and a ‘European Register Committee’ would be established to act ‘as a gatekeeper for the inclusion of agencies in the register’ (ENQA, 2005, p. 5). The European Commission, on the other hand, proposed that higher education institutions ‘should be given the freedom to choose an agency which meets their needs, provided that this agency figures in the Register’ (Commission…, 2004, point D). There have also been discussions on ‘the EHEA beyond 2010’ that have led to a question that is not merely rhetorical: ‘Can the European Higher Education Area be established as a

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9 The Maastricht Treaty (1992), Art. 126. – Up to this point, politically reached as far back as in 1991-1992, no essential changes have occurred to date. While reading the highly disputed Draft European Constitution of 2003-2004, the Maastricht wording could be found with almost no changes; e.g.: ‘The Union shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action. It shall fully respect the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity’. Etc. – See Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, 2003, Art. III-182).
sustainable structure without a formal/formally binding commitment from participating countries?\textsuperscript{10}

Together with a number of important issues, the last Bologna ministerial meeting (London, May 2007) politically confirmed the idea of the Register: ‘We welcome the establishment of a register by the E4 group, working in partnership, based on their proposed operational model’. On the other side, it also recognised the importance of a discussion on the EHEA after 2010 and announced further, perhaps even more ambitious steps: ‘We will take 2010 as an opportunity to reformulate the vision that motivated us in setting the Bologna Process in motion in 1999 and to make the case for an EHEA underpinned by values and visions that go beyond issues of structures and tools. We undertake to make 2010 an opportunity to reset our higher education systems on a course that looks beyond the immediate issues and makes them fit to take up the challenges that will determine our future’ (London Communiqué, 2007).

There is no doubt that national authorities are still the most responsible actors in implementing the commonly agreed principles of the EHEA and the ERA, but it seems that their exclusive authority with regard to the governance of higher education systems has been relativised. Not only that a trans-national level has been established but universities and other higher education institutions as well as student organisations have achieved an important role in implementing the Bologna objectives.\textsuperscript{11} Gradual implementation of the commonly agreed guidelines and principles is coming to a point where the voice of higher education institutions – and also the voice of disciplines (study areas) – could be a decisive factor for the success of the whole enterprise. Some disciplines and/or study areas are already deeply involved in taking as good position as possible in a further run\textsuperscript{12} – and teacher education should position itself within this process as well.

As decisions made at the macro-level are important and far reaching, it remains true that the new higher education reality will depend primarily on institutions. There are cases of good practice at the institutional – as well as the inter-institutional – level; a number of European development projects are running in support of curricular renewal and the organisation of studies but also in favour of the Europeanisation and internationalisation of higher education institutions and their provision.

Two key questions emerge against this background: (1) how far has the Bologna Process advanced; and (2) how much is the specific area of teacher education involved in these processes, in particular with regard to mobility and the European dimension? Both questions will be discussed below.

3. The emerging EHEA: developments and open issues

The early years of the Bologna Process were predominantly a period of developing principles. Since the Berlin Conference (2003), there has been a fast change of focus towards the implementation of principles; yet, this shift has also raised a question of interpretation. There

\textsuperscript{10} Quoted from a ‘Bologna’ internal document of 27 April 2005 (in the author’s archive).

\textsuperscript{11} ‘We [Ministers] underline the central role of higher education institutions, their staff and students as partners in the Bologna Process. Their role in the implementation of the Process becomes all the more important now that the necessary legislative reforms are largely in place, and we encourage them to continue and intensify their efforts to establish the EHEA’ (Bergen Communiqué, 2005).

\textsuperscript{12} On one hand, there is a case of the so-called ‘regulated professions’ (at European level; e.g. medical doctors, nurses, architects etc.) while, on the other hand, there are non-governmental associations (agencies, organisations) like e.g. Euroing. Teacher education is a nationally regulated profession and there have been no European/trans-national associations in this area so far (ENTEP is not more than a consultation forum on behalf of ministries, not higher education institutions).
is growing evidence that steps taken at national levels have not always been parallel and simultaneous or at least understood in the same way. The *Trends 4 Report* made an interesting observation about conflicting interpretations:

‘Creating a system of easily readable and comparable degrees is a central – and for many even the essential – objective of the Bologna process. Since 1999, however, the experience of introducing two or three cycles to Europe’s national higher education systems has demonstrated that there is […] ample room for different and at times conflicting interpretations regarding the duration and orientation of programmes. Especially the employability of 3 year Bachelor graduates continues to be an issue in many countries. […] There are various modes and speeds of introducing the new systems’ (Reichert, Tauch, 2005, p. 11).

We will come back to this issue later; there is another point in *Trends 4* which attracts our immediate interest. Namely, there was another observation regarding disciplinary and/or study area differences when it comes to implementing the Bologna principles:

‘Numerous institutions confirmed that the speed of (and motivation for) reforms is perceived very differently across some disciplines and faculties. In some universities the Humanities disciplines seem to have the least problems offering first- and second-cycle degrees; in others they find it almost impossible to do something meaningful at Bachelor level. The same is true for the regulated professions where professional bodies play a significant role in helping or hindering the introduction of the new degree structures’ (Reichert, Tauch, 2005, p. 12).

In this context, *Trends 4* also referred to teacher education and addressed an important issue:

‘Overall, however, the situation is remarkably different from two or three years ago, when not only medicine, but also teacher training, engineering, architecture, law, theology, fine arts, psychology and some other disciplines were excluded from the two-cycle system in many countries. Today, if at all, this restriction seems to apply only to medicine (and related fields) in most countries. […] Teacher training and certain other disciplines still pose problems, in some national contexts more than others, and here national systems are experimenting with a variety of solutions’ (Reichert, Tauch, 2005, p. 12).

The transition from agreed general principles to ‘devil details’ is always difficult and this has also been demonstrated within the Bologna Process. All disciplines, study areas and professional profiles are today confronted with pressures of ‘urgent and immediate’ implementation, yet each finds itself in a different position. So far, one of the spiciest questions for the majority of institutions (in many but not all European countries; at least not at the same level of intensity) has been the composition of study programmes in the new ‘Bologna’ first and second cycles. The issue becomes tense when it is observed in relation to (national) traditions of academic professions and to the new Bologna principles of the flexibility of learning paths and employability of graduates.

Along these lines, *Trends 4* could only re-establish that ‘[d]iscussions on both the duration and the purpose of programmes at Bachelor level continue. The misconception that the Bologna process “prescribes” in any way the 3+2 year structure is still widespread. 3+2 is indeed the dominant model across the European Higher Education Area, even in countries where HEIs have the choice between three and four years for the Bachelor level […]’. In many universities professors and, to a lesser degree, deans and sometimes the institutional leadership, still express profound doubts regarding the possibility to offer a degree after only three years that is both academically valid and relevant to the labour market: “Employability” to these critics often seems to be synonymous to a lowering of academic standards.
Reservations about the validity of three-year Bachelors are particularly strong in engineering, the physical sciences and fine arts’ (Reichert, Tauch, 2005, p. 13).

Trends 4 did not include teacher education in this group. However, employability with a Bachelor degree in teacher education is a very hot issue in many countries as will be commented on later. Yet, uneasiness in relation to the (re-)composition of the new two-cycle study programmes and to employability is not only an institutional issue. Difficulties in reforming old curricula and transforming them into the new – ‘Bologna’ ones – depend very much on system incentives and/or system obstacles. Trends 4 also stated that a ‘very important impediment for a better acceptance of the Bachelor degrees is the failure of many governments to set a clear example of the value of Bachelor graduates with regard to public service employment, through adjusting civil service grades, and demonstrating positively the career and salary prospects of Bachelor graduates’ (Reichert, Tauch, 2005, p. 14).

The last Trends Report – Trends 5 – even sharpened its critical remarks with regard to implementation of the three-cycle structure. On one hand, it mentioned ‘difficulties in institutional relationships with national authorities’ and a ‘lack of financial support to reform’ (Crossier, Purser, Smidt, 2007, p. 20). However, there are also problems within the academic community: in some institutions ‘the shift to a three-cycle system seems to have taken place largely in isolation from a debate on the reasons for doing it. It was noteworthy that where negative views on implementation were expressed, these were almost always made by people who made no connection between structural reform and the development of student-centred learning as a new paradigm for higher education, and who did not perceive any strong necessity for the institution to re-think its role in society. Conversely, where attitudes were positive, they were nearly always connected to the view that reforms were enabling a better-suited, more flexible educational offer to be made by institutions to students’ (Ibid, p. 21).

The reform of structures seems to be taking place in many cases in advance of the reform of substance and content, Trends 5 concluded at this point. This is what should be in particular seriously considered from the point of view of the educational sciences – often linked with teacher education – at universities. ‘While diversity in thinking and culture is a great strength of European higher education, diversity in understanding and implementation of structures is likely to prove an obstacle to an effective European Higher Education Area. It seems as difficult in 2007 as in 1999 to find evidence that the “European dimension” of higher education is becoming a tangible aspect of institutional reality. While the process may seem to be providing the same structural conditions for all, closer inspection reveals that some “little differences” may confuse the picture’ (Ibid, p. 23).

The Trends Reports have, of course, a general focus: the issue is European higher education at large. Many findings can also be easily applied to individual disciplines and/or study areas but, from our point of view, it is now important to sharpen this focus with regard to particular issues of teacher education.

4. The position of teacher education within the ongoing higher education reforms

We will now analyse the position of teacher education in relation to the Bologna Process and the emerging EHEA in a relatively simple way: sharpening the focus on some key ‘Bologna’ categories, starting with the European dimension, continuing with employability and structural issues and concluding with mobility. Before doing so, we should again ask a few relatively general questions.

First of all: when we say teacher education – what do we actually mean? We know that teacher education is an old profession but a relatively young study field at universities; its university roots usually do not extend further back than the 1980s. Previously – and in some
rare cases still today – teacher education was organised outside universities. Usually, nobody stressed teacher education but teacher training. Since the 1980s, arguments in favour of teacher education at universities or at least in other higher education institutions (yet, not excluding professional training) have multiplied, although today the term ‘training’ can still often be found instead of ‘education’ and not parallel to it. Is this terminological dispute at all important?

Yes, it is. If the teaching profession needs only ‘some training’ – even if it is higher training – there would be no need for a recognised study field. It would suffice if higher education were to take place in a subject discipline – e.g. mathematics, language, arts etc. – and then some additional teacher training should be added on top. This ‘cream on the coffee’ could also be added outside higher education, e.g. in special inset courses organised e.g. by ministries of education. If this were the case, the teaching matter and education could not be an ‘independent object’ of higher education and research and there would be no need to enable teachers to continue their studies – i.e. teacher education studies – in the second and third cycles (Masters and PhD). They could only transfer from their initial education: either to a ‘pure’ subject discipline or to ‘pure’ education as such (‘pedagogy’ as in many continental countries in Europe).

There have been criticisms of such an understanding of teacher education since the 1980s. From today’s point of view, the picture is relatively positive; it seems that teacher education has been accepted as a university study area even amongst the broad public outside of the strict circles of teachers of teachers. There have been ups and downs so far and several questions remain open and still cause confusion. Nevertheless, teacher education has undergone substantial reforms; it has entered the new millennium a little ‘tired’ – but ‘upgraded’. Unfortunately, there is no time to rest; new reforms have been launched.

It can be stated that the Bologna Process bring a new but serious challenge to teacher education at the present stage. Is there enough strength within teacher education to proceed with the pace of development known from previous years? Are the concepts and ideas for further progress elaborated and clear? Which weaknesses could endanger the already achieved developmental level?

4.1. The European dimension

Around the world we have been witnessing deep and turbulent changes in education during the last 25 years. As basic education already became a standard for the whole population in the first half of the 20th century, upper-secondary education had become such a standard by the end of the 20th century. On the other hand, the growing internationalisation of higher education has had much in common with globalising economies. Despite clear international trends and some degree of international ‘standardisation’, as already discussed above, changes in education systems are still predominantly nationally-based. Even in the most ‘internationalised’ countries and globalised economies, school curricula remain nationally-based. The weight of the national context and the national culture seem to be the determinant with a specific ‘excess’ (‘surplus’) with regard to internationalisation and globalisation processes. During the Europeanisation processes, a lot has been said in favour of strengthening the European dimension; however, in public this term often sounds like mere words and not like a true value which politics is really concerned about. It is often put in the forefront that strengthening the European dimension could importantly contribute to ‘soft’

aims (if the economy is a ‘hard’ one), such as e.g. intercultural dialogue, social inclusiveness etc. A lot of work for teachers as well as for the teachers of teachers!

Not only education systems in general but particular systems of teacher education can be clear indicators of the ongoing ‘national reservations’. Traditionally, ‘national’ teacher training colleges were – to a certain degree – more similar to police and military academies than ‘universal’ universities: teacher education and training was perceived as almost part of the ‘national sovereignty’. With the changes of recent decades, this feature seems to be sinking into history but teacher education is encountering ever new challenges within the rough sea of modern education reforms. A teacher is still predominantly perceived as a teacher within the national context (e.g. language of instruction, culture, traditions, history, identity, citizenship etc.), yet there is also an increasing need to position her/himself within the European context (e.g. mobility, languages, histories, multiculturalism, multiple identities and citizenship). This is not a specific feature of European education; all of this can also be applied to the global context. This challenge is sometimes understood as a dilemma and hinders faster development in the internationalisation of teacher education and teacher profession. Finally, teacher education is not a very common area in European ‘flagship’ projects; e.g. within Erasmus-Mundus it is practically a non-existent area etc.

With regard to the fast internationalisation of academic fields and professions (e.g. medicine, law, science, engineering, business and management etc.) teacher education (could) lag behind if more ambitious goals are not established.

### 4.2. Employability: discipline vs. profession

Employability is a relatively new concern for curriculum designers pressed by the Bologna reforms. It has frequently been stressed in fundamental policy documents, e.g.: the EHEA should be ‘a key way to promote the citizens’ mobility and employability and the Continent’s overall development’ (Bologna Declaration, 1999); measures should be taken ‘so that students may achieve their full potential for European identity, citizenship and employability’ (Berlin Communiqué, 2003) etc. But when we try to translate general strategic guidelines into a specific field concrete troubles always re-emerge.

On one hand, unclear definitions of teacher education disciplinary and/or professional fields bring about a conceptual problem: what are the ‘epistemological grounds’ of teacher education? We have already touched on this issue. Is teacher education integrated into (subjected to) respective ‘subject disciplines’? If yes, there is no special teacher education disciplinary field; on the contrary, there are only fragmented disciplinary subject fields (language, mathematics etc.). Students get their higher education in a subject disciplinary field and – after that – some specific training, e.g. how to hold a piece of chalk and keep kids obedient. If no: does teacher education belong to ‘pedagogy’ (in continental traditions) as a ‘subject-free’ area? This option seems not much better than the previous one. Unfortunately, both have influenced discussions on teacher education in many European countries. The opposition between ‘subject discipline’ and ‘pedagogy’ is a kind of a ‘necklace of tradition’ which teacher education today has to remove off. This is one of the preconditions to approach the issue of employability and to make teaching a true profession.

Since its affiliation with university life, teacher education has been a prisoner of a conflict between a ‘subject’ and ‘pedagogy’; a ‘Conflict of Faculties’ if we paraphrase Immanuel Kant’s famous essay. However, there is rich evidence that this kind of opposition necessarily belongs to the past because ‘scholars and scientists of one discipline can readily cross-fertilize colleagues in other. [... P]roblems increasingly transcend the competence of single disciplines or departments’ (Hirsch, 2002, p. 2). This is not only the case in highly reputed fields such as
medicine; it could also be applied in the case of teacher education. The strategic question is not ‘who will take over premises and students of teacher education’ (i.e. money) as it often is in university disputes, but rather the question of how to build studies and research in an interdisciplinary way.14 This plea goes alongside some central ‘Bologna’ ideas on the flexibility and interdisciplinary character of academic study today.

Yet, the problem – at least in some national contexts – could be even more difficult. Not only do the ‘epistemological grounds’ of teacher education (discipline) still have to be built, but teacher profession in the strict sense has to be established and clearly recognised. On one hand, there is a generic comprehension of ‘a teacher’ in all languages: a skilled and qualified person who works with kids and students at a school. But when we say ‘a teacher in the first grade of primary school’, do we mean the same qualified person as in the case of ‘a teacher in a gymnasium’? As a rule, this has not been the case so far. There are many different ‘categories’ of teachers and this hinders the clear identification of the teachers’ profession. In medicine, a similar differentiation can be found between doctors and nurses, but not amongst doctors themselves.

Further, there are important formal differences among teachers in existing national systems: in salaries, responsibilities, social status and recognition and, last but not least, their degrees and types of teacher education institutions. Teachers’ prestige usually depends on the position they take on the educational ladder; lower levels of education and VET ‘don’t count’ much. A popular understanding – even within academia – is that ‘a teacher for small kids’ deserves less education and training (and a lower status) than ‘a teacher for more adult kids’. (In comparison to medicine, this is again a fundamentally different approach: a gerontologist and a paediatrician are not treated in an opposite way.) Teachers in European countries are almost as a rule a nationally regulated profession; it seems to be easier if national (or regional) regulations simply absorb the prejudices of ‘popular culture’ than to make new provisions, try to upgrade the teaching profession at all levels of the educational ladder and contribute to a homogenous teaching profession.

Higher education institutions (in particular teacher education institutions) can contribute a lot towards achieving the latter option. Further reforms of teacher education should address this issue. Within this perspective, the hottest topic seems to be the structure of teacher education curricula and the division of teacher education into the first, second and third Bologna cycles.

4.3. Structural dimension of the Bologna Process and teacher education

In the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area adopted by European Ministers in Bergen (2005) it is stated that first-cycle qualifications ‘may typically include 180-240 ECTS credits’ while second-cycle qualifications normally carry 90-120 ECTS credits, but ‘the minimum requirement should amount to 60 ECTS credits at second cycle level’ (Bologna Working Group, 2005, pp. 9 and 102). The Framework also made it clear that the issue should not be reduced to the abstract duration of study programmes but the focus should be given to descriptors of learning outcomes, including competencies, credits and workload, profile etc. Despite this warning, the popular ‘Bologna jargon’ used at higher education institutions formulates ‘the principal question’ as an arithmetic dilemma: 3+2 or 4+1?

14 ‘Therefore, researchers and students must become competent to engage in interdisciplinary undertakings if they are to meet societal and scientific challenges. […] In short, as challenges facing society become increasingly complex, multidimensional, and multi-faced, education must stimulate horizontal, thematic thinking and exploration. Emphasis on interdisciplinary curricula and research is thus in order’ (Hirsch, 2002, pp. 2-3).
This is a really simplified approach; an excuse could be that ‘Bologna’ brought headaches for many who are considering how to organise a two-cycle system in terms of study years and in relation to academic traditions. As have we already seen, the Trends Reports addressed this issue. Trends 4 pointed out that the ‘misconception that the Bologna process “prescribes” in any way the 3+2 year structure is still widespread’ (Reichert, Tauch, 2005, p. 13), while Trends 5 was concerned that ‘the process has sometimes been implemented rather superficially. Rather than thinking in terms of new educational paradigms and reconsidering curricula on the basis of learning outcomes, the first reflex has been to make a cut in the old long cycle and thus immediately create two cycles where previously one existed’ (Crossier, Purser, Smidt, 2007, p. 24). So how do institutions decide about this problem in practice?

At the Centre for Education Policy Studies (CEPS; Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana) two similar surveys were performed in 2003 and 2006: a survey on trends in learning structures at teacher education institutions in 33 Bologna countries (Zgaga, 2003) and a survey on the prospects of teacher education in 12 Bologna countries of Central and South-east Europe (Zgaga, 2006). An interesting picture was constructed on the basis of responses to the question what model of a two-cycle degree structure do individual institutions plan for the future? It is true that the samples in both surveys are different but some general trends are easily perceived.

The survey painted a relatively surprising picture of trends in organisation of the two-cycle system. According to the 2003 survey, institutions were completely divided into two blocks when the formula 3+2 vs. 4+1 was in question: there were two distinct and totally equal majorities, both close to one-half of the respondents: 42.8% vs. 42.8% (Zgaga, 2003, p. 194). Interestingly, there were also almost equal shares of responses centred around both main options in the 2006 survey: 32.3% of institutions opted in favour of 4-year programmes in the first cycle (Bachelor) followed by 1 year in the second cycle (Master) while 30.6% of institutions opted in favour of 3 years in the first cycle (Bachelor) followed by 2 years in the second cycle (Master). A group representing 17.7% of institutions seems to remain undecided and a group of 14.5% of them plans to provide only the first cycle (Zgaga, 2006, p. 15). It could be concluded that teacher education institutions have certain problems with the new two-cycle structure of study. In the last few years this dilemma has only deepened.

Is this a special problem of teacher education? First, it is not a problem only in teacher education but it appears in some countries also in some other study areas (nevertheless, it seems it is a particularly sharpened problem in teacher education). Second, insofar as it is a special problem in teacher education, it relates to all of its main characteristics; teacher education studies are more complex than most other studies in higher education. Let us check just three elements of this complexity.

The first one can be presented through the interdisciplinary character of teacher education as a university study area. As already argued, teacher education study programmes should combine in the best possible (interdisciplinary) way both ‘subject’ and ‘pedagogy’. The problem is that there is no ‘one subject’, but almost all main disciplinary fields at universities could compete to be recognised as ‘teacher education subjects’. As a result, there are often ‘clashes among faculties’: more cruel and pragmatic than in Kant’s time, and faculties of teacher education as ‘junior fellows’ are often not such aggressive fighters. Academic ‘politics’ and the academic power balance can decisively determine how certain dilemmas – which in normal conditions should be treated as exclusively expert issues, e.g. redesigning curricula – are resolved in practice. On the other hand, this ‘fight’ is taking place under the hot ‘Bologna’ sun. Teacher education faculties are today again under pressure to argue their raison d’être.
Second, initial vs. continuous teacher education is a traditional differentiation within the teacher education concept. With the Bologna two-cycle structure this differentiation is seen under a new light. In most countries, initial teacher education was traditionally understood as undergraduate study and continuous education as in-service training. Now, is second-cycle teacher education initial or continuous education? In practice, the answer largely depends on national regulations. Traditionally, the first diploma was quite enough to obtain a licence to teach. Finland was the first country which decided – before ‘Bologna’ – to upgrade the initial teacher qualification to the second-cycle (Masters) level. Today, some countries are trying to follow it; but in the new circumstances the announced changes run parallel to fears that this will not necessarily contribute to the quality of teachers’ qualifications. On one hand, there is a fear in some countries that qualifications for teaching at pre-school and primary school levels will ‘only’ require first-cycle degree and, in certain cases, the effect could be that study programmes are one year shorter. This introduces a double danger: to decrease existing standards and to (again) split primary and (upper-) secondary school teachers. It is crucial for the future of teacher education systems in Europe which new national regulations governments approve will by 2010.

Third, the parallel vs. consecutive mode is another characteristic feature of teacher education but not a characteristic feature of other higher education study areas. It seems that Bologna has not endangered this specific feature; on the contrary, it gives more opportunities for flexible learning paths (at least on paper) and it therefore could be a ‘Bologna friendly’ element. However, it poses some new questions and dilemmas. For example, a student gets a first-cycle degree (Bachelor) in Chemistry and then she/he would like to obtain a second-cycle (Master) degree in Teacher Education. Obviously, Master in Teacher Education should be based on the second-cycle level descriptors and not be understood as or substituted by teacher training courses (non-degree courses) which have traditionally in many countries compensated for a lack of pedagogic skills with those who graduated in a ‘pure subject’.

There is another question at this point. What should the second cycle of Teacher Education aim at? Should it be about gaining a teaching licence (initial teacher education)? Or should it be about gaining a research degree? If this were true, then a transfer from a ‘pure subject’, e.g. first-cycle Chemistry to second-cycle Teacher Education would be difficult. In some study areas a differentiation between a shorter (60 credit ECTS) ‘executive’ or ‘professional’ degree and a longer (120 credit ECTS) ‘research’ degree is being made. Is the area of teacher education ready for this challenge? Is it adequately supported by university and/or national authorities?

Finally, quality is another key ‘structural’ concept broadly discussed within the Bologna Process, and we could start a long discussion here. Instead, let us just briefly mention that there has been no transnational organisation, association or network in the area of quality assurance in teacher education so far. There are cases of good practice in some national environments (e.g. Campos, 2004) and ENTEP also engaged in quality assurance issues at its September 2006 meeting. Finally, we also received an important document dealing with the quality of teacher education at the European level (Commission…, 2007) and it will be interesting to see how national authorities react to it.

However, in practice teacher education at the European and international level lags behind other fields of study such as medicine, engineering, economics and business etc. It is a strong trend today that specialised trans-national accreditation and/or quality agencies are established to act in the ‘prominent’ individual fields of studies – but this is not the case in teacher education. The energy behind this trend is principally linked to issues of mobility,
internationalisation, competitiveness, excellence and attractiveness in the global higher education arena. It seems that teacher education lacks this energy: it is still treated predominantly as ‘national’ and kept distant from internationalisation. This is a serious obstacle which hinders teacher education in not only improving its academic positioning and enhancing quality but also in playing an active role in international co-operation (in the broadest meaning of the term) and intercultural dialogue.

4.4 European and international mobility

Mobility is the key and central Bologna concept; therefore, it is important to ask how mobile are students in teacher education today and what can we expect and plan for tomorrow. Various statistical sources are available which can help to draw some pictures; however, analysts mainly agree that the methodology and data collection should be substantially improved if we really want clear pictures.

Mobility statistics usually refer to higher education at large; it creates an effect that all cows look black in the dark. To read mobility statistics across European countries from a concrete study area point of view it is important to know, first of all, what is the distribution of students and graduates by a specific area or field of study. As we can reconstruct from the available data, at the beginning of this decade (2000/01) there were on average 8.4% of students in the EU-15 who were studying in the (broader) area of education (see European Communities, 2003, F.8a). With the enlargement process (EU-25 in 2004) this share has only increased: in the new member states, this share is as a rule higher than 10%, e.g. in Latvia 18% and in Slovak Republic 17%, while at the bottom of the list it is 11% in Slovenia and 10% in Estonia. On the other hand, the share of new teachers within the total body of new graduates in the EU-15 was a little higher: 10.0% (it seems that the drop-out rate in teacher education is lower than in higher education generally), while in most new member states it was again much higher. With regard to the starting question, it can be estimated that the average share of students in teacher education in today’s EU-27 is somewhat over 10%.

And what is the share of international and mobile students in the area of teacher education? According to recent OECD indicators (OECD, 2005a, Table C3.5), it is less than the average share of students in general. Within the EU-15, the highest share of foreign students in education is noted in Sweden (7.3%), followed by the Netherlands (5.7%) and Austria (5.3%). Among the new EU-10 countries (2004), the biggest share of foreign students in education is in Hungary (9.6%) and Poland (9.0%). Data also show that the share of foreign and/or mobile students of education and teacher education is proportionally lower than in most other study areas and/or disciplines.

An ACA study on student mobility in European higher education (Kelo, Teichler, Waechter, 2006) gives additional evidence to support such a conclusion. In the EU Socrates-Erasmus Programme (see ibid, p. 166, Table 10.4), there was a share of 3.9% of students from the ‘education + teacher training’ area in 1998/99, which went down to 3.4% in 2002/2003. There are only three study areas – out of a total of 16 areas – where a decrease was noted: languages + philology (a fall from 18.4% to 16.3%); law (a fall from 8.1% to 7.1%) and natural sciences (a fall from 4.4% to 3.9%). The picture is much worse with the Tempus programme: there were only 0.5% of mobile students in the area of ‘education + teacher training’ (ibid, p. 172, 15 There are several methodological difficulties with statistics at this point: the category ‘education’ as a rule comprises teacher education but in some cases other categories are also included. In any case, in absolute figures, students of ‘pure’ teacher education prevail in this group but other students in this group are also important for future building of the ‘teaching profession’.
The position of teacher education in the two main EU mobility programmes – Erasmus and Tuning – is surprisingly weak and decreasing!

To provide some additional checking, results from the Erasmus Student Network Survey of 2005 can also be used – although the results are similar: ‘The most popular major subjects among the respondents were: business studies / management sciences (20%), engineering / technology (19%), languages and philological studies (11 %) and social sciences (8 %)’. Education and teacher education is almost at the end of the scale (2.2%), followed only by agricultural sciences (1.2%) and geography, geology (1.0%)\(^\text{16}\) (Krzaklewskia et al., 2006, p. 10, Figure 5).

A brief concluding comment is needed regarding these extremely revealing statistics: today, in overall European student mobility teacher education is a relatively disregarded field of study. This is a fact and it is not encouraging when we discuss the possible enhancement of the European – and global – dimension in teacher education.

*An increase in mobile and foreign students in teacher education is necessary:* not only to stay closer to other study areas and disciplinary fields but also to promote European and international mobility in education in general and to contribute to the ‘soft’ aims of (higher) education reforms. Teachers who have had an opportunity to experience the advantage of mobility already as students are much better prepared for their work with pupils and students in the context of European and international co-operation and intercultural dialogue; they approach multicultural issues in education easier etc.

5. Conclusion

We arrive now at the final point. Many contemporary teacher education institutions have achieved – or are striving for – an academic critical mass and a position within academic environments. Through their teaching and research, they could and should address not only questions of e.g. teaching, learning and assessment and not only questions of understanding ‘teaching subject(s)’ and/or educational phenomena, acting in schools and educational processes in general etc. Faculties of teacher education have also often played a constructive role in national education reforms as well as in bilateral and multilateral education cooperation. They could and should also play an active role in researching and teaching in this area as well as in designing teacher education policies. Predominantly, it is still regarded today that teacher education policies are an exclusive responsibility of national ministries of education. ENTEP has shown that ministerial representatives can do their work better in close co-operation with representatives of teacher education institutions. This practice should continue and be enhanced. It is also important to strengthen the European and global dimensions in education.

Since the 1980s, teacher education has been ‘upgraded’ (a process of the ‘universityfication’ of teacher education). The turbulent processes in a higher education at large and in the global context are bringing further challenges to teacher education as a specific area within higher education. Today, teacher education may be described:

- as a young ‘academic discipline’ and, therefore;
- as having a relatively lower ‘critical mass’ than traditional academic disciplines;
- as being at a higher level of political (governmental) influence than traditional professions;
- as more vulnerable with regard to ‘national interests’;
- at the beginning of a true internationalisation process; and

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\(^{16}\) Here again, the survey used a different – more detailed in some areas – classification of study areas.
as confronted by the challenge to contribute to the emerging knowledge society. It can often be noticed in today’s political discourses that ‘the role of teachers is crucial’ in national development as well as in international co-operation, intercultural understanding etc. If we take these statements seriously and try to make them a reality, the role of teacher education within higher education and in society at large should be significantly improved, in particular it is important:

- to ‘tune’ educational structures and approaches to teaching and learning at teacher education institutions in order to facilitate and increase the European and broader international mobility of students;
- to strengthen the European and broaden the international mobility of acting school teachers, including as an instrument of their continuous education and training;
- to bolster interdisciplinary research at teacher education institutions which provide teacher education and training;
- to enhance quality in the international context; and
- to enhance the position of teacher education within higher education at large.

In short: teacher education institutions should start seriously considering their active participation in developing European national teacher education policy; for this reason, they should also consider developing in co-operation their own policy with regard to the questions discussed here.

References

Note: the websites referred to in the footnotes were accessed in May and June 2008.


