

# Teacher Education Policy in Europe (TEPE) Conference 2008

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Thursday 21st – Saturday 23rd February 2008

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Introduction

The second TEPE Conference, hosted by the Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana from 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2008, constituted a European forum of around 100 participants from 23 countries representing most European regions in discussions on various aspects of teacher education policy in Europe. These *conclusions and recommendations* aim to synthesise key messages of the Conference.

### Aims of the conference

Three main clusters of questions were addressed around the following themes:

- *Advancing Research in and on Teacher Education*
- *Mobility and the European Dimension in Teacher Education*
- *Evaluation Cultures in Teacher Education*

Over 30 plenary and workshop presentations focused on good practices, strategies and comparative analyses of teacher education in Europe and provided an impressive background for further exchange of views, debates and the search for common positions in workshops. A panel with representatives of various stakeholders including teacher education institutions, students, school teachers, trade unions as well as representatives of the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the European Training Foundation and the European Network on Teacher Education Policies (ENTEP) provided an additional opportunity to address issues from a variety of angles and to build common principles for future action.

### The momentum for teacher education in Europe

“Europeanisation” in (higher) education has reached a point at which key details at the institutional and disciplinary levels have to be resolved for it to move to the next qualitative level. Conference discussions confirmed that today this situation demands sustained dialogue, reflection, exchange and co-operation underpinned by research in the very processes of reform and renewal at European universities. The academic world is able – and willing – to provide policy analysis in order to strengthen a process of decision making both at the institutional level and European level in a further process of “concerting”.

The development of educational policy is a genuine task for universities and higher education institutions that calls for their contribution at this time. This is especially the case in the field of *teacher education*. In the last two to three decades, Teacher Education has become a *large and important segment of higher education* with, on average, about 10% of all students, mainly future teachers, educators and education experts. Recent policy documents at national as well as at European levels increasingly stress the *importance of primary and secondary education in implementing Lifelong Learning and in building and sustaining the Knowledge Society*. Therefore, Teacher Education can and should respond to new challenges: effective Teacher Education Policy should be developed as a transparent “chapter” of a wider Education Policy, both at a national as well as at a European level.

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Teacher education policy must also be viewed from an institutional perspective. Studies in Teacher Education Policy can link several research fields that are inherent to Faculties of Teacher Education (regardless of how they are described and/or organised) giving them an interdisciplinary basis and character and signifying areas to be included in quality assurance in teacher education: for example subject didactics, ICT and learning, curriculum development, assessment and evaluation, quality issues, equality in education, special educational needs, moral philosophy and an ethic of care in education and education for democratic citizenship and the public good. Research in Education and/or Teacher Education Policies is *a precondition for improved governance of institutions and systems* (for example quality enhancement and assurance, comparability and compatibility of qualifications) as well as *for improved teaching and learning* at teacher education institutions (for example the preparation of future teachers, pre-service courses and continuing professional development, graduate programmes, doctoral studies and research programmes).

The Conference participants welcomed the recently published communication from the European Commission (August 2007) on *“Improving the Quality of Teacher Education”* and agreed that it provides new opportunities to synthesise previous discussions and to build a new common approach. Universities and higher education institutions in general should take a central role in this field. During a period when we move steadily closer towards achieving the goal of the *European Higher Education Area* as declared by the Bologna Process, it is most urgent that these issues are (re-)addressed from today’s point of view and on the basis of collegial discussion on questions of common concern in order to identify appropriate solutions.

## Key recommendations

**To all stakeholders: Universities and other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of Teacher Education, Student Unions, Teacher Unions, Teaching Councils, Governments and European Bodies** (in particular the European Commission and the Council of Europe)

### *Improving the Image of Teaching and the Status of the Teaching Profession*

All stakeholders should:

- take action to improve the image of teaching and the status of the teaching profession, including the image and status of teacher education, in all European countries,
- support multidisciplinary platforms for peer learning between policy makers, practitioners and researchers at institutional, national and European Level.

### *Developing Teacher Education Policy*

Teacher Education Institutions should be recognised as partners in the process of policy development based on a strengthening their commitment to this process.

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**To all stakeholders: in particular to Universities and other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of Teacher Education**

### ***Advancing Research in and on Teacher Education***

All stakeholders should:

- support the development of research cultures in teacher education and the strengthening of the research base on teacher education as an inter-disciplinary field of study,
- support the advancement of professionalism in teacher education and the development of cultures of lifelong learning.

### ***Promoting Mobility and the European Dimension in Teacher Education***

All stakeholders should:

- strengthen their commitment to mobility of people and ideas in teacher education through the innovative implementation of established practices in novel contexts,
- support the development of networking for professional development and organisational learning as part of a dynamic process of internationalisation.

### ***Supporting Cultures for Quality Improvement in Teacher Education***

All stakeholders should move away from an emphasis on evaluation mechanisms of accountability and towards approaches based on evaluation for development and organisational learning and the consequent development of **cultures for quality improvement**.

### **To Governments**

Governments should:

- improve the necessary preconditions and provisions for the continued professional development of teachers as a priority,
- introduce professional development programmes for teachers at the induction stage where this does not exist and strengthen these further where they do so exist,
- reconsider the low share of Teacher Education in overall student mobility programmes (e.g. Erasmus, Tempus) and encourage Universities and other HEIs to promote greater student mobility as part of a dynamic process of internationalisation in European education systems in general,
- promote the development of Teacher Education study programmes at all three cycles of Higher Education.

### **To the European Commission**

The European Commission should:

- consider the issues of research in and on Education, including Teacher Education, in EU research programmes,
- reconsider the low share of Teacher Education in overall student mobility programmes.

### **To the European Council and the European Parliament**

The European Council and the European Parliament should:

- adopt the proposal from the European Commission on “Improving the Quality of Teacher Education” without delay.