Chapter 1
Teacher Education in Europe; Main Characteristics and Developments

Marco Snoek and Irēna Žogla

Introduction

Teachers in Europe are educated in a wide variety of institutes and by a wide range of curriculum models. The main aim of teacher education is the same throughout Europe – the education of teachers – but the underlying ideas and the contexts differ, leading to significant differences between teacher education curricula (Eurydice, 2002). Nevertheless, the teacher education institutes in the various European countries face similar challenges, like how to support the development of teacher identity, how to bridge the gap between theory and practice, how to find the balance between subject studies and pedagogical studies, how to contribute to a higher status of teachers and how to prepare teachers for the needs of pupils in the 21st century (European Commission, 2007a). Both the academic discourse and the exchange of examples of good practice show that in most countries, the national debates focus on similar issues (see, e.g., OECD, 2005).

The curriculum designs of European countries differ, as they are based on different national contexts such as different education systems, political choices and underlying mental models, for example, with respect to the expected level of knowledge and skills of teachers. Reflection on these differences can stimulate discussions and help to identify alternatives, find new perspectives and raise awareness of national presuppositions.

It is impossible within the context of this chapter to make a thorough comparison of all systems of teacher education in Europe. Chapter 2 offers a more detailed description of teacher education in the United Kingdom, Israel and the Netherlands. In this chapter, we reflect on some of the issues that define teacher education, and we try to identify choices that are made in different countries and the differences and similarities in structures and approaches that are a result of these choices. To structure our reflections, we use a comparative framework focusing on:

- The system of teacher education
- The content of teacher education

M. Snoek
Amsterdam Institute of Education, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

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- The pedagogy of teacher education
- The role of stakeholders on the macro, meso and micro level

We end the chapter with a reflection on the role and position of teacher education and teacher educators in educational policies. We hope that these reflections will help teacher educators to become more sensitive to and aware of the underlying choices in teacher education in various European countries and will help to develop an open mind to alternative approaches.

Comparative Framework

A comparative framework is needed in order to compare curricula in teacher education. For the comparative framework, we make a distinction between the national system of teacher education (institutes, degrees and qualifications), the 'what' of teacher education – the content of the curriculum in terms of the selection and organisation of knowledge and skills – and the 'how' of teacher education – the pedagogy and teaching methods that are used and the way in which the curriculum is structured (Lundgren, 1983). All these elements can be influenced by powers on the macro, meso and micro level. From a macro perspective, attention is paid to the societal setting in which teacher education takes place. This perspective includes all governmental regulations regarding teacher education, like the number of institutes, the organisation of institutes, degrees, teacher qualifications. The meso perspective refers to the way in which teacher education institutes organise teacher education within their institute. The micro perspective refers to what takes place in the actual classroom and the interaction between teacher educator and student teacher.

As can be seen from the examples in Fig. 1.1, the national government can influence the system of teacher education, the 'what' of teacher education and the 'how' of teacher education. However, in some countries governments restrict themselves to the system and the 'what' of teacher education. They define the outcomes and it is up to the teacher education institutes and teacher educators to design the 'how', the way in which these outcomes can be achieved. Such outcome-based approaches give teacher education institutes and teacher educators freedom and responsibility to make their own decisions with respect to pedagogical approaches; there is no 'state pedagogy'. On the other hand, the increased freedom is often associated with more accountability: governments may use strict methods to evaluate whether the outcomes have been achieved, that is, whether student teachers have acquired the necessary competences. This leads to a dominance of assessment procedures that focus on measurable outcomes (Education Commission of the States, 1995).

Similar issues can be identified at the meso and micro level. The head of the institute or school board can make decisions on the 'what' level and on the 'how' level. These decisions define the professional autonomy of teacher educators on the micro level. The balance between autonomy and control of teacher educators differs

	Main actor	System	What	How	
				Pedagogy	Structure
Macro	National and local governments	For example, decisions on degree level (BA/MA)	For example, decisions on national teacher standards	For example, decisions on compulsory teaching practice	For example, decisions on the amount of teaching practice
Meso	Head or faculty board of university or teacher education institute	For example, division in departments responsible for parts of the curriculum	For example, decisions on criteria for examination	For example, decisions to use a problem-based curriculum approach throughout the curriculum	For example, the number of credits awarded for completing a specific course
Micro	Teacher educator		For example, emphasis on specific skills or competences	For example, design of specific problems, the interaction during the mentoring of teaching practice and the choice of methods	For example, the planning of lessons

Fig. 1.1 Comparative framework with examples

between countries. In the next three sections, we reflect on the system of teacher education, on the 'what' of teacher education and on the 'how' of teacher education.

The System of Teacher Education

Teacher education is part of a country's educational system. It has its own place within the institutional structures and has a strong relation with schools, as it educates their teachers. Therefore, teacher education reflects the characteristics of national education systems. In this section, we focus on the institutional structure of teacher education, on the national degrees and on the national required teaching licenses. Detailed information on teacher education systems in the various countries in Europe can be found in the database of Eurydice, an institutional network for gathering, monitoring, processing and circulating reliable and readily comparable information on education systems and policies throughout Europe. Eurydice maintains Eurybase – the information database on education systems in Europe – and carries out comparative research on education systems in Europe, including teacher education (Eurydice: www.eurydice.org).

Institutional Structure of Teacher Education

In 2007, the European Commission published a communication on the quality of teachers and teacher education. This document provides common European principles with respect to teacher competences and qualifications (European Commission, 2007b). It emphasises that teachers should be highly qualified: they should be graduates from a higher education institute or equivalent, and teacher education programmes should be delivered in all three cycles (Bachelor's, Masters, and doctoral level) of higher education in order to ensure their position in the European higher education area and to increase opportunities for advancement and mobility.

The position of teacher education within higher education is recognised throughout Europe, but the systems for higher education differ and therefore the position of teacher education varies. In many countries, there is just one type of higher education institute, namely universities. In other countries, there are several types of higher education institutes: universities and professional universities, like Högskole in Norway and hogescholen in the Netherlands and Flanders. However, all these institutes are regarded as higher education (third cycle or level 5) by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).

Degrees

Although all teacher education programmes are located within higher education, the levels of the teacher education programmes differ. One way of comparing the level of the programmes is to look at their length. Figure 1.2 provides an overview of the duration of teacher education programmes in a number of countries (OECD, 2005).

As Fig. 1.2 shows, in general teacher education courses for higher levels of education have a longer programme. This is motivated by the specialised subject study that is needed and the more academic role model that a teacher in upper secondary education has to be for his or her pupils. However, it can be questioned whether the complexity of the teaching job and the professional expectations of teachers increase with higher levels of education.

The level of teacher education programmes can also be compared by looking at the academic degree level. As a result of the Bologna agreement, higher education programmes in Europe should lead to qualifications on the bachelor or Master's level. In most countries, teacher education programmes have been adapted to this Bachelor–Master framework. Again, the outcomes of this restructuring differ: in some countries all teacher qualifications are on the Master's level (e.g. in Finland and recently in Portugal), while in other countries some qualifications are on the bachelor level and some on the Master's level. For example, in Flanders and the Netherlands the teacher qualifications for lower secondary education are on the bachelor level and those for upper secondary education are on the master level.

	Primary education	Lower secondary education	Upper secondary education
Austria	3	4	5
Belgium (Flanders)	3	3	4½
Belgium (Wallonia)	3	3	5
Czech Republic	4 ½	5	5
Denmark	4	4	6
England & Wales	4	4	4
France	5	5	5
Germany	5½	5½	6½
Greece	4	4½	4½
Finland	5	5½	5½
Hungary	4	4	5
Iceland	3½	3½	4
Ireland	3	4	4
Israel	4	4	4½
Italy	4	7	7
The Netherlands	4	4	5
Norway	4	4	6
Portugal	4	5½	5½
Scotland	4	4	4
Slovak Rep.	4	5	5
Spain	3	6	6
Switzerland	3½	4½	6
Turkey	4	–	4½

Fig. 1.2 Number of years of post-secondary education required to become a teacher; situation in 2001 (OECD, 2005)

In some countries, it is possible to enrol for in-service postgraduate courses leading to Master degrees. The introduction of the Bachelor–Master structure has created new career opportunities for teachers. In many cases, these Master courses focus on leadership or special education. However, new courses are being developed that focus on the professional development of teachers with respect to their core quality: the teaching of pupils and students.

It is the ambition of the EU that teacher education programmes should also offer courses on the doctorate level; however, there is still a long way to go. Until now, only a few teachers decide to do a PhD study.

Teaching Licenses

In most countries in Europe, a Bachelor's or Master's degree is not enough to qualify as a teacher. Additional to a higher education degree teachers need a teaching license. The licenses are related to the level of the educational system: those who want to teach in primary education need a different license than those teaching in secondary education. In the Netherlands, teachers need to have a primary education teaching license to teach in primary schools and a so-called second degree teaching license to teach at lower secondary education and vocational education level. To teach in upper secondary education, Dutch teachers need a first degree teaching license. These licenses are restricted to the level of teaching: to change from one level of education, for example from primary to secondary level, teachers need to complete an extensive in-service course. In other countries, teaching licenses overlap. Countries with overlapping licenses create more flexibility for teachers to teach in different levels of education.

There are also differences concerning the number of subjects that are offered in teacher education institutes. Teacher education for primary education prepares teachers who can (and have to) teach all primary school subjects, while teacher education for lower and upper secondary education educates teachers as specialist teachers, who teach one or two, and in some countries, three subjects. Again, these system characteristics will influence the flexibility for teachers and schools. For example, in the Netherlands and Latvia, schools have more autonomy to structure their curriculum. Some schools want to increase the coherence of their curriculum by creating integrated subject areas, such as science or social studies. However, the opportunities to create such subject areas are restricted, as by law teachers are trained and licensed to teach only one subject.

In most countries, teacher education leads to a Bachelor's or Master's degree and a teaching license. The curricula in teacher education have to meet two types of standards: the Dublin descriptors for Bachelor or Master studies and the national requirements for teachers, in terms of teacher standards or teacher competences. In many countries, the degree, teacher qualification and teacher license are issued by the same institute: the institute of higher education that runs the teacher education programmes. However, in some countries, the roles are separated. For example, in Scotland a teaching license is not granted by the higher education institute but by a separate body: the General Teaching Council. Entry to the profession is not regulated by higher education institutes, but by representatives of the profession itself through the General Teaching Council.

In all European counties, the characteristics of teacher education are defined on the macro level, but in some countries other bodies (like Scotland's General Teaching Council) are involved leading to interesting differences between European countries. These differences can be the source of debates about who is responsible for the quality of the teaching profession: is it the responsibility of the government (who is responsible for the quality of education in a country), the teacher educators (who are experts on the education of teachers), the school leaders (who are responsible for the quality of the teaching staff within their school) or the members of the profession

itself (who as members of a professional community take the responsibility for the professional quality of their profession)? The outcome of such debates in a specific country depends on a variety of variables, for example, the perception of the government with respect to its role, the level of autonomy for schools and institutes or the level of professional trust that is given to teachers or teacher educators.

The 'What' of Teacher Education

Decisions on the degree level do not determine what competences, skills and knowledge a teacher is expected to acquire. Therefore, the 'what' of teacher education needs to be defined. Decisions on the content of teacher education curricula are made on all three levels (macro, meso and micro). Even in situations where the government provides detailed lists of skills or competences, teacher educators still have to make decisions about the specific learning goals of a course. Reflection on the choices made in countries on the content of the teacher education curriculum can help to promote curriculum debates on the meso and micro level, where institutes and teacher educators have to make decisions with respect to what and what not to include in the curriculum.

In this section, we reflect on the content of the curriculum, the balance between the different elements of the curriculum and the stakeholders involved in defining the curriculum content.

Content of the Curriculum

Teacher education's main aim is to provide student teachers with the necessary teacher qualities. In some countries, decisions on these qualities are mainly made on the macro level; that is, the qualities are strictly defined by government regulations: 'government steering by content and outcomes'. In other countries, teacher education institutes on the meso level have more freedom in defining the content of their curricula: 'government steering by goals'. Therefore, a distinction can be made between countries with total autonomy, limited autonomy and no autonomy for institutes with respect to the curriculum of teacher education (Eurydice, 2002).

No autonomy for teacher education institutes. The content and structure of the curriculum are defined on the macro level. Institutes follow very precise regulations issued by the top-level education authority, which specifies compulsory subjects, core curriculum subjects and optional subjects and their precise time allocation. These regulations can be enforced through national exams or strict curriculum guidelines.

Total autonomy for teacher education institutes. The content and the structure of the curriculum are defined on the meso and the micro level. Institutes are entirely free to decide how the programmes they offer are organised in terms of content and/or time.

Limited autonomy for teacher education institutes. The content and/or structure of the curriculum are partly defined on the macro level and partly on the meso and micro level. Official documents, issued by the top-level education authority, provide the basis on which institutes develop their own curricula. These documents specify minimum requirements about compulsory groups of subjects, the amount of general and professional training, examination targets and the minimum standards required by teachers when they have completed their initial education.

When there is limited or total autonomy, teacher education institutes have to make decisions about the content of the curriculum. This freedom gives more opportunities for innovation of the curriculum and leads to a larger diversity in the curricula of teacher education institutes within a country.

Balance Between Elements of the Curriculum

In general, teacher education curricula consist of the following four elements (European Commission, 2007b):

- Extensive subject knowledge
- A good knowledge of pedagogy
- The skills and competences required to guide and support learners
- An understanding of the social and cultural dimension of education

The balance between these elements within the curriculum depends on a variety of issues and is related to the views the different stakeholders have. There are several views on teaching and teacher education, and each view has its specific impact on the curriculum of teacher education and the learning of student teachers.

Views on the educational goals of the school. These views concern the principles that underlie the selection, organisation and methods of the curriculum. Lundgren (1983) distinguishes a number of curriculum codes:

- The classical curriculum code, which is based on the ideal of the educated person. The concept of Bildung fits in this code.
- The rational curriculum code, which is based on the natural sciences where learning take place through experiments and discovery.
- The moral curriculum code, whereby the curriculum is governed by the need to introduce the learners to their responsibilities in society. Reproduction of culture, values and morals has a central place in the curriculum.
- The realistic curriculum code, whereby the content of the curriculum is selected based on its usefulness to the individual and to society. The curriculum is intended to contribute to production and economic growth.

These different curriculum codes lead to different emphases being put on content elements for teacher education, for example:

- When the main aim of education is to introduce pupils to the world of knowledge and the intellectual and cultural heritage of society, the subject knowledge and cultural knowledge of student teachers and their ability to transfer that knowledge are emphasised (the classical curriculum code).
- When the main aim of education is to provide pupils with knowledge and skills that support them to learn by discovery and research student teachers need to learn how to support pupils to become explorers (the rational curriculum code).
- When the main aim of education is to introduce pupils to shared values, the teacher education curriculum focuses on the development of democratic attitudes and on the involvement of pupils (the moral curriculum code).
- When the main aim of education is to provide basic skills for society and skills for future professions, the curriculum within teacher education is designed accordingly (the realistic curriculum code).

Views on the role and professionalism of the teacher. These views have their impact on what elements are seen as most important within the teacher education curriculum. The focus can be on the interaction of the teacher with pupils, on the contribution of the teacher to school development, on the relation of the teacher to the local community, etcetera. Views on the professionalism of the teacher can vary from a limited interpretation of professionalism to an extended professionalism characterised by 'a capacity for autonomous, professional self-development through systematic self-study, through the study of the work of other teachers and through the testing of ideas by classroom research procedures' (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 144). Again, these different perspectives lead to different emphases on content elements for teacher education, for example:

- When a teacher is seen as a subject specialist, introducing pupils to the rich world of a specific subject, the emphasis in the teacher education curriculum is on mastering the subject.
- When a teacher is seen as a member of a school team, the emphasis is on teamwork, cooperative skills and supervision.
- When a teacher is seen as someone who is supposed to deliver teaching methods that are developed by curriculum specialists, student teachers are trained to use teaching materials from educational publishers in the way they are intended.
- When a teacher is seen as a professional who is involved in developing his or her own way of teaching, student teachers need to learn how to design their own teaching materials according to their educational views.
- When a teacher is seen as a knowledge worker, contributing to the professional knowledge on teaching and learning, the curriculum focuses on acquiring action research skills.
- When a teacher is seen as an independent professional, the focus is on skills and attitudes concerning public accountability and on creating and maintaining professional networks.

As the views with respect to educational goals and the role and professionalism of teachers vary between countries and between institutes, there is an ongoing discussion, either on the macro level or on the meso and micro level, about the content

Competences for teachers

At the individual student level
- Initiating and managing learning processes
- Responding effectively to the learning needs of individual learners
- Integrating formative and summative assessment

At the classroom level
- Teaching in multicultural classrooms
- New cross-curricular emphases
- Integrating students with special needs

At the school level
- Working and planning in teams
- Evaluation and systematic improvement planning
- ICT use in teaching and administration
- Projects between schools, and international cooperation
- Management and shared leadership

At the level of parents and the wider community
- Providing professional advice to parents
- Building community partnerships for learning

Fig. 1.3 Competences for teachers, based on country reports (OECD, 2005)

of teacher education (see Fig. 1.3). More and more teachers are expected to have several roles and have to be able to contribute to:

- The individual development of children and young people
- The management of learning processes in the classroom
- The development of the entire school as a 'learning community'
- Connections with the local community and the wider world

Stakeholders in Defining the Content of the Curriculum

Defining the 'what' of teacher education is often a difficult process in which a variety of stakeholders are involved: governmental delegates, school leaders, teacher educators and teachers themselves (and in some countries, also parents and pupils). Each actor has its specific concerns and its own perspective on the quality of teachers (see Association of Teacher Educators in Europe, 2006).

The *government* (or local authority) is concerned with maintaining the quality of education. This concern might lead to formal regulations, including the explicit definition of standards of teachers.

School leaders are responsible for appointing teaching staff members who will support and guarantee the quality of the learning process of pupils. To promote the quality of the teaching staff members, an attractive and challenging learning environment must be created. Quality indicators for teachers can be used as an instrument within the human resource policy of the school for the selection of new staff and for arranging the continuing professional development of the teaching staff.

Teacher educators need an explicit definition of the quality of student teachers for three reasons: they need this frame of reference to be able to design their curricula, to be able to supervise students in their development towards becoming competent teachers and to be able to assess the students in order to guarantee the quality of future teachers.

Teachers are responsible for their own continuous professional development. Explicit indicators to identify their professional quality can help them to monitor and navigate their learning process.

Parents and pupils are concerned with the effects that the teacher has on the learning of the pupil.

Quality indicators can create a shared frame of reference and a shared language for communication between the various actors. The lifelong learning of teachers is

Recommendations on the development of criteria for and use of indicators of teacher quality

Development of indicators

- A shared frame of reference regarding the concept of teacher quality is needed in order to facilitate international cooperation and exchange.
- National and European Projects to formulate indicators to identify teacher quality should focus on the involvement and ownership of teachers, as this is a necessary condition for quality indicators that will have a real impact on teaching.

Criteria for indicators

- Indicators of teacher quality should take into account the concerns and perspectives of the different stakeholders (government, school leaders, teachers, teacher education, parents/pupils). Only then can quality indicators be used as a shared language.
- As teaching is a profession that entails reflective thinking, continuing professional development, autonomy, responsibility, creativity, research and personal judgments, indicators to identify the quality of teachers should reflect these values and attributes.
- Indicators and their use should reflect the collaborative nature of teaching by allowing room in professional profiles for flexibility, personal styles and variety.
- Indicators of teacher quality should be focused not only on the teaching process itself but also on the development of teaching materials, school innovation and knowledge development through systematic reflection and research.

The use of indicators

Quality indicators are not goals in themselves, but should be part of a system to stimulate teacher quality that is consistent with the indicators and that stimulates ownership by teachers.

Fig. 1.4 Recommendations on the development of, criteria for and use of indicators of teacher quality (Association of Teacher Education, 2006)

promoted and supported when teachers, teacher educators and school leaders use the same frame of reference for teacher quality and the professional development of teachers.

In countries with little or no autonomy for teacher education institutes, the government plays an important role in initiating or coordinating the process of defining teacher quality. The exclusion of any stakeholders from the process of defining teacher quality leads to reduced ownership. In such cases, teacher standards are seen as – as a Portuguese colleague once put it – 'evil constructs, imposed by the government to control teacher education' or as a way to standardise teaching in a mechanical way.

In countries where teacher education institutes have full autonomy in defining their curricula, it is important to involve relevant stakeholders. If the aim is to educate teachers who have an extended professionalism and take responsibility for their own professional quality and development, teacher education institutes need to involve student teachers in defining teaching quality and the 'what' of the teacher education curriculum. Based on the above considerations, the Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE) formulated recommendations on the development of indicators for teacher quality (see Fig. 1.4).

The 'How' of Teacher Education: Teaching Methods and Pedagogy

The 'how' of teacher education refers to the teaching methods and the pedagogy of teacher education.

Teacher Education Pedagogy

Teacher education pedagogy addresses the way in which the learning of student teachers is stimulated and assessed. It covers the methods used in the teacher education courses. This variety of approaches can be recognised in such concepts as the reflective practitioner, the teacher as researcher or collaborative learning. Again, a variety of views exist in various European counties and in various teacher education institutes:

- When teacher learning is seen in terms of a transmission model, the curriculum is strictly regulated, leaving limited freedom for student teachers to set their own goals and to adapt the curriculum to the preferred learning style of each student.
- When teacher learning is seen as an interactive and collective process, the emphasis is on a collaborative and adaptive design of the curriculum.
- When teacher learning is viewed as a reflective process of knowledge construction, stimulated by critical investigation of personal experience, the emphasis is on teaching practice, reflection (see Chapter 10) and research activities (see Chapters 13 and 14 of this book).

Korthagen (2001) emphasises the importance of a pedagogy of teacher education based on the involvement of student teachers in authentic and realistic learning environments. Such environments can be schools and when that is the case the work in schools, for example during teaching practice, becomes more important. In many European countries, the role of field experiences in schools is being reconsidered (OECD, 2005) and in recent years the amount of teaching practice in the teacher education curriculum has been increased (see Chapter 4 for more details). This teaching practice provides students with a broad experience of what it means to be a teacher, including teaching in school, counselling and guidance, curriculum and school development planning, research and evaluation, and collaboration with parents and external partners. The OECD (2005) emphasises that the students' field experiences and academic studies reinforce and complement each other, for example, through students doing research on issues identified within the schools.

In most countries, teacher education institutes are relatively autonomous in choosing their pedagogy. In such countries, the institutes are free to define the learning activities that they use to educate their students. In other countries, the national government formulates regulations regarding the pedagogy of teacher education. Mostly, these regulations refer to the role and amount of teaching practice within the curriculum. Sometimes, also tests and assessments are defined on the macro level. In France and Germany, for example, recruitment for the second phase of the teacher education course is based on a national exam organised by the ministry of education.

When teacher education institutes are fully autonomous in choosing their pedagogy, this pedagogy can be defined on the meso level – that is, the head or a faculty board defines the pedagogy for all courses within the curriculum – or on the micro level, when each individual teacher educator defines his or her own pedagogy and teaching and assessment methods.

Many teacher education institutes try to be consistent in their pedagogy. This consistency means that the content of the teacher education curriculum and the pedagogy of teacher education strengthen each other. This affects, for example, the assessment methods used in the curriculum. In a curriculum that focuses on self-responsibility of students and prepares students for lifelong learning, the assessment methods should fit with those aims. In such a curriculum, peer assessment, self-assessment and portfolios play an important role.

Another way to increase the consistency of the pedagogy of teacher education is to mirror the aims of the curriculum in the teaching of the teacher educators. This 'teach as you preach' principle puts high demands on teacher educators with respect to how they demonstrate within their own daily practice such curriculum aims as adaptive teaching, explicit reflection, involvement in action research and integration of ICT.

The 'How' of Teacher Education: The Structure of the Curriculum

In some countries, the structure of the curriculum is decided by the government who defines the way in which the content of the curriculum is organised in specific

courses. In other countries, teacher education institutes have a large amount of freedom on the meso level in the way in which the content is translated into separate courses and how specific elements are integrated (e.g. in problem- or project-based approaches or in cross-curricular areas). Especially the way in which the teaching of the subject part of the curriculum and the professional studies (e.g. educational sciences, pedagogy and teaching practice) are integrated or separated varies greatly. Two models can be distinguished:

- *Concurrent models.* Teacher education curricula in which the subject part and the professional part of the curriculum are programmed parallel to each other, and are taught by the same teacher educators. Concurrent models create opportunities for integrated projects and cross-curricular modules.
- *Consecutive models.* Teacher education curricula in which there is a strict separation in modules, time and teachers. In consecutive models, students first study the subject part (leading to a BA/BSc or an MA/MSc) before continuing their study with a postgraduate teacher education course.

In some countries, the different parts of the curricula are the responsibility of different teams of teachers and sometimes even different departments within an institute (the subject department and the department of education), while in other countries all of the curriculum (subject studies and professional studies) are the responsibility of the faculty of teacher education. In such models, it is easier to create consistency in teaching methods and pedagogy within the teacher education curriculum.

Within the design of the curriculum, attention should be paid to bridging the gap between studying teacher education and entry to the profession in order to prevent the so-called 'praxis shock'. One way to bridge the gap and reduce the praxis shock is to create an on-the-job qualifying phase (Eurydice, 2002). Such a phase can be an integrated part of the teacher education curriculum. In such curricula, part of the induction phase is integrated in the teacher education curriculum, for instance by giving student teachers the opportunity to teach for a long period at the end of the teacher education program. In other countries, the induction phase starts after completing the formal teacher education course as the first year of teaching is considered a probation year, before a student can obtain a full teaching license. In some countries (e.g. France), students have to pass a state assessment before a teaching license can be obtained.

The structure of the curriculum can also vary in the way that schools are involved in the curriculum. There is a variety of models for cooperative partnerships between schools and teacher education institutes (Maandag, Deinum, Hofman, & Buitink, 2007). These models affect the involvement of schools in the design and teaching of courses within teacher education from involvement in the design of teaching practice to schools taking over parts of the teacher education curriculum and having a shared responsibility for the design of the whole curriculum. This also affects the way in which schools organise the professional development of their own staff (see Chapter 4).

Teacher Education and National and European Policies

Thus, there is a wide variety in systems, content, pedagogy and structure of teacher education throughout Europe and the involvement of national governments in teacher education varies considerably. Despite the differences, the domain of teacher education receives special attention from politicians in every country. Politicians and ministries try to influence teacher education more than any other area in higher education, as the quality of teachers is a key issue in the economic development of a country, in safeguarding a socially coherent society and in conserving the cultural heritage of a country. This holds for not only the national level, but also the European level. In 2000, the European Council agreed that 'the Union must become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'. Two years later, the Council stated that by 2010, Europe should be the world leader in terms of the quality of its education and training systems (European Commission, 2002). This understanding was translated into a working programme – the Education & Training 2010 Programme – in which goals and indicators are formulated to be met by each country of the EU in 2010.

However, education policies are the domain of national governments and the European Commission has to be very careful not to become too much involved in the area of education. Nevertheless, the European Commission exerts a rather strong influence by organising exchanges of interesting policy practices between Member States and, even more important, by establishing benchmarks for the indicators agreed in the Education & Training 2010 Programme. These benchmarks have a strong influence on national education policies, as no country wants to be at the bottom of the league table.

In 2007, the European Commission published a communication (European Commission, 2007b) that stresses the importance of highly qualified teachers and gives recommendations for improving the quality of teacher education. Although the recommendations are formulated in a very general way, the Commission announced its intentions to develop clear indicators to monitor the quality of teachers and teacher education systems in the Member States. Such indicators can have great impact on teacher education policies in the Member States.

One of the main problems of teacher education is its vulnerability to criticism from politicians and society. Problems in society (e.g. with respect to its economic competitive position, multicultural tensions and children's health) are easily transferred to schools as the institutes that should solve these problems and if teachers in schools are not able to solve these problems, teacher education is blamed.

As a result, teacher education is politicised (Bruner, 1996). According to Cochran-Smith (2005), the way in which the goals, positions and problems of teacher education are formulated is never neutral but always 'a matter of the strategic representation of situations wherein advocates deliberately and consciously fashion their portrayals so as to promote their favoured course of action' (p. 182).

While facing criticism, teacher education institutes have to deal with the 'curse of complexity':

> The tradition of teacher education is to take into account diverse viewpoints, subtle nuances, uncertainties and the multiple facets involved in unravelling the relationships between and among teacher preparation and teaching, learning, schooling and contexts. The curse is particularly vexing when many of the critics of university-based teacher education feel no such need to acknowledge uncertainty and complexity and in fact, are quite ready to provide uncomplicated statements about how to solve simultaneously – through 'rational' and 'common-sense' approaches – the many problems related to teacher recruitment, preparation and retention. (Cochran-Smith, 2005, p. 183).

Teacher education institutes have to cope with this reality. One way of doing this is to strengthen networks of teacher education institutes, to stimulate mutual exchange and research and to develop clear quality criteria. Self-confident teacher education institutes with a shared evidence-based opinion can be strong participants in the development of policies to improve the quality of teachers and teacher education, on both a national and a European level.

Conclusion

We have reflected on some of the issues that define teacher education and that can be easily recognised within national contexts of teacher education. In these reflections, we tried to identify choices and the resulting differences and similarities in structures and approaches that can be found in Europe with respect to:

- the system of teacher education
- the content of teacher education
- the pedagogy and structure of teacher education

The system, content, pedagogy and structure of teacher education are different in each country. Some of the issues discussed in this chapter can be influenced by teacher educators. If so, we hope that this chapter will inspire beginning and expert teacher educators to rethink the choices made by and the underlying philosophies of their institute. Understanding the underlying philosophies and questioning the presuppositions can be fruitful ways to start and inspire new developments in teacher education.

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Useful Websites

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html. Provides information on the European policies concerning education and the Education & Training 2010 Programme.

Eurydice: www.eurydice.org. Eurydice is an institutional network for gathering, monitoring, processing and circulating reliable and readily comparable information on education systems and policies throughout Europe. Eurydice maintains Eurybase, the information database on education systems in Europe. In addition, Eurydice carries out comparative research on education systems in Europe, including teacher education.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development): www.oecd.org.