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Teacher Education in Slovenia: Between the Past, the Present, and the Future

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Introduction

Teacher education in Slovenia has a long history. Secondary school teacher education was initially offered by lycées or universities; then, after the school reform of 1848/1849 when lycées were discontinued, it was offered only by universities. Basic school teacher education was first provided, in the form of teaching courses, in the second half of the eighteenth century. One hundred years later, in 1869, teacher training schools were founded; in 1947 the first Teacher Training College was established; and in the academic year 1987/1988, the first cohort of students enrolled in a full higher education programme. In recent times, the teacher education system has been deeply affected by Slovenia gaining independence from Yugoslavia in 1991 and by the Bologna Process. Reforms in the teacher education system prior to gaining independence arose from the country's internal needs and corresponding solutions; since its independence, Slovenia has become more integrated into international landscapes. The Bologna reform in particular, issued from the European Union level, introduced common principles relating to the development of higher education that subsequently affected teacher education as well. However, although principles underpinning further development of teacher education at a

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European level have been agreed upon, teacher education is still predominantly regarded as the responsibility of national ministries of education and, therefore, the teacher is still predominantly perceived as a teacher in their national context (Zgaga 2008). Slovenia is no exception in this regard. Thus, the teacher education system in Slovenia maintains its own specific features and forms, despite Europe-wide common principles.

Thus, in order to understand how teacher education works in Slovenia today, societal, political, economic, cultural, and historic—as well as education-related—circumstances and shifts should be taken into account. In the following chapter, a short history of these changes and the structure of the contemporary education system in Slovenia will be presented, before discussing the ways in which both the initial teacher education system and the teacher professional development system have been developed and structured. Lastly, this paper will analyse some of the present tensions and challenges, as well as potential directions for the future, faced by teacher education in Slovenia.

Socio-political Context

In 1918, after almost 600 years under Habsburg rule, Slovenia joined the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, later renamed as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. After World War II the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was established, in which Slovenia was one of the six republics under the federal parliament and government in Belgrade. In the second half of the twentieth century, interethnic conflicts, deepened by Yugoslavia's economic crisis and disintegration of Yugoslavia, evolved into the demand for independence (Natek et al. 2000, p. 1). On 23 December 1990, 88.5% of Slovenia's population voted to have their own state, and on 25 June 1991, the Republic of Slovenia declared its independence. A ten-day war followed in the summer of that year. Slovenia was officially recognised by the European Union in January 1992 and joined the United Nations in May 1992. Subsequently, Slovenia joined NATO (March 2004), European Union (May 2004), the Eurozone (January 2007), and the OECD (2010).

Slovenia is a small European country in terms of land area (20,273 km^2) and population (2.08 million) (Statistični urad republike Slovenije [SURS] 2019d). Although the number of foreign citizens living in Slovenia has increased in recent years and represented 6.6% of the population in 2019 (SURS 2019d), the country has a relatively homogeneous ethnic structure. According to the 2002 census, 83.1% of the population consider themselves

Slovenian, 1.8% Croats, 2.0% Serbs, 1.6% Muslims (including Bosniacs), 0.3% Hungarians, 0.1% Italians, 2.2% others, and 8.9% of unknown nationality (SURS 2002). The country's official language is Slovenian and, in ethnically mixed areas, the official languages are also Italian and Hungarian; additionally, the Romani language is protected by law. Slovenia is a democratic republic and a social state governed by law, with the state's authority based on the principle of separating powers into legislative, executive, and judicial strands, and a parliamentary system of government.

As part of Yugoslavia (prior to independence in 1991), Slovenia succeeded in maintaining close ties (e.g., economic, cultural, educational) with Central and Western Europe. Since its independence, Slovenia has managed to facilitate a relatively fast and successful establishment of a democratic system. However, like other countries undergoing this type of transition, it has faced numerous problems due to rapid and fundamental changes (e.g., political, economic, cultural, educational)—brought about by the dual competing factors of proximity to the European Union and the heavy burden of a socialist past (Natek et al. 2000, p. 1). In 2008, the global financial crisis halted the progress of economic and social development in Slovenia, and it has been a challenge to find a path back to economic recovery and renewed prosperity since then: GDP per capita was 22,083 euro in 2018 (SURS 2019a). To contextualise government spending on education within that, public expenditure for formal education was 4.8% of Slovenia's GDP in 2017, within which preprimary education accounted for 20.1%; basic education for 43.5%; upper secondary education for 16.9%; and tertiary education for 19.5% (SURS 2017).

Education System

The 1990s—with Slovenia's independence won in 1991—were a turning point in the development of the contemporary education system. In 1995, the *White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia* was introduced, stipulating the current school system's core principles, and new school acts regulating the entire education system (from preschool up to university education) were adopted. This new legislation became the basis for considerable changes on a policymaker level and decision-making processes alike, and established basic governance mechanisms as well as the regulatory framework for the operation of schools. These acts and regulations have been amended several times since, but their core rules have remained more or less the same. On the whole, these reforms were based on the following principles: the right to education; equal

opportunities for pupils; the possibility of choice at the level of curricula, school activities, teacher education, schools; fostering excellence in students; increased quality of education; an increase in teachers' and schools' professional responsibility and autonomy of teachers and schools; plurality of cultures and knowledge; and lifelong learning (Krek 1995) (Fig. 12.1).

Preschool Education

Preschool education is part of the education system and is not compulsory (Eurydice 2019; Taštanoska 2019). Children can attend preschool institutions from the age of 11 months until they enter compulsory education at the age of six. Professional staff adhere to the Kindergarten Curriculum, that is, the fundamental programme document adopted in 1999. Kindergarten programmes include education, care, and meals and are subsidised by the state, with parents paying means-tested fees.

In the last decade the number of children in kindergartens has increased by one-third. In the school year 2018/2019, 81.7% of all preschool age children attended preschool education. The proportion of four- and five-year-old children attending preschool education is 93.5% (SURS 2019b; Kozmelj 2019).

Compulsory Basic Education

Basic education is compulsory and state-funded, free of charge for all children whose sixth birthday occurs in the calendar year they enter first grade, is organised as a single-structure, and spans nine years (Taštanoska 2019; Eurydice 2019). It is provided by public and private schools, as well as educational institutions for pupils with special needs and adult education organisations.

The basic school programme is specified by the timetable and curricula of compulsory and optional subjects. Besides, it is specified by guidelines and educational concepts that define methods of working with children and cross-curricular contents to guide the work of education professionals. It is divided into three three-year cycles. In the first cycle pupils have a class teacher for most subjects; in the second cycle, specialist subject teachers are gradually introduced; then during the third cycle pupils are taught exclusively by specialist subject teachers. In grades 1 and 2, teachers assess pupils' progress with descriptive marks, and then from grade 3 onwards with numerical marks from 1 to 5, whereby 1 is negative and the rest are positive. At the end of grades 6 and 9 pupils sit for a national examination.

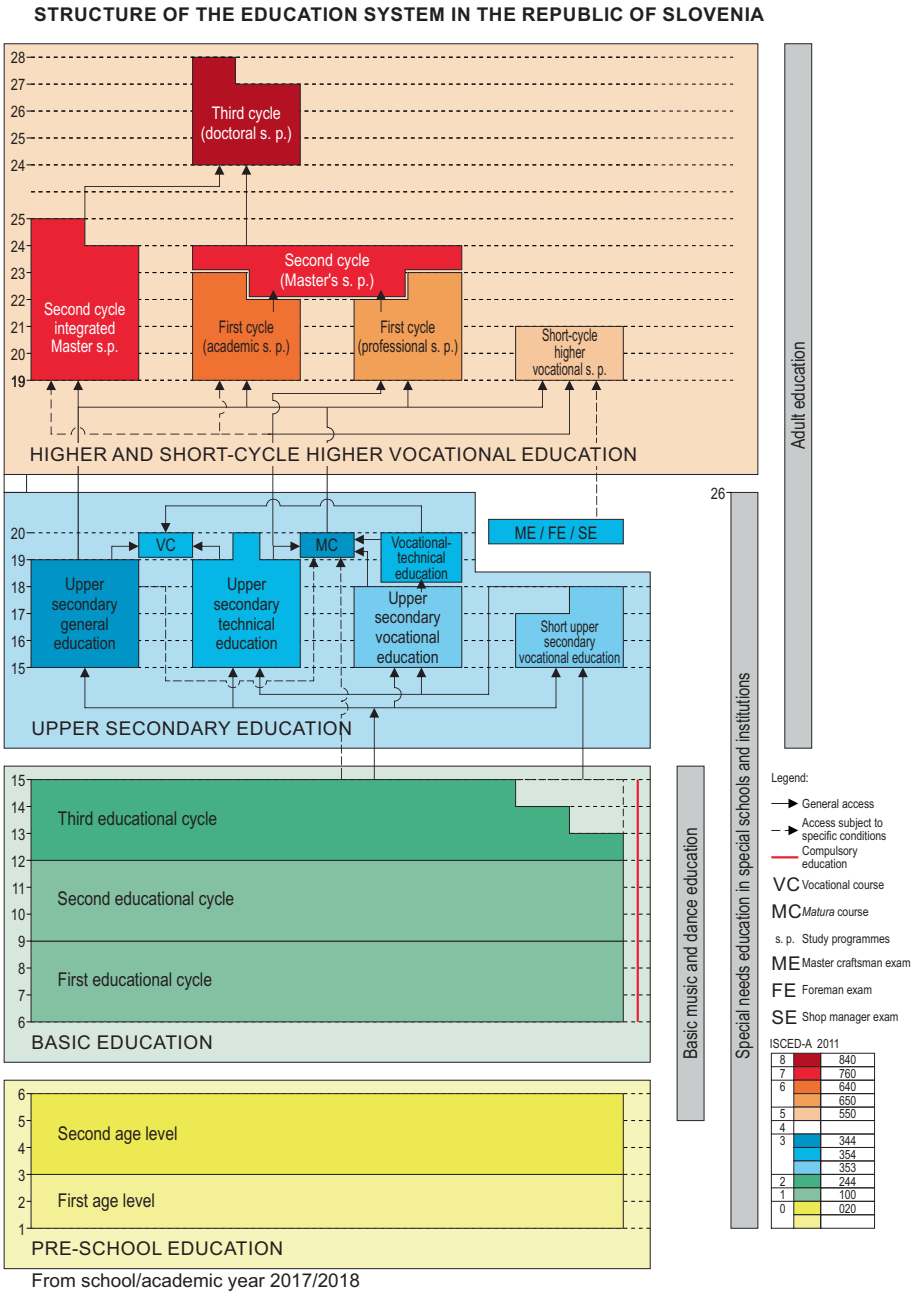

Fig. 12.1 Structure of the education system in the Republic of Slovenia (2019)

Upper Secondary Education

Successful completion of compulsory education enables pupils, typically aged 15, to proceed to an education programme at a selected upper secondary school, a transition regulated at a national level through the common national application system (Peček 2015; Taštanoska 2019; Eurydice 2019). Upper secondary education is non-compulsory, takes two to five years to complete, and does not carry tuition fees. It is divided into general upper secondary education (different types of four-year *gimnazija* programmes), technical upper secondary education (four years), and vocational upper secondary education (two to three years). *Gimnazija* education ends with the general *matura* and technical education with the vocational *matura*.

It is estimated that all students who have completed their basic school education continue their studies at the upper secondary level. In the school year 2018/2019, 91.2% of the population aged 15–18 were enrolled in upper secondary education: 35% of pupils opted for general education, 46.2% for technical education, and 18% for vocational education (Kozmelj 2019).

Tertiary Education

Like some other EU countries, Slovenia opted for a gradual implementation of the Bologna reform, and since the academic year 2009/2010, only 'post-reform' programmes have been offered. The most important fundamental objectives of tertiary education are high-quality education, employability for students upon completing their studies and mobility for students and staff, fair access to education for students, diversity of institutions and study programmes, and international comparability of study programmes (Taštanoska 2019, p. 39).

The higher education reform of 2004 introduced a three-cycle structure (Peček 2015; Pavlič Možina and Prešeren 2011; Taštanoska 2019; Eurydice 2019). The first cycle has a binary system of academic and vocational study programmes (180–240 ECTS; 3–4 years), leading to a first-cycle degree. The second cycle offers master's degree programmes (60–120 ECTS; 1–2 years). The third cycle covers doctoral study programmes (180 ECTS; 3 years). Long, non-structured master's degree programmes are allowed as an exception. In public higher education institutions, Slovenian students and students from EU member states pay tuition fees for part-time studies, while full-time studies are free of charge. For third-cycle studies, tuition fees are paid by students, but can be subsidised by public funds under certain conditions.

The transition to higher education is managed on a national level. The number of places available is fixed for all study programmes and is announced each year by higher education institutions in the pre-enrolment period. In case the number of applicants exceeds this capacity, candidates are selected from those with a better overall grade in the *matura* examination, higher overall marks in third and fourth years, or marks in individual subjects in upper secondary education (Peček 2015; Pavlič Možina and Prešeren 2011; Taštanoska 2019). Admission requirements include the following: a general *matura* certificate or a vocational *matura* examination and an additional exam for university first-cycle study programmes; a vocational *matura* or a general *matura* certificate for vocational first-cycle programmes; a first-cycle degree in a corresponding field of studies (and additional exams when this is not the case) for master's degree studies; a second-cycle degree for doctoral studies; and additional aptitude test results (e.g., artistic talents, physical skills) are required for certain study programmes.

Over the past 20 years, tertiary education has undergone several legislative and structural changes, rapid institutional development, and a significant increase in student numbers. In 2018/2019, there were 3 public and 3 private universities, 1 independent public higher education institution, and 48 private higher education institutions in Slovenia (Taštanoska 2019, p. 40). Slovenia surpassed the specific target of the *Europe 2020 Strategy* (2013), namely, to have 40% of the population aged 30–34 holding tertiary qualifications (Taštanoska 2019, p. 39). In the academic year 2018/2019 the share of people aged 19–24 participating in tertiary education was 46.1% (SURS 2019c): 75,991 students were enrolled in tertiary education programmes, of which 10,566 were enrolled in short-cycle higher education courses and 65,425 in higher education programmes, including 3089 in doctoral study programmes (Sever 2019).

Education of Children with Special Needs

Education for children with special education needs (SEN) is provided exclusively as a public service, with provision following a multi-track approach and a variety of services offered between mainstream education and special needs institutions (Peček 2015; Taštanoska 2019; Eurydice 2019). A Special Education Needs Guidance Commission coordinates professional and administrative activities that qualify a child for their appropriate educational setting. The majority of children with SEN enrol in programmes with adapted implementation and additional professional assistance provided in mainstream classes.

Recently there has been a decline in the number of children with SEN enrolled in adapted and special programmes offered in special class units, and an increase in the number of children with SEN enrolled in mainstream programmes. There were 9948 children with SEN enrolled in mainstream and adapted basic schools in the academic year 2018/2019, and most of these children (76.5%) were included in mainstream programmes with additional professional assistance, meaning that children with SEN represented 4.1% of all children in mainstream basic compulsory programmes (Kozmelj 2019).

Recent Reforms in Teacher Education

As mentioned in the introduction, teacher education in Slovenia has a long history. The first organised basic school teacher education was established in 1774, on the basis of the General School Ordinance, with prospective teachers attending teaching courses. The third Basic School Act in 1869 led to the establishment of the first four-year teacher training schools. This was increased to five years in 1929 (Cencič 1990, p. 138; see also Janša-Zorn 1997; Peček 1998). As there was a shortage of teachers after World War II, teaching courses were again in place in 1955 when teacher training schools were reintroduced, initially providing four-year and later, once more, five-year programmes (Cencič 1990, pp. 138–139; Janša-Zorn 1997, p. 8).

Upper secondary teacher education followed a somewhat different path. Initially it was offered by lycées or universities; then, after the school reform of 1848/1849 when lycées were discontinued, it was offered only by universities. After World War II, graduates from different universities took to teaching in upper general secondary schools and also in the upper grades of basic compulsory schools (Janša-Zorn 1997, pp. 8–9).

As there was a need for subject teachers in the upper grades of basic school, the Teacher Training College (programme comprising tertiary two-year study and a thesis) was established in Ljubljana in 1947, renamed the Academy of Education in 1964. In 1961 another Academy of Education was founded in Maribor. The main purpose of the transition from the Teacher Training College to the Academy of Education was to ensure that all basic school teachers completed a two-year tertiary education programme: as a result, a class teacher training programme was added to its repertoire in 1964 (Janša-Zorn 1997). In the academic year 1987/1988, the first cohort of students enrolled in a full higher education programme (i.e., a four-year study programme and a thesis). This transition presented many dilemmas. There was broad agreement that subject teachers should be educated via four-year higher education

programmes, but there was not the same consensus that this was needed for class teachers. Eventually the decision to include this study programme in higher education prevailed and academies of education became faculties of education with the goal of creating better conditions for high-quality research and higher quality teacher education programmes (Janša-Zorn 1997, p. 28; Zgaga 1997, p. 50). In 2003, a third faculty of education was established within the new University of Primorska in Koper. In 2009, the implementation of the new Bologna study programmes began: all teachers in Slovenia are now required to attain a second-cycle degree, that is, a master's degree or 300 ECTS.

All of these changes dramatically changed the working conditions for faculty of education academic staff, namely forcing them to attain doctoral degrees as quickly as possible and to secure the appropriate accreditation newly required for working in a university. While lecturers at the former teacher training schools were mostly experienced practitioners and textbook writers, at academies of education, and even more so at faculties of education, practical teaching experience ceased to be the decisive factor in securing an employment contract. More lecturers with a sound academic, research-based background were sought in order to ensure the new faculties carried the same weight as other, more established faculties (Razdevšek-Pučko and Peček 2002, p. 217).

In addition to faculties of education, prospective teachers can also currently acquire their degree in other programmes at one of Slovenia's three universities, namely, in courses relevant to the subject they will teach (e.g., the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics for future maths and physics teachers). Traditionally, this type of teacher education ran in parallel with regular studies for specific professions. As a result, there were no significant differences between study programmes for students training to become teachers and those aiming to enter other careers in the field. The only difference was that student teachers were simply required to attend a minimal additional number of prescribed units in methods of subject teaching, as well as in pedagogy and psychology (Razdevšek-Pučko and Peček 2002, p. 218). With the implementation of the Bologna Process there came an intention to change this; however, most faculties made a distinction between their programmes only in second-cycle degree studies. While graduates from faculties of education can work as subject teachers in basic, technical, and vocational upper secondary schools, graduates from other faculties can work as subject teachers in all basic and all upper secondary schools.

According to Hudson and Zgaga (2008, pp. 8–9) international cooperation is traditionally broadly embedded in university studies; however, teacher

education is traditionally developed comparatively more within its national boundaries, a contrast which applies both in Slovenia and further afield. Prior to the 1990s, teacher education in Europe was rarely a subject of European and/or international cooperation. However, shifts away from predominantly national focuses began with the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, as well as with cross-border programmes like Erasmus, Socrates, Leonardo, and Tempus which emerged at the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s (Hudson and Zgaga 2008, pp. 8–9). Subsequently, the Bologna Process brought about an even bigger change across Europe in this regard and Slovenia is no exception. International trends did play something of a role in teacher education reforms before Slovenia's independence (e.g., Troha 1992, p. 105; Marentič Požarnik 1992); however, the main issue was always how to educate teachers in such a way as to ensure the provision of high-quality education within the national education system. As such, approaches and solutions mainly followed internal needs for change and pressure from above, that is, the state and its political system. Consequently, the teacher education reform of the 1990s, following Slovenia's independence in 1991, was necessary due to the reformation of basic and upper secondary schools that required a different kind of teachers—teachers that are willing to make their own professional decisions and stand by them (e.g., Peček and Razdevšek-Pučko 2000). Key features of this reform included how it responded to challenges and solutions identified by its users and practitioners, and aimed to find a consensus among different interest groups in the country (e. g. teachers in schools, teacher educators at faculties, student teachers, Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport). The reform was implemented during a time of relatively high university and teacher autonomy (Razdevšek-Pučko and Peček 2002). In contrast, the Bologna reform has since been conducted from the top-down, whereby the 'top' is no longer the state, but rather a new set of standards developed at European Union level—thus, it is not a reform based on the needs identified in Slovenia. Therefore, the Bologna reform has proved hard to accept in Slovenia, especially by academic staff upon whom it was forced, generating a wide range of opposing views which will be further discussed later.

Current System of Initial Teacher Education

Initial teacher education in Slovenia is provided by faculties as well as by higher education institutions, in line with higher education legislation and education regulations regarding requirements for teachers and other education professionals. Slovenian legislation states that preschool teachers must

complete a three-year professional study programme (180 ECTS); and all basic and upper secondary school teachers must complete a higher education degree (four years) in the appropriate field (pre-Bologna programmes) or a master's degree (Bologna programmes) (300 ECTS). All teachers should attain appropriate pedagogical education and successfully pass the teaching certification examination (e.g., Pravilnik o izobrazbi učiteljev in drugih strokovnih delavcev v izobraževalnem programu osnovne šole 2011; Eurydice 2019; Taštanoska 2019).

Models of Bologna teacher study programmes vary: some follow the 3 years (first cycle) + 2 years (second cycle) model (e.g., in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ljubljana) and others follow the 4 years (first cycle) + 1 year (second cycle) model (e.g., in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana); therefore, both are two-cycle programmes. There are also exceptions, for example, 5 years + 0 year programmes (e.g., in the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics at the University of Ljubljana), also referred to as one-cycle programmes.

Initial teacher education for class teachers is based on the integrated or concurrent model, meaning that professional, general, and subject components are inseparably combined. Education for preschool teachers, and subject teachers in basic or upper secondary schools, can follow either the concurrent or the consecutive model. The consecutive model as a pathway towards becoming a qualified teacher can be realised in two ways: on the one hand, the first cycle can provide appropriate knowledge in the taught subject while the second cycle can provide vocational education; on the other hand, experts with work experience in particular fields and an existing degree in a relevant subject (300 ECTS) can complete a supplementary pedagogical-andragogical programme (60 ECTS) (Eurydice 2019). Teachers who teach in special education programmes in special basic schools are educated in study programmes that apply the integrated model. Teachers who teach in the third three-year cycle in special basic schools can be mainstream subject teachers, but they need to obtain a dedicated qualification (of at least 60 ECTS) before working with children with special needs.

Following a completed master's degree, students can enrol in PhD programmes which, in the 2019/2020 academic year, have been extended from three to four years (240 ECTS). The fundamental aim of PhD programmes is to deepen students' understanding of theoretical and methodological concepts in the area of teacher education and educational science.

The admission procedure for teacher education institutions is the same for all students in whatever higher education institution or study programme they enrol. Thus, a condition for entry into teacher education is positive

results from the general *matura* or positive results from the vocational *matura*, plus an additional general *matura* subject. For study programmes, like for example art pedagogy or physical education, special aptitude or psychophysical abilities are tested. A higher education institution may limit enrolments where the number of applicants significantly exceeds the number of available places. The selection criteria are academic results at the *matura*, marks from the third and fourth years of secondary school and aptitude test results (if relevant) (*Zakon o visokem šolstvu* 2012). Students who have completed a first-cycle programme in an appropriate discipline, or students who have finished a first-cycle programme in other disciplines then complete bridging study obligations or an extra year (60 ECTS), may enrol in second-cycle programmes (*Zakon o visokem šolstvu* 2012; Eurydice 2019) (Fig. 12.2).

Curricula and syllabi of the study programmes are under the autonomy of the higher education institutions themselves; however, they must meet the requirements as specified by the *Criteria for the accreditation and external evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes* (Svet Nacionalne agencije Republike Slovenije za kakovost v visokem šolstvu (NAKVIS) 2019). The administrative framework for the development of teacher education programmes used to be stipulated by the *Accreditation criteria for teacher education study programmes* (*Merila za akreditacijo študijskih programov za izobraževanje učiteljev* 2011), but those accreditation criteria are currently no longer valid. At the moment, the NAKVIS Council considers only general criteria for the accreditation of teacher education programmes (NAKVIS 2019) which have no education-specific requirements. Such an accreditation must be confirmed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport. The current practice of the ministry is to confirm those teacher education programmes that meet the currently invalid criteria mentioned earlier (*Merila za akreditacijo študijskih programov za izobraževanje učiteljev* 2011), including whether or not a programme provides a second-cycle master's degree; includes sufficient hours of teaching practice; includes areas that are currently important, such as preparing the candidate to teach children with special needs; ensures the candidate will be employable; as well as what professional title is awarded upon completion of the programme (Adamič Tomič 2019).

The *Criteria for accreditation of teacher education study programmes* (*Merila za akreditacijo študijskih programov za izobraževanje učiteljev* 2011) stipulated that a teacher education programme should include at least 60 ECTS in pedagogical-psychological studies (i.e., psychology, pedagogics, didactics, andragogy, methodology of pedagogical research, etc.), in the humanities and social sciences (i.e., philosophy, sociology, anthropology, etc.), in subject or relevant didactics, as well as at least 15 ECTS of teaching practice.

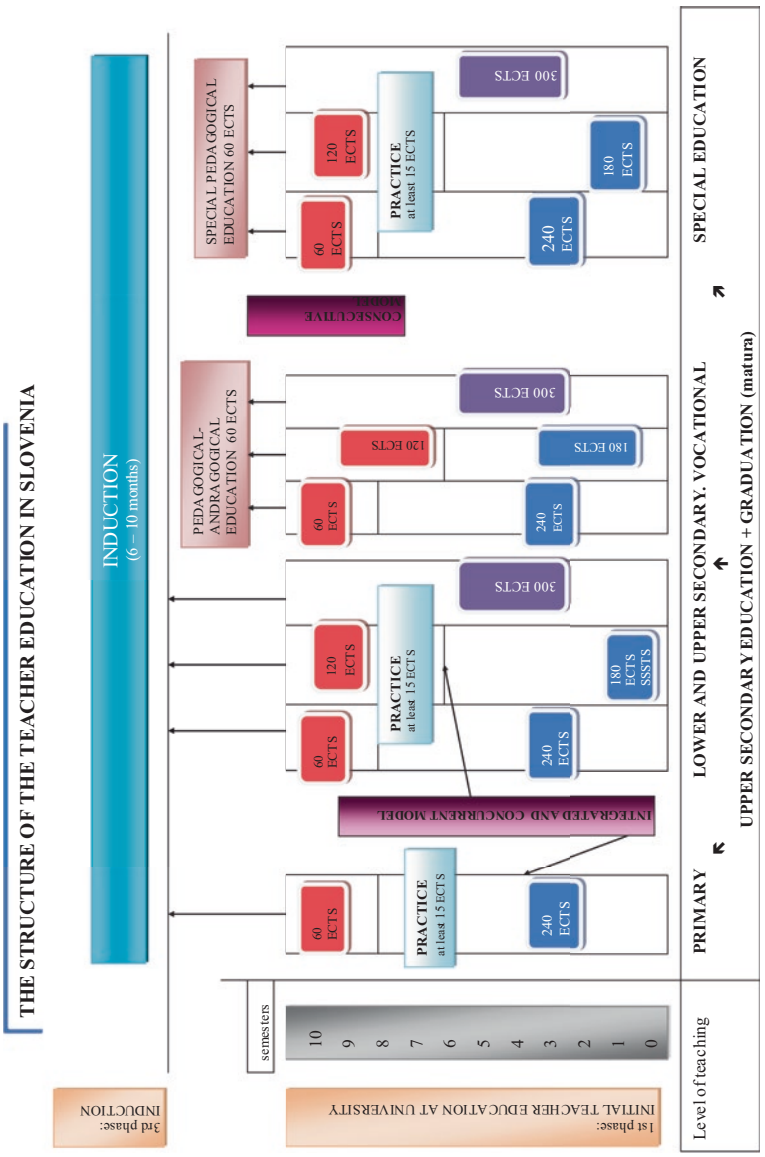

Fig. 12.2 The structure of the teacher education in Slovenia (Peček and Lesar 2011)

Students should attain the following general competences:

- Effective teaching
- Participation in the work and in the social environment
- Ability to undertake professional development
- Management abilities

As already mentioned, the curricula and syllabi of study programmes are under the autonomy of higher education institutions; thus, the structure, number, and length of courses a student must complete vary from programme to programme. For example, the curricula of study programmes at the Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, are divided into four basic groups: compulsory general or basic pedagogical courses, compulsory vocational courses, elective courses (general and vocational), and intensive practical training in the first cycle and a master's thesis in the second cycle (Eurydice 2019; Faculty of Education 2019). There is variance from programme to programme in terms of the length of practical training (at least 15 ECTS) and the way it is integrated into the programme (Peček and Lesar 2011). One part of practical training usually includes long (i.e., a few days or weeks), continuous practice in the classroom, and another part consists of observation of individual teaching hours. Some programmes, such as class teaching at the Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, provide practical training throughout the course of study. In the first cycle, practical training is offered in the form of continuous classroom practice. Additionally, practice is facilitated in special didactics and other courses, for example, theory of education and psychology. In the second cycle, practical training is an integral part of various courses, but there is no continuous classroom practice. Other programmes (e.g., programmes at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana) have practical training only in the second cycle, where all teaching-related education is concentrated.

Assessment methods are set separately for each course in the curriculum. Taking into account the diversity of delivery modes for individual courses (i.e., lectures, seminars, tutorials, project and research work, diaries, performances, etc.), various student activities may be separately evaluated and constitute part of the final mark in the course. In general, the traditional methods of assessment (i.e., colloquium [mid-year tests], oral and written examinations, seminar papers, etc.) are supplemented by marked special tasks within individual courses. The assessment scale spans 1–10, where 1–5 are failing marks and 6–10 passing. To complete a study programme, the student must

have all courses assessed with a positive mark, and then write and orally defend a master's thesis in front of a panel, with the thesis presenting theoretical and/or empirical research conducted by the student themselves.

Current System of Teacher Professional Development

While teacher professional development in the 1980s was merely a moral obligation, the new legislation adopted at the beginning of the 1990s introduced a system which enabled those who undertook professional training to be awarded higher titles (e.g., mentor, advisor, counsellor) and correspondingly higher salaries. Although teachers were initially generally somewhat critical of this new system—there were very few programmes available and there was an imbalance between themes, not all of which provided an equal opportunity to acquire points—annual internal evaluations of the system up until 2010 show that the quality improved with each new academic year, provided additional career opportunities for all teachers, and resulted in significant and positive motivation for participants (Peček 2008).

The right and obligation of teachers to undertake continual professional development is stipulated by law and the *Collective agreement for the educational sector* (*Kolektivna pogodba za dejavnost vzgoje in izobraževanja v Republiki Sloveniji* 2019), as well as by relevant rules. The *Rules on the selection and co-financing of further education and training programmes for education professionals* (*Pravilnik o izboru in sofinanciranju programov nadaljnjega izobraževanja in usposabljanja strokovnih delavcev v vzgoji in izobraževanju* 2017) issued by the minister responsible for education outlines the organisation and financing of programmes, the responsibilities of decision-making bodies, as well as the award and recognition of points for the career advancement of preschool and school teachers (Eurydice 2019). The aim of this further education is not only the professional development of education staff as individuals, but also the improved quality and efficiency of schools and the education system as a whole.

There are two main types of continuing professional development (CPD) programmes (Eurydice 2019):

– Programmes which qualify teachers for different posts, for teaching a new subject, or for teaching their existing taught subject on a higher level are prescribed by law. Thus, it is both the right and the duty of the teacher

teaching a subject for which such a programme is prescribed to undertake this type of training. In the school's annual work plan, the head teacher should prioritise teachers' training via this type of programme and ensure that they are available to undertake such training. The providers of these programmes are higher education institutions which have developed and implemented their programmes in accordance with the rules on higher education.
– Shorter programmes of career development aimed at promoting the vocational and disciplinary development of teaching staff. The providers of these programmes are diverse institutions dealing with education.

The Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport outlines the priority topics and fields for continued professional development on a national level. These themes are defined by the Council of Experts for General Education and in cooperation with the Development and Counselling Institutes. Every year the ministry announces a public call for proposals and co-financing of programmes, with programmes selected by the tender commission and approved by the minister's decision. The chosen programmes are then published in a special catalogue, thus informing schools and teachers of their opportunities.

The *Collective agreement for the educational sector* (*Kolektivna pogodba za dejavnost vzgoje in izobraževanja v Republiki Sloveniji* 2019) specifies the right to up to five days of leave for teacher professional development per annum or 15 days over three years. Teachers may take training during their regular work and get a paid leave of absence. Teachers are free to decide which programmes they want to take; however, training for major curricular changes or other reforms is either compulsory or recommended. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport allocates funds to cover the cost of participation in CPD programmes. Teachers are also compensated for any travel and accommodation expenses incurred during training. Additionally, teachers receive a salary increase for acquiring formal higher education qualification or receive points for participating in programmes that count towards their future promotion, offering further motivation for education staff to pursue training (Eurydice 2019).

However, the teacher professional development system in Slovenia is not without its problems. While the state and municipalities do provide some funds to cover the material costs of participation in teacher professional development programmes, the amount given to schools is frequently insufficient, which is the main reason why such opportunities are not fully taken up in practice. Indeed, this was especially the case in the years of recession in the early 2010s. Another issue is each school's ability to cover for teachers' absences

while still implementing its core programme of education provision: the head teacher and the teacher who wishes to attend training must find an agreeable solution and, in practice, this most often results in solidarity, with teachers covering classes for one another.

Tensions in Recent Teacher Education Reforms

Teacher education reforms in Slovenia have been accompanied by many challenges, conflicts, and often very heated and prolonged discussions and negotiations. As mentioned before, one of the key questions concerning teacher education reforms after World War II was the level of education required for teachers: is it possible to educate a teacher in a two-year tertiary education programme or is it necessary to do this in a four-year tertiary education programme? This discussion was concluded in 1986 when it was agreed that all teachers needed a four-year education. Since the Bologna reform, this question has lost its potency as it has become clear that all teachers would need to attain a second-cycle master's degree. The only exception to this are preschool teachers—in the past the requirement was a completed two-year tertiary education programme, whereas now the requirement is a completed first cycle, that is, 180 ECTS or three-year programme.

Another question which arises with every reform, including the Bologna reform, is about the study programme model that should be followed: either consecutive (with subject education first, followed by pedagogical education) or concurrent (pedagogical education alongside subject education from beginning to end). Different faculties across the country have always made different decisions, usually in accordance with their own academic traditions and norms.

While teaching practice for students was fairly well organised in teacher training schools, a problem arose with the academic year 1987/1988, when the first cohort of students enrolled in a higher education programme, as those programmes were less ready to provide opportunities for practical work (Cencič 1990). Ever since, the quality and length of teaching practice for students has been one of the key questions underpinning all teacher education reforms in Slovenia, including the Bologna reform (e.g., Razdevšek-Pučko and Peček 2002; Marentič Požarnik 1992).

In terms of the tradition, quality, and length of practical training, there are differences between education programmes at faculties of education and other faculties, and between practical training for class teachers and subject teachers. Practical training at faculties of education, especially in programmes for class teachers, is longer and more integrated into the study process than in

other programmes. The Bologna reform led to significantly longer and better quality practical teacher training in all faculties that educate teachers; nevertheless, there are still differences in the length and the method of delivery across study programmes. One of the reasons for this discrepancy came to the fore during the transition from academies of education to faculties of education in 1991: namely, universities found it difficult to avoid explicit or implicit perceptions that practice was 'only an introduction' to the trade/vocation and thus not truly worthy of academic studies at the university level (Marentič Požarnik 1992; Razdevšek-Pučko and Peček 2002). This transition period also uncovered the assumption that teachers working with younger children—and thus dealing more directly with their upbringing—would need more teaching practice than teachers working with older pupils, where formal education and knowledge of the taught subject were assumed to be more important than the methods of teaching or understanding children (Marentič Požarnik 1992; Razdevšek-Pučko and Peček 2002).

These imbalances in perception, and therefore actual provision of teacher education, continue with regard to graduates' types of education: graduates from faculties of education, especially graduates in class education, attain in-depth pedagogical-psychological knowledge, while graduates from other faculties attain more subject-related knowledge and have less developed teaching skills (Janša-Zorn 1997, p. 24). For the former, the emphasis in their studies is on their profession, and for the latter on the relevant scientific field (Zgaga 1997, p. 51)—this particularly applies to teachers who do not attend faculties of education and attain some teaching skills later in their careers, while working towards their second-cycle degree or even after completing their master's degree. As a result, every reform of teacher education in Slovenia is affected by heated debates between advocates for scientific fields (i.e., mathematics, physics, geography, etc.) and proponents of educational courses (i.e., theories of education, didactics, psychology, etc.). The material results of these debates often depend on the balance of power of those advocates at the faculties at the time of each reform. In this process, the need for the right balance between the two extremes is often forgotten (Janša-Zorn 1997; Zgaga 1997, pp. 52, 53).

As mentioned before, the Bologna reform has received much criticism in the education community in Slovenia, as well as many of the other countries in this handbook. Nevertheless, the reform has introduced many changes in teacher education, which fundamentally widen the spectrum of teachers' competences: the inclusion of education for children with special needs; the inclusion of education for marginalised groups of children, such as migrants; and the posing of questions around inclusion, class management, individualisation and differentiation, and interdisciplinary work. It is true that some of

these themes have been included in teacher education programmes as electives only, nevertheless, these themes can meet the wider spectrum of needs today's teachers have, as they were met before the reform. Current teacher education programmes also include more interdisciplinary courses, provide more elective subjects, and allow for easier transfers between study programmes, as well as for international comparability. Current teacher education programmes have led to higher levels of student mobility both within and out of Slovenia, with greater international mobility of students and employees as faculties encourage students and their staff to spend at least one semester abroad.

Nonetheless, criticisms of the Bologna reform remain valid and essential. Admittedly, previous reforms were affected by their particular political, social, educational, and professional contexts, but they were always generated within Slovenia itself and included a very wide range of teachers and researchers from the country's own field of education. The same cannot be claimed for the reforms of the last 20 years, in particular the Bologna reform. Recently, the development of the education system as a whole, including teacher education, has become ever more influenced by results from international analyses (TIMMS, PISA, PIRLS, etc.) and international strategic documents, such as the Sorbonne Declaration and the Lisbon Strategy, aimed at reviewing the quality of each country's education system and providing directions for future development. As a result, the Bologna reform is often considered to be a reform that led those who helped draft the strategic guidelines for the development of education in Slovenia to fully adopt Europe-level education policy (Kroflič 2014, p. 10; see also Kovač 2006, p. 104), despite the fact that there were no analyses indicating that changes in the direction dictated by the Bologna reform were necessary or constructive for the future development of tertiary education in the country (Kellermann 2006, p. 34; Kovač 2006, p. 104). Nonetheless, the Bologna reform introduced new concepts, new terminology, and new ways of thinking to teacher education programmes in Slovenia and thus significantly changed the way teachers are educated: a new, performance- and competence-oriented paradigm emerged (Kotnik 2006, p. 85; Tancig and Devjak 2006, p. 9). Indeed, competence is the central concept of the Bologna agreement, yet the term itself, it is often claimed, has a range of meanings, creates confusion, and has no scientific basis (Kotnik 2013).

Another criticism of Bologna reform needs to be mentioned. Although the main focus of the Bologna reform is supposed to be the reform of education content, many ongoing discussions and dilemmas relate to formal issues, such as study programme levels (Medveš 2006, p. 7; Peček and Lesar 2011). While most faculties wanted to maintain uniform, single-cycle studies unchanged, as there were no obvious problems with the former system, the pressure for

two-cycle studies prevailed via the question of the employability of graduates from first-cycle degrees (Medveš 2006). Formally, faculties came to terms and provided options for two-cycle studies; in reality, however, graduates of first-cycle degrees in teacher education have remained unemployable, as the required level of education for all teaching positions, according to Bologna reform, is a second-cycle degree or 300 ECTS.

During the implementation of the Bologna reform, it was often said by its critics that it represented a break with the tradition of European universities: instead of seeing knowledge as value in and of itself, the reform frames knowledge as an 'investment', replacing the humanist, European tradition of higher education in the humanities with the economic, utilitarian pursuit of studies as a commodity (Medveš 2006, p. 8). Indeed, Kellermann (2006, p. 34) points out that the Bologna reform is concerned with employability, mobility, and competitiveness, but overlooks the traditional ideals of universities, such as research for the sake of scientific progress and the development of well-educated people. Consequently, the fundamental motivation of students and teachers to pursue their studies from places of questioning, curiosity, and criticism has been replaced with a capitalist motivation based on employability and market value (Kellermann 2006, p. 30). Kotnik (2013, p. 166) comes to similar conclusions, while Kroflič (2014, p. 11) takes this further and claims that in education profession this leads to unprofessionalism and the bureaucratisation of study and research.

Such changes, however, affect not only the pedagogical work of teachers in tertiary education but also their research (Kroflič 2014). In this area too, competitiveness and usefulness of research play their role, leading researchers to non-academic research proposals. By itself this might not be an issue; however, fundamental, theoretical research studies in education are lacking. Due to appointment criteria, teachers in higher education are required to prove the relevance and usefulness of their research internationally, which effectively means that they need to publish more papers abroad than at home. Additionally, Slovenian publications and journals increasingly use English rather than Slovenian as their working language, in an attempt to be more open to international readerships. Again, by itself, publications abroad and English as working language might not be an issue; however, consequently, Slovenian terminology related to education is neglected, as are material issues and questions specific to Slovenian educational system (Lesar and Peček 2009).

Some Possible Futures for Teacher Education

In conclusion, Slovenia currently faces a range of dilemmas and questions—as well as opportunities for future changes—in its teacher education system. At the time when the Bologna programmes were drafted, strong opposition arose to spreading teacher education programmes over a two-cycle degree as it was hard to ensure that graduates from the first-cycle degree would still be employable. Indeed, there are not many jobs available for them, and therefore most students continue their studies to attain a second-cycle degree that provides them with sufficient qualifications to work as teachers. It is thus questionable whether or not a two-cycle degree for a teacher education programme makes sense, given that the second-cycle is effectively essential in any case: perhaps it would be better to have a single-cycle, five-year study programme (300 ECTS). Another reason for questioning the reasonableness of two-cycle teacher education programmes is the mobility between some programmes. A student who wishes to transfer from one study programme to another upon completion of the first-cycle degree can do this by fulfilling additional differential study requirements of up to 60 ECTS. For some second-cycle programmes, however, this is not enough, which puts the fundamental quality of their education under question. This discrepancy is particularly vexing in the class teacher programme since it is very difficult to ensure the comparability of knowledge gained in one year (second-cycle degree), despite the additional 60 ECTS, against students who have completed their first-cycle degree in the class teacher programme (earning 240 ECTS). At this point in time, it looks very likely that class teacher programmes will become single-cycle, five-year study programmes at all faculties of education in Slovenia, which might be the best solution for this issue.

Another dilemma relates to the question of entry exams. In order to acquire better quality student teachers, it is urgent that thorough entry exams are introduced which would test not only candidates' knowledge but also their aptitude for working with children (e.g., Ažman et al. 2019). There is an agreement between all three universities in Slovenia which educate preschool teachers to introduce entry exams. Whether or not this will actually happen—and whether or not entry exams will be extended to other teacher education programmes—remains to be seen. There is strong opposition to this proposal by those who claim that the right to education is universal and that it is the responsibility of employers to decide who they employ (more on this topic can be found in Peček and Macura 2019).

Teacher education does not feature in public awareness as frequently as teachers' working conditions, fiercely fought for by teacher unions. Nevertheless, when there are pressing challenges in basic and upper secondary education, civic initiatives often arise to demand better quality education for teachers and better teachers. In particular, they demand that teacher education programmes pay more attention to the development of emotional, social, and spiritual intelligence, plus argue that the ability of teachers to facilitate dialogic co-creation, teamwork, and pupils' upbringing is as important as their technical expertise (e.g., *Civilna pobuda. Kakšno šolo hočemo? (Civil initiative. What kind of school we want?)* 2009).

Professional and scientific conferences and research papers often make calls for a review of the content of teacher education programmes, primarily in terms of what skills and knowledge teachers lack. The list of themes often cited is long (e.g., EADSNE 2012; Messner et al. 2016). However, initial teacher education fundamentally cannot prepare teachers to be fully able to respond to each and every challenge encountered in their teaching career. Challenges change, as do doctrines, and therefore the most appropriate solutions do too. It is thus necessary that the teacher acquires solid and wide-ranging initial knowledge that will enable them to meet emerging challenges confidently and independently. At the same time, initial teacher education must be supplemented by a rich system of continuous education which helps teachers to update and upgrade their skills throughout their careers and in schools the holistic assistance systems such as school counselling services need to be in place to support them.

Some challenges posed to the continuous teacher professional development system, such as funds to cover the material costs of participation in CPD programmes and the ability to cover for teachers' absences, have already been discussed before. It can be added here that this system has become outdated—last reformed in the 1990s and subject to only minor changes since then—and no longer sufficiently motivates teachers towards further professional development (e.g., Ažman et al. 2019). CPD programmes financed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports are, at present, only a minor part of the activities available to teaching staff in Slovenia for their professional development. However, these activities are widely scattered, their funding comes from different sources, and there are no clear methods for measuring their effects in terms of better quality work carried out by teachers and teaching institutions. Going forwards, there is a need for a nation-wide, consistent, and fact-based strategy of teacher education professional development. All training and education activities should be connected in one cohesive system which clearly defines the role and the duty of formal and informal continuous

teacher education. Indeed, this is becoming even more important now, when it is under question whether or not the current teacher promotion system tied to continuous professional development remains the right way to motivate teachers for further education.

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