

Who are the teacher educators?

PLA in Iceland on the quality, the professionalism and the education of the educators of teachers¹

In recent years there has been intense discussion about the teacher as a professional: As a reflective, creative, progressive and a truly knowledgeable expert, a team player with a solid knowledge of the basic aims of education; an expert with a profound understanding of how these aims are achieved, and a good of appreciation of the relevant subject matter and how it is being transformed into competencies: thus having a broad understanding of the curriculum and of the pupils and how they become educated. The motivation for this discussion is the conviction that teachers play an essential role in the learning process of their pupils.

When the focus is on teacher education, it seems reasonable to expect the same crucial role for teacher educators: they play a crucial role in the learning process of student teachers. Discussions about the quality of teacher education therefore should include reflections on the quality of teacher educators. This has led to a growing appreciation in European member states of the need to undertake a thorough debate on the nature of the professionalism of teacher educators. This is the topic of the present background paper.

As teacher education is a wide ranging phenomenon, arranged in Europe in a large variety of institutional settings, there is a need to clarify the concept of 'teacher educator': is it those educators that are working in pre-service, in-service or CPD, or all of these? Does it include all those working in universities or those working in schools as mentors, those working in (commercial or non-commercial) institutions that offer CPD-activities for teachers in schools? The list can be quite long.

For all those involved, the principal question can be asked: what should they know, what are their credentials and in what capacity should they be regarded as teacher educators? What, indeed, characterises the professionalism of teacher educators? What are the criteria necessary for calling oneself a teacher educator? And of course the next question: Who are responsible for the quality of the teacher educators and of their education? Can they be identified?

The answers to these questions may of course vary considerably from one educational system to the next depending on the institutional traditions of teacher education. But we are assuming that there are some common characteristics.

In order to review these questions, whether there is a genuine problem to be tackled, and if so, how policies might come towards addressing it, a PLA activity is being proposed as a forum for the discussion. The focus of this PLA is to exchange existing policy practices on the quality, professionalism and education of teacher education in European member states and from this, to derive lessons that can be learned for each member state on policies that stimulate the quality and professionalism of teacher educators, thus contributing to the quality of teacher education.

Iceland offers to host this discussion as it is in the midst of a lively discussion about a series of new laws on education, inter alia a law extending teacher education from three to five years.

¹ A paper originally written by Jón Torfi Jónasson, but with substantial improvements, gracefully suggested by Marco Snoek. I extend my thanks to him. The paper still shows merging of somewhat different approaches, but probably more of slightly different terminology.

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A background paper

This background paper is presented in the context of a Peer Learning Activity of the Thematic Working Group on Professional Development of Teachers of the European Commission.

This PLA will be held in Iceland in 2010. This Peer Learning Activity on the one hand builds on a discussion of issues being raised in the reorganisation of teacher education in Iceland.² On the other hand, the PLA has to be seen in the European and perhaps the global context where policy discourse on improving teacher education has been prominent. In particular the European Union has been extensively discussing the development of educational structures and reconstruction of teacher education.

The quality of teachers has received considerable attention in the European policy debate, both in policy studies and policy papers³. Much less attention has been given to the quality of teacher educators. In 2008 ETUCE, the European Trade Union Committee for Education published a policy document which also included a chapter on the quality of teacher educators. In November 2009 the Council of the European Union published its conclusions on the professional development of teachers and school leaders, which invited the European Commission to 'prepare a study of the existing arrangements in Member States for selecting, recruiting and training teacher educators'. In 2009 a first small scale study on existing policy practices on the quality of teacher educators in different member states was published (Snoek, Swennen & Van der Klink, 2009).

Therefore, the Thematic Working Group on the Professional Development of Teachers has decided to stimulate the peer learning process between member states in this issue. As part of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ("ET 2020"), one of the PLAs will be dedicated to the quality of teacher educators. .

² References to the appropriate literature are hardly present; a summary of the relevant Icelandic, Nordic, European, and US discussion, including that of TALIS, exists in a draft but is not directly referred to here.

³ For instance see:

- The Teaching Profession in Europe: Profile, trends and concerns. Report 1. Initial training and transition to working life of teachers in general lower secondary education. (Eurydice, September 2002).
- European Commission. (2005). Testing Conference on the Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications 20th - 21st June 2005. European Commission.
- How the best-performing school systems come out on top. McKinsey & Company, 2007.
- Improving the Quality of Teacher Education. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT {SEC(2007) 931, SEC(2007)933.
- TEACHER EDUCATION POLICY IN EUROPE: a Voice of Higher Education Institutions Edited by Brian Hudson and Pavel Zgaga. Umeå 2008.
- *Evaluating and Rewarding the quality of Teachers*. International Practices. OECD 2009
- Teachers' Professional Development: Europe in international comparison. *Executive summary and main conclusions*. Jaap Scheerens (Editor) Univ. of Twente 2009.
- Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS. Executive summary. OECD 2009.

1. The Icelandic context: background to the interest of Iceland to host the PLA

For their part the School of Education, University of Iceland and the University of Akureyri, are prepared to participate in planning a PLA focussing on the quality, professionalism and education of teacher educators. This PLA can contribute to the intense Icelandic discussions on the composition of teacher education and on who should be planning and participating in teacher education. We suggest two principal reasons, why this is both an appropriate and a very critical time for such discussion within the Icelandic context.

I. The first reason refers to the fundamental changes in context in Iceland. Large, even dramatic changes have taken place in the economy of Iceland, but for our purposes more importantly the whole legal framework concerning education has undergone dramatic changes, in particular that extending the teacher education programme, both for pre- and primary school teachers from three to five years. The legal framework concerning pre-primary,⁴ primary, i.e. compulsory,⁵ upper secondary⁶ and higher education⁷ and adult education⁸ have been changed in the recent years. Some have entailed fairly marked changes.

In particular the legal framework on teacher education has recently also been changed quite dramatically. In particular the minimum requirement for pre-school and primary school educators has been changed from a three year B.Ed. degree to a five year M.Ed. degree.⁹ Thus the new laws require a masters degree for teacher certification at all school levels, pre schools, compulsory schools and upper secondary schools, after 1st of July 2011. Until then a three years study to B.Ed. degree has been sufficient for teacher certification in pre schools and compulsory schools and one year additional study in pedagogy on top of the BA/BS degree in subject, for teacher certification in upper secondary schools. Based on the new laws, a directive has been establish defining the amount of ECTS dedicated for subjects and for pedagogy within each program. Until this directive from the ministry of education, the content in TE program has been decided within each institution. The issues that are most debated are perhaps:

- a. What should be hallmark of the two added years of teacher education? Or put in a slightly different perspective: what does it entail to require a masters degree for becoming a teacher? Is there more academic emphasis? More emphasis on specific subjects? Or more field based work? Would practicing teacher become more involved in teacher education?
- b. With the merger of the University of Iceland and the Education University in 2008, there was a widespread expectation that teacher education would disperse to the various departments and the University as a whole would become responsible in teacher education. Thus the spectrum of those becoming teacher educators would change dramatically. It is still not clear at all to what extent this might or will happen.

⁴ Law on pre-primary education, [Lög um leikskóla](#), 90/2008

⁵ Law on primary education, [Lög um grunnskóla](#), 91/2008

⁶ Law on upper secondary education, [Lög um framhaldsskóla](#), 92/2008

⁷ Law on universities, [Lög um háskóla](#), 63/2006; Law on state universities, [Lög um opinbera háskóla](#), 85/2008

⁸ Proposed bill on continuing education, [Frumvarp til laga um framhaldsmenntun](#), from November 24th, 2009.

⁹ Law on the education and hiring of school teachers and principals in pre-primary, primary and upper secondary schools, [Lög um menntun og ráðningu kennara og skólastjóra við leikskóla, grunnskóla og framhaldsskóla](#), 87/2008.

- c. The third issue is the division or categories of teachers. What should be common and what should be essentially different in the education of pre-primary, lower primary, lower secondary, or upper secondary teachers? Where should the dividing lines be? Related to this is the question of specialisation of teachers at all levels.

II. The second reason refers to the multiplicity of strong interests from a wide variety of stakeholders wanting to participate actively in the moulding of teacher education; this makes the process of designing the programme both very complex and quite dynamic. In the extensive discussion in Iceland on the nature and composition of teacher education in the anticipation of the changes in the various laws on education, a variety of strong and contrasting views relating to teacher education have emerged. The question is now actively pursued in Iceland: who should design the curriculum of teachers? The ministry, the School of Education, the University as a whole and what should be role played by interested professional stakeholders such as the municipalities (who run the pre-primary and primary schools), the teacher unions and the parents association?

2. The profession of the teacher educator

2.1. Who are teacher educators?

Before addressing the main theme of the PLA, the quality of teacher educators, we need to address the question 'Who are the teacher educators?'

Using the term 'teacher educator' creates the assumption that there is some professional group that can be identified (or identifies themselves) as teacher educators. However, this is not always the case. Many countries do not refer to teacher educators as a specific separate group. In many cases those working within teacher education are seen as teachers in higher education or sometimes even more general: as teachers. This reflects the multiple identity of teacher educators (e.g. in the work of Swennen), where educators have an identity as a teacher in general (as a specialist who is a master in the profession that he prepares his students for), an identity as a teacher in higher education (emphasizing higher education qualities like participation in academic research) and a unique identity of second order teacher (who teaches about teaching).

The identity that teacher educators feel themselves committed to mostly, varies according to personal preferences and context. However all three identities are relevant to all those who support student teachers in becoming a teacher, whether one is a university teacher on a specific academic subject, a mentor of student teachers in school, a didactics and methodology teacher within the school of education, or a in-service CPD trainer for teachers in schools.

For the aim of the PLA we define 'teacher educators' as '*those involved in the pre-service and in-service education and learning of student teachers and teachers*'. Therefore the definition includes university based and school based teacher educators and mentors, subject and pedagogy specialists, those supporting teaching practice, et cetera.

With this broad definition in mind we will reflect on the profession of the teacher educator.

2.2. A multidisciplinary profession

Teacher education is by no means a simple enterprise. A fundamental issue in current policymaking is to probe to what extent teacher education should be seen as a unitary professional task, requiring a core expertise within the Schools of (Teacher) Education or universities. Teacher education is clearly a multidisciplinary, or perhaps more importantly an interdisciplinary undertaking, requiring an eclectic and a varied expertise. The institutional location of this expertise varies, being either concentrated in one single faculty of education, or spread out through different disciplinary faculties, with a strong focus on the university expertise or with the explicit acknowledgement of the expertise of mentors in school as school based teacher educators.¹⁰

2.3. A differentiated profession

The involvement in the pre-service and in-service education and learning of student teachers and teachers can have a variety of appearances, varying from:

¹⁰ The variation in institutional contexts for Teacher Education in Europe is described in the final report of the EC study on Teacher Education in Europe (Finnish Institute for Educational Research, 2009).

- the teaching of specific knowledge or skills to (student) teachers,¹¹ on a Bachelors, Masters or a practical level
- the support, coaching and mentoring of (student) teachers in their teaching practice and in the development of their professional identity, during their induction phase or during their career development
- the formative or summative assessment of (student) teachers
- the development of the (pre- and in-service) curriculum for teacher education, including innovations in the content and didactics of teacher education (like case based methods, problem based methods or approaches based on the activity theory (Ellis, et al, 2010).¹²
- research in topics that are part of the content or the didactics of the teacher education curriculum

2.4. Curriculum

The curriculum of pre- and in-service teacher education combines a wide variety of themes and topics.¹³ The knowledge base that teachers need is broadly divided in the areas subject knowledge and pedagogy.¹⁴ However a closer study reveals a more differentiated range of topics, which are summarised in Figure 1.

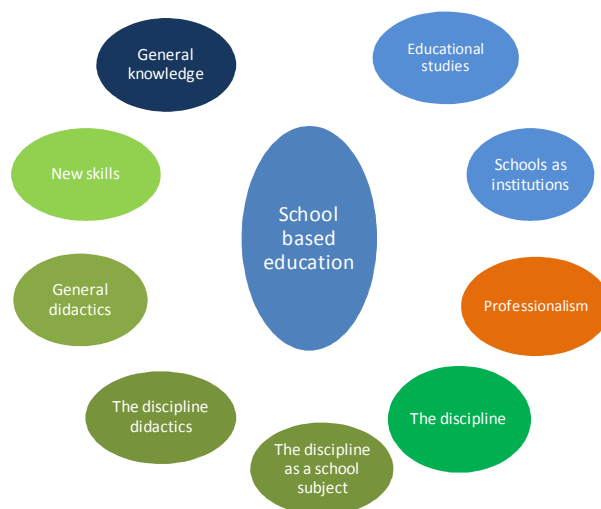


Figure 1. A schematic presentation of some of the major components of a teacher education programme (see the appendix for more details on each of the topics). The different ellipses are not meant to demonstrate isolated tasks, but to emphasise topics that should receive serious attention in the discussion of the organisation of teacher education.

¹¹ Often the specific knowledge taught to future teachers is not taught to them as teachers, but as specialists in the subject, e.g. physics as to physicists.

¹² Ellis, V., Edwards, A., & Smagorinsky, P. (Eds.). (2010). *Cultural-historical perspectives on teacher education and development : learning teaching*. London: Routledge.

¹³ See e.g. the final report of the EC study on Teacher Education in Europe (Finnish Institute for Educational Research, 2009)

¹⁴ It should be acknowledged that there is a substantial problem of terminology between cultures, e.g as it relates to the terms, education, pedagogy and didactics.

It shows the fundamental inter- and multidisciplinary character of teacher education. It is very important to appreciate that the exact classification of these topics is not an issue at all. It can be done in many different ways. The principal point being made by presenting the figure and the following clarification is that there are a multitude of elements that might be included in teacher education that are often not emphasised in the general or semi-professional discussion.¹⁵

- General knowledge for teachers, such as
 - The mother tongue (often a major topic at primary level for all teachers)
 - Literacy
 - The general use and effects of ICT
 - Manipulation of school data, e.g. student statistics
- Subject studies, including
 - The discipline
 - The discipline as a school subject
 - Subject didactics (content based pedagogy)
 - 21st skills or competencies (e.g. the Commission's 8 competencies)
- Pedagogy, including
 - Educational studies
 - General didactics
- Education and society, including
 - The education system
 - Schools as institutions, their nature, role and responsibilities
 - 21st century demands (like gender and cultural equality, democratic values, citizenship, moral issues)
- Professionalism, including
 - Research skills
 - Innovation, school development, entrepreneurship and creativity
 - Self-responsibility and self-accountability
 - Professional ethics

The structure of and balance between these elements of the teacher education curriculum will vary between member states depending on their national context and educational structure. In the figure we also added the teaching practice, field work. It is often debated, how extensive this should be, what its nature should be, who should be responsible and even how this should be classified in the division between subject and educational studies.

For the PLA the relevant question is what demands this multi-disciplinary character of the teacher education curriculum place on the teacher educators. The variety of topics can easily lead to a fragmented curriculum, where respective teacher educators only take responsibility for their own part and where there is competition about which part is the most important. Who should be responsible for the coherence of all these elements, creating a holistic view on becoming a teacher? Is it the responsibility of only a few, or all teacher educators? And would we expect all teacher educators to have an understanding of all the critical aspects in the above list?

¹⁵ Here we present a classification that reflects differences in terminology between different approaches. I regard those differences not very important in the general discussion, but of course it is important to come to an agreement about what terms should be used. But my main objective is to highlight the complexity of the task of educating teacher educators, not to provide the proper classification of these tasks. I am prepared to stand corrected on those issues.

2.5. Field connections – school based education

As a large and an increasing part of the training of initial teacher education takes place in the field, i.e. within the school, the nature and extent of this part of teacher training and CPD must be reassessed. The consensus is that strong emphasis must be placed on a genuinely integrated co-operation with the schools or the field, requiring the schools to become, not only associate but central partners in the enterprise. This leads to questions regarding the quality of school-based 'teacher educators' or mentors. Do they need the same professionalism as university based teacher educators? Who is responsible for their quality? What support is given to them? How should the field experience be intertwined into the curricular discussion of teacher education?

2.6. Research

A very strong general development in the area of teacher education concerns the role of research; both the importance of research for the development of the field in general but also with reference to the potential teachers themselves. A forceful demand exists for tying both the education of teachers and teaching practice to research. A professional teacher (certainly at Master's level) should become a reflective practitioner, able to look systematically, pensively and critically into own practice and follow the developments in the field. This brings up questions about the involvement of teacher educators in research. It is expected that the professionalism of all teacher educators should involve a solid background in educational research. On the one hand they must be able to support students in the research they undertake. On the other hand they must be role models for their students, studying the quality and outcomes of their teaching. The upgrading of teacher education from the Bachelor's to the Master's level will ask for close attention to the upgrading of staff at teacher education institutes and schools (where school-based teacher educators support student teachers in their research projects), creating a dynamic symbiosis between the teacher educator as a practitioner and a researcher.

2.7. Professional role models

As teachers of teachers, teacher educators are important role models for (future) teachers. This is based on the strong belief that education in the wide sense, must be characterized by the formation of an individual and the society in which she or he participates, rather than transmission of information or knowledge in the narrower sense. When we see the teacher as an active player within an institution, as a player in team with a multiplicity of roles and tasks, this must affect both the didactics within the Schools of education and the role examples that are set by teacher educators, bringing the central educational values and norms to life. This in turn requires a strong sense of mission and inculcation into the culture of education, and not just a preparation for the technique of teaching.

A central aspect of being a role model is connected to the professionalism we expect from teachers. When we expect teachers to show extended professionalism, exercising leadership in schools, aiming at professional collaboration with colleagues inside and outside the school, having an inquiring attitude and an open focus of society and its needs, taking responsibility for defining transparent standards for quality performance and showing willingness to account for the quality of their work, these qualities are certainly expected to be part of the professionalism of teacher educators.

2.1. Lifelong learning of teachers

Similarly, the lifelong learning dimension of all professional education must be taken into account. It is clear that the initial pre-service education only accounts for a very limited part of the

development of any professional. It is increasingly accepted, because of relatively fast changes in the content and tasks of education that emphasis must be placed on the idea of teacher education being an ongoing process.¹⁶ This view demands merging pre-service and in-service programmes (including induction), seeing teacher education as a project being characterised more by being a partner in the development of education within and around the school system, using the perspective of the lifelong career and development of the teacher, rather than being seen simply as an initial stepping stone.

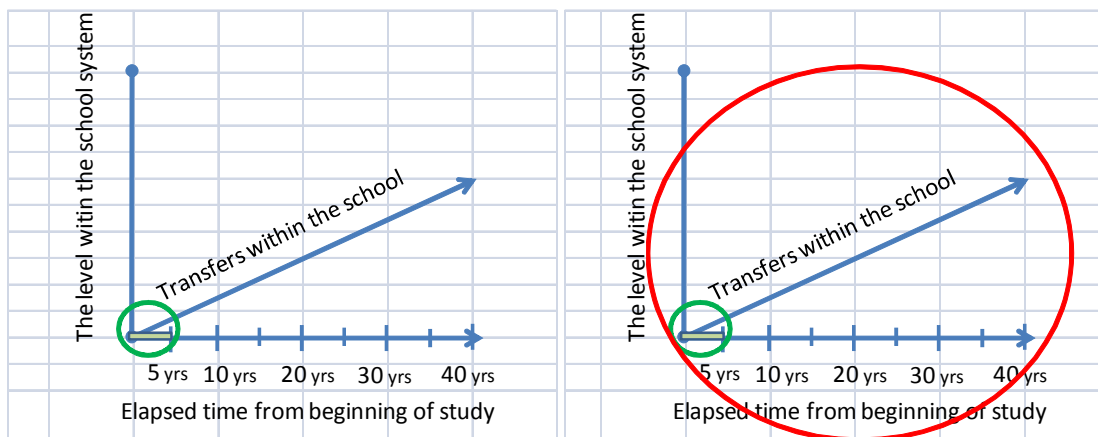


Figure 2. The three dimensions showing the scope of teacher education. The vertical dimensions indicates the levels within the educational system, the horizontal line shows the professional time and the oblique line is meant to indicate the various specialisations within the system that are gradually being distinguished from the normal teaching jobs. The frame on the left has a circle indicating the traditional focus of teacher education. The larger circle on the right indicates a scope covering the professional life of a teacher, as the paper suggests should be the perspective adopted in the discussion.

Discussions on the quality of teacher educators should therefore include those that are involved in in-service teacher education. And all involved in teacher education should place their contribution to the learning of (student) teachers in the light of this lifelong learning process.

¹⁶ In the Finnish study, it is very clear how fuzzy the arrangement for in-service education is in many countries, even though this varies greatly, see Teacher Education in Europe (Finnish Institute for Educational Research, 2009).

3. Policy issues with respect to the quality, professionalism and education of teacher educators¹⁷

The issues that are raised while discussing the profession of the teacher educator lead to important policy questions that will provide a focus for peer learning between European member states.

These issues will be used to discuss experiences in policy making in different member states, trying to identify good practices and elements that can inspire policy in other contexts. The discussions can also lead to a stronger awareness of opportunities in national or European policy making that are still unexplored.

In this way we hope that the PLA will contribute to the quality, professionalism and education of teacher educators to Europe and therefore contribute to the further strengthening of the quality, professionalism and education of teachers in schools.

These questions might cover the following topics:

- Standards for teacher educators:
 - What are the basic ingredients in the professional identity of teacher educators?
 - Who should set or develop these standards?
 - What variation is necessary or sensible to recognize the diversity of teacher educators?
 - How can ministries support and stimulate the development of professional standards for teacher educators? Or whose role should it be?
 - What might be the role of professional stakeholders, such as unions or the civil authorities that run the schools?
 - In what way could or should professional standards be connected to systems for professional registration, appraisal, recognition, job promotion, etc.
 - Should the standards be specific for teacher educators or largely similar to those of most other academics?¹⁸
- Professional identity of teacher educators
 - What are the benefits of a strong and separate professional identity of teacher educators?
 - How is such an identity formed?
 - Can the professional identity of teacher educators be strengthened?
 - To whom should it extend?
 - What are the benefits a heterogeneous composition of identities?

¹⁷ Largely suggested by Marco Snoek.

¹⁸ See e.g. the discussion of changing professional identities within academia and their diversification in Gordon and Witchchurch (2010).

- Strengthening teacher education
 - How can a focus on professionalism and professional standards for teacher educators contribute to the strengthening of the quality of teacher education, especially with respect to:
 - Coherence in the teacher curriculum
 - The partnership of schools and universities underlying teacher education
 - Innovation of teacher education
 - Innovation and development in the schools?
 - The strengthening of research-based teacher education?
- Educating teacher educators
 - What ways exist to become a teacher educator? In what respects do these ways acknowledge professional standards that are expected from teacher educators? What are the opportunities to develop a 'curriculum to become a teacher educator'?
 - What induction measures exist for beginning teacher educators? What should those include?
 - What opportunities for lifelong learning of teacher educators exist? In what way is LLL and CPD¹⁹ for teacher educators considered as a right and an obligation?
 - What are institutional infrastructures facilitating or constraining the integration of LLL and CPD into either, the institutions of teacher education, the schools or the contracts with the teachers?
- Roles and responsibilities
 - What roles and responsibilities are necessary for the different stakeholders: ministry, universities, Heads of TEIs, professional associations of teacher educators, individual teacher educators, with respect to the definition of professional standards, 'initial education', induction and CPD for teacher educators?
 - How can governmental policy contribute to the development of a strong collective professional self-awareness of teacher educators?

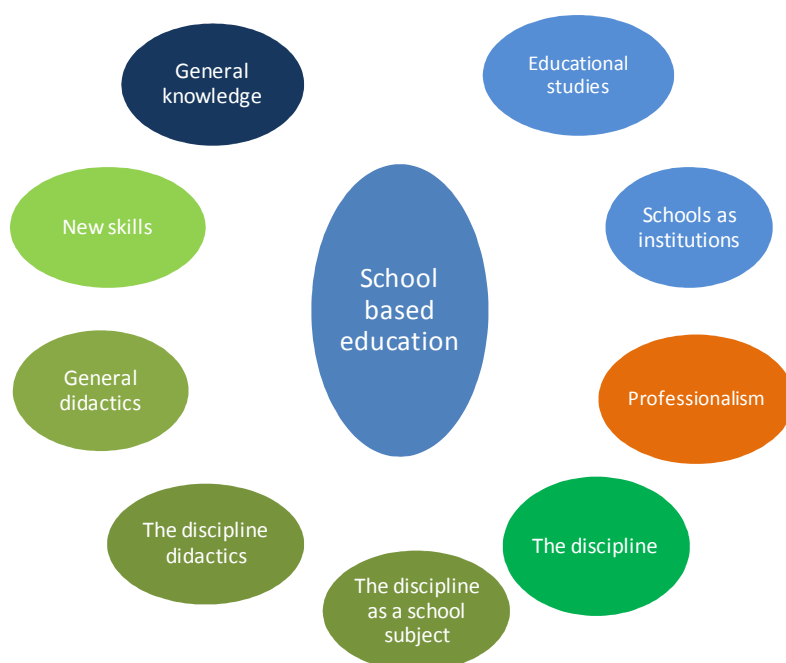
These issues should be tackled very explicitly and extracted for an open discussion. They are of considerable practical importance for the development of education in the European countries and should be a visible and an integral part of the more general discussion about the development of education.

¹⁹

LLL: Lifelong learning, CPD, continuous professional development

4. Appendix

Here we present some further thoughts on the organisation and curriculum of teacher education. There are two related overarching questions: What should be the content and structure of the curriculum of teacher education and what should be the background or professionalism of those who undertake the task of being teacher educators? The curriculum of pre- and in-service teacher education combines a wide variety of themes and topics. The knowledge base that teachers need is broadly divided in the areas subject knowledge and pedagogy. However a closer study reveals a more differentiated range of topics, as shown in the Figure.



- **Figure 3. (A replication of the Fig. 1). A schematic presentation of some of the major components of a teacher education programme.**

Educational studies²⁰

We suggest here a general category, that is neither the subject nor its didactics, but are nevertheless issues that form the basis of becoming a professional teacher; an educator. We want to make more of this than is often done. This concerns the philosophical (or political, or social or economic) justification for having compulsory education and an extensive discussion what education is all about; what on earth is the school system for and education for that matter? A discussion we feel is often missing or only paid lip service. Given the volume of educational systems, the priority it is given on the political agendas, the rhetoric it attracts at the time of crisis or the prominence it is given as a part of a reform process, we suggest that this should be given a

²⁰ We accept that this might be categorised as pedagogy, but we want to make a clear distinction between overarching educational issues and issues within the didactic field. We are not quite clear how this is best done.

much a higher and a more pragmatic priority in teacher education. And the ingredients of the debate should be within the grasp of all teacher educators, not only a few educational theorists.

Within this framework we would have the general curricular discussion about how the aims of education at each level are determined and how the balance is decided between the disciplines or competencies and how the system (and thus the individual schools and teachers) responds to pressures from those demanding more emphasis on science, or industry, or the economy, multicultural issues, literacy, citizenship, democracy, the arts, personal development, creativity and self-sustainability. And how these pressures might be responded to when the respective arguments are accepted.

Thus we suggest that a deep understanding of the differing views about the aims and organisation²¹ of education should not be treated as an interesting academic exercise but a crucial issue for the development of education. It should be given much prominence as it is crucial for anybody to understand what education is about, or at least to understand how the different interest groups pull in different directions. It may then be discussed to what extent the thorough understanding of these issues should be that part and parcel of the approach or understanding of all those who teach the teachers. This concerns the rationale of the school, and is thus fundamental to the operation of its professional staff.

Within this general category we would also place also various issues concerning the individual student (and teacher!), e.g. psychology of learning and learning difficulties, on psychological and personal development and on individual differences. Also themes related to sociological issues ranging from peer and group effects to class differences and how these are often quite dramatically reflected within the daily school life. These are often classified as pedagogical issues, but I don't think the terminology should be at stake but we should accept the multitude of issues that should be tackled in professionalization of teachers.

Schools as institutions

The general understanding that the school as an organisation, has a large role to play over and above that of the individual teacher, is gaining ground. This calls for leadership, division of labour and teamwork, which must be a part of the theoretical and practical education of teachers. A good teacher should have an understanding of the dynamics of an institution, and how it develops (or not) and the value of its institutional culture and how it may be developed. Often this is not taken to be a part of the professional education of workers in the social system. Furthermore the schools are increasingly supposed to perform internal assessment, mould their own school curricula and systematically develop the educational programme within the school, all of which call for professional understanding of these tasks and how they are a part of an institutional programme and not only that of individual actors. There are also several quite taxing tasks that the teachers, or at least some of them, have to cope with such as dealing with mobbing, and dealing with problems within the classroom and cooperating constructively with all with parents; tasks they have to be effectively trained to cope with. All these must be seen as institutional issues and in many schools they affect dramatically what goes on in a normal school day. But we suggest that even though they are in some sense mainly institutional issues they are nevertheless an essential part of the training of each individual teacher. Within this category are also more general issues, such as ensuring gender equality within the school and cultivating the democratic principles the students are expected to adopt in their lives. Again these should be seen as the task

²¹ Under this rubric we would place the perennial discussion about day-care versus kindergarten and in what sense pre-schools should be seen as schools. Also the debate about formal versus informal education and how all education is gradually being formalised and institutionalised.

of the institution, in the sense that if it is only up to individual teachers to ensure their pursuit, a lack of coherence may make any individual effort much weaker. Thus developing an understanding of institutional issues and fostering the institutional culture among the future teachers must be a major task of any institution of teacher education. This does not require any lessening of the importance of the individual competencies or entrepreneurship. On the contrary it is meant to foster the blossoming of individual strength and differences in a strong team.

General knowledge: The general academic base of professional teacher education

It is traditionally accepted that the two basic ingredients of teacher education, are the discipline base and the didactic (or the pedagogic) component; above we have suggested that such a dichotomy is an unhelpful oversimplification. Inter alia this invites the question if there is a general component of professional teacher education, related to neither of these particular areas, even if we classify educational and institutional studies as pedagogy. Is there some general content knowledge that should be within the purview of all teachers, in addition to their special subject or field? Yes there probably is but it may vary according to the level of school we are talking about, even though such difference is probably sometimes overestimated.

It is not clear what should be treated as general subjects for all teachers. But there are certainly important themes that we expect to be within the grasp of each or most teachers. We suggest that topics such as literacy, the use of the mother tongue, efficient communication skills (both for using and teaching) and substantial mastery of some aspects of ICT. Perhaps we should place research methodology under this heading but we might also set it under the heading of professionalism. We speculate to what extent these elements should be within the purview of all teacher educators. In fact we think they should, but should not be classified as didactics or even pedagogy. But being important nevertheless.

To make the general problem more concrete, do we expect all teachers (e.g. in natural sciences at the primary level or physics or carpentry at the upper secondary level) to take professional courses in communication in the mother tongue, or in the way ICT²² is changing the culture of our school children, or in research methods relevant to research within the classroom?

Professionalism

To become a professional is something much more than taking a number of courses from one or more departments in a university. It means being encultured into an environment and into a role that is gradually developed. An environment that makes considerable demands on each individual as an independent professional but also as a member of a team. This requires understanding of the dynamics of team work, ethical principles, professional standards and what it takes in terms of training, and dedication to become an expert, to become an accomplished nuanced professional. This requires understanding of the profession, this requires time and dedication.²³ This applies to teacher education as much as any other profession.

Here we want to consider (see e.g. the chapter on policy issues above) what issues should be included in the training of a professional, in particular what should be general considerations about the framework of the programme and what should be counted as curricular themes?

²² We are not talking about ICT as a tool for teaching different subjects. That is a different issue that may be placed with the subject didactics.

²³ Even though one doesn't want to make too much of the notion of it taking 10 years or 10000 hours to become an expert in intricate task, it may still be relevant consider how the institutions view the professional training element. See e.g. Ericsson (2009).

This begs the question about the nature of the whole programme of professional training: to what extent can a dedicated professional be trained to a high standard of professionalism within a fragmented, eclectic programme? It also begs the question: to what extent can we train professionals with only marginal immersion into the environment they are going to work in. Does the answer to this question point to more field relationship in pre-service training, to an apprenticeship period during the initial stages of a new job, or continuous professional development – or all of these?

In our discussion we are investigating what should be the spectrum of issues that the professional teacher educator should master and convey but also (in this section) what specific issues fall within the purview of the curriculum of the professional discourse and training.

General didactics

It is generally accepted that a professional teacher should master a number of very important skills related to teaching in general. This ranges from understanding the importance of using a variety of assessment methods, to understanding the somewhat intricate problems of validity and reliability of each approach.

Also a thorough understanding of the use of various technologies, and in particular their strengths and weakness as educational tools, but inter alia to be able to adopt distance education in a variety of circumstances. The general problem of adapting teaching to individual students is a major concern and should be tackled both from the theoretical and practical standpoint as a general problem, common to all areas of education.

The discipline

This item should include two components. One should be the discussion of what should be the disciplinary components of teacher education, which may vary quite dramatically, depending on the level of the school system for which the teacher is preparing. The other should represent the global discussion on what should be the ingredients of education and thus the teacher education programme. We will touch on both issues.

- ***The explicit traditional content, or subject matter of the school curriculum***

There is no debate that in order to be a competent, inspiring, independent and a dynamic teacher one must master one's field. There are however three questions that must be raised and answered in this connection.

The first is what constitutes a field within the modern debate, such as the EC eight competencies, which are mentioned below.

The second is the relationship between the subject discipline as defined by the university departments and the school subject as typically defined by the ministries of education.

The third question concerns the time it takes to become a sufficient master of a discipline to be able to conduct classes emphasising individualised teaching, problem solving and creativity in the area: How much time, in terms of ECTS units, does it take to master the subject in order to have the qualities referred to above? What type of courses would be most useful, taking into account the different levels of the education system? But it is also important to note, how the answer to these questions must be balanced against other questions or issues raised in other sections of this document.

The following are the traditional subjects considered essential within the compulsory curriculum and indeed as a general ingredient of education at all levels: or are they? They are derived from

the eight areas deemed essential for any modern educational program suggested by the European Commission, see also Figure 4.

- ***Communication in the mother tongue***
- ***Communication in foreign languages***
- ***Mathematical competence***
- ***Basic competencies in natural science and technology***
- ***Basic social and civic competencies***
- ***Cultural awareness and expression***
- ***Digital competence***

There are a number of serious issues that arise in this connection, totally apart from what the list may look like. One is how are these subjects implemented differently for different levels of the educational system?

- ***The reconstruction of the curriculum in light of various debates in recent decades***

In recent years the call for education to attend directly to various competencies and values not implicit in the traditional discipline curriculum has become more pronounced, with a demand for these issues being tackled head on in the schools and thus in the curriculum (see e.g. the previous section). In the Figure we show two examples.

European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, suggests these key areas:	The Partnership for 21st Century Skills; from the USA			
1. Communication in the mother tongue	Core Subjects			
2. Communication in foreign languages	21st century interdisciplinary themes into core subjects			
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology	Information, Media and Technology Skills			
4. Digital competence	Learning and Innovation Skills			
5. Learning to learn	Life and Career Skills			
6. Social and civic competences	Sometimes put as:			
7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship	3 Rs	Reading, writing, arithmetic		
8. Cultural awareness and expression	4 Cs	collaboration, and creativity and innovation		

Figure 4. The left panel shows the Commission's proposal for key competencies.²⁴ The right panel shows a kindred idea from the partnership for 21st century skills in the US.²⁵

Once again an urgent call is made to reconstruct the curriculum at all levels.²⁶ Some of the previous calls for change in emphasis or content have been of a rhetorical nature, partly because

²⁴ See e.g. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/ll-learning/keycomp_en.pdf

²⁵ See material on <http://www.p21.org/> These are two (EC and US) very important frameworks but there are others. We present the two to underscore that it may be to some extent a matter of perspective which areas are selected.

²⁶ As examples there is an EU Communication setting the stage, i.e. *New Skills for New Jobs: Anticipating and matching labour market and skills need*. Also the report *New Skills for New Jobs: Action Now. A report by the Expert Group on New Skills for New Jobs*. The latter report suggests a number of key actions. The question is to what extent these calls are ignored in the general educational discussion and in particular that of teacher education. This varies greatly between countries.

they lack a professional or procedural base within the programme of teacher education and have thus no chance of implementation.²⁷ Nevertheless, if taken seriously, they seem to call for fundamental changes in the way education is conceived and undertaken, both within the general school system and within teacher education. It may indeed be debated how these shall be tackled for teachers at different levels, and by whom within the field of teacher education. Most of these are mentioned or perhaps discussed extensively in the current discourse, but are not considered as *bona fide* independent major tasks within general teacher training; some are though accepted as areas of specialisation (such as special education and ICT, but less so composing education material or curricula).

It is a major task to determine the place of these areas within programmes of teacher education. In particular to what extent they will be moved from the periphery towards the centre of the programmes? They certainly face substantial inertia, both within and outside academia and the traditional parallel questions become, a) how well are the new topics argued for both in terms of theory and implementation and b) how well is a conservative stance justified?

The major question is simply this: if we seriously believe that these should be important characteristics of our education system how should we organise our teacher education to ensure (or at least encourage) their effective and sustained implementation? And a corollary is, how do we ensure that the relevant competencies reach our current teachers?

The discipline as a school subject

As discipline curricula at the university level develop in order to underpin the theoretical advances in the respective disciplines and concurrently the pressure increases on the school system to attend to a variety of roles and values and thus diluting its disciplinary emphasis, the question arises: to what extent is the university based discipline the appropriate preparation for the school system. This begs the question what is the most appropriate disciplinary curriculum and who should teach it to future teachers? Is it the subject specialists within the respective university departments? And thus we ask, who decides what these becoming teachers are being taught? We suggest that the material appropriate for those aiming at a high flying research carrier, may not be the most solid or fruitful preparation for a teacher at the primary or even the secondary level? A related but distinct issue is: what counts as subject teaching of a specific field? What about courses about issues faced by curriculum authors in a particular field? Should they be allowed as disciplinary courses? Such as, what should be the ingredients in the natural science curriculum for 7th-9th graders? Note that these are not didactic courses, they are on the subject and how it relates to technology or the world outside academia. They are on the nature of the discipline as it is mapped onto the school system. Thus the proper disciplinary courses aimed at preparing teachers for the school system may be of high standard and academic rigour, even though they are different from courses preparing for advanced research carrier. Thus the question is important: what counts as disciplinary courses?

The subject didactics, whether modern or traditional

It is now generally accepted that the didactics of a topic or a subject is a crucial part of the professional education of teachers (related to pedagogical content knowledge). A number of very important issues arise, which all touch on the spectrum of areas that range from traditional subject content in academic programmes to very specific didactical issues related to e.g. the use of technology in teaching that particular subject, the appropriate teaching methods, or the valid

²⁷ We suggest that in many cases, there is no, even general, consensus on what the content is, how it shall be taught or evaluated (assessed). Normally the calls for a changed emphasis are not taken seriously and pushed aside by the defenders of the traditional curriculum as an irrelevancy.

evaluation of subject specific issues. The implicit questions are: How important are these topics? What prominence should they be given the curriculum of teacher training, and most importantly whose responsibility is it to ensure their place, given that the programme is run both within the subject departments and teacher training departments?

- *Issues within the arena of traditional didactics*

It is generally accepted that these topics are crucially important within the programmes of teacher training, but it is not clear how it can be ensured that they have a real impact on the teaching practice; in particular on its dynamic development. It appears that these must be emphasised far more than is traditional if a dynamic development of teaching practice is to be ensured or at least enabled.

- *Issues related to the implementation of the modern topics for education*

It is much more difficult to fathom how the implementation of a variety of new topics, discussed above shall be ensured, as compared to the didactics of traditional disciplines as referred to above.²⁸ It is often thought that the latter should not necessarily be seen as specific subjects, neither in the schools nor in teacher training (e.g. teaching for citizenship, or communication or co-operation), but be seen to permeate the whole enterprise. This is perhaps debateable, from the very pragmatic perspective of school development, but most probably a recipe for only a romantic short lived diversion; which means that these ideas will not be taken seriously. But the logistics of how a project including these topics should be implemented have not been thoroughly thought out, e.g. as compared to the traditional subjects. It is absolutely clear that if the implementation is not planned with insight of a dreary pragmatist, the discussion or effort will have no substantial or sustained effect.

Field training – school based education

The importance of weaving together teacher education and school is generally recognised as a crucial part in the education of teachers.²⁹ There are, however, three problems related to this issue in the context we are discussing here. One is that the rationale for the contact is not always clear, i.e. what should happen within the school, e.g. at what stage in the educational process this should take place and on what terms. Second it is not clear what the role the teacher at the mother institution should play in this interaction. Thirdly it is not always clear where the school based experience should be accounted for in the book keeping of teacher education. All these are issues that must be thoroughly discussed when probing the professionalism of teacher educators. A particularly important issue is to what extent the schools and the teachers should be considered as integral part of the teacher training force and thus what their professional contribution should be? Also what should be the financial and organisational responsibility of the school-based work?

Ellis, V., Edwards, A., & Smagorinsky, P. (Eds.). (2010). *Cultural-historical perspectives on teacher education and development : learning teaching*. London: Routledge.

Ericsson, K. A. (2009). Enhancing the development of Professional Performance: Implications from the Study of Deliberate Practice. In K. A. Ericsson (Ed.), *Development of professional expertise toward measurement of expert performance and design of optimal learning environments* (pp. 405-431). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Gordon, G., & Whitchurch, C. (2010). *Academic and professional identities in higher education : the challenges of a diversifying workforce*. New York: Routledge.

²⁸ Above we mentioned multicultural issues, literacy, citizenship, democracy, the arts, personal development, creativity and self-sustainability; but many more could be listed.

²⁹ See e.g. (Ellis, Edwards, & Smagorinsky, 2010).