



## Teacher Education Case Studies in Comparative Perspective

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As the title suggests the focus of the book is set on teacher education, which is lately a quite frequently discussed subject. As a result of serious social and economic changes the formation of knowledge-based society gave huge emphasis to education. The effective production and management of knowledge became essential and strongly connected to economic performance within the knowledge based society. The wide range of highly qualified employees with appropriate competences are also needed to manage rapidly changing working environment, to creatively solve problems, to effectively communicate and cooperate with different actors of their working environment, and of course to confidently use the wide range of opportunities provided by ICT. The vital role of teachers in building of such society is undisputable. Of course the knowledge based society has great impact on learning-teaching processes as well. A teacher must create a different type of learning environment with different focuses, and must act differently within them as before. In consequence of that thinking about teacher education itself, and the actual way teacher training programs work must be changed. This means, the discussed book has chosen its main topic sensitively.

Before we take a deeper look into the book we have to say a few words about its publisher and editors. The volume was published by CHERD (Center for Higher Education Research and Development - Hungary) and was supported by the Visegrad Found. Gabriella Pusztai – one of the editors – is the professor of educational sociology and the head of doctoral program on educational sciences at the University of Debrecen. Her primary research interest is on the influence of social contexts of schools, families and student networks on the academic career. She is interested in private, denominational and minority schools and deals with higher education as well. Ágnes Engler – the other editor – obtained her PhD degree in educational sciences in 2010 at the University of Debrecen. Her main research fields are formal adult education, women in the adult education and in the higher

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education, and the education of inactive adults. Both experts have a strong education-sociological point of view, but the book itself has a much wider interdisciplinary approach, which indicates the openness of the editors. It is one of the strengths of the volume.

The book itself has a clear and coherent structure. It is divided into two main parts, with different goals. Through six different studies the first part provides a close-up for today's teacher education, while the second part gives a four chapters long insight into the future of teachers. The ten studies of the volume are so rich in content and so multi-coloured in approach that it worth to take a closer look on every single one of them.

The first chapter by Simonetta Polenghi and Pierpaolo Triani is a historical overview of the last 250 years in teacher training and teacher profession in Italy. The study identifies the most important changes in thinking about teacher education in Italy in the light of the changes of social and cultural environment. As the study belongs to the first part of the book it also takes great emphasis on detailed description of the 15-20 years long formation process of present Italian framework of teacher education and its most important legal regulations as well. The chapter defines the main elements and most important directions of the review of initial teacher education in Italy, as the related challenges also. The authors mentioned three such elements. The first is the increase in training of all teachers at university level, the second is to define a common core of skills for all teachers, and the third is to develop initial teacher training programs with strong connection between the theoretical and practical dimensions.

The second chapter by Carmen Campos Aparicio and Almudena Buciega Arévalo deals with Spanish teacher education system, but from a less historical perspective as the previous study. Of course it also has a short overview to understand the formation of Spanish teacher training institutional framework, but the main focus is set on present situation and recent developments, especially on Spanish continuous teacher training. The authors unfold interesting details about continuous teacher training such as its institutional system, organisational aspects, or finance. The study gives us information about the sociological profile of teacher training students and their further professional plans as well as about social construction of teacher profession in wider society. Through chapter two we can also take a peek into Spanish teacher training curriculum.

Gabriella Stark and Katalin Zoller – the authors of the third study – present the Romanian teacher education situation. They focus on both the initial and the continuous teacher education system. As the chapter describes the Romanian teacher education system is rather diverse, because teachers of different education levels can traditionally graduate in different institutions. Of course joining to the Bologna process brought significant changes to the system as the chapter explains it in details. It is also interesting, that Romania has a developed system of teacher career paths. This system is similar to what Hungary implements now.

The main topic of the fourth chapter by Jolanta Karbowniczek, Monika Grodecka and Elżbieta Miterka is the Polish teacher education system, but at the same time the authors pay high attention to the European context of higher education. The introductory part of the study describes the changing European and national context of teacher training. Within this introduction the authors present an informative overview of the most important progresses in European higher education such as the Bologna process, the formation of European Higher Education Area or the development of European Qualification Framework. They draw attention to the new curricular philosophy of learning outcome based qualification framework approach and the new demands and goals behind it. Following the overview of the European context the authors give an insight into the National Qualification Framework, and the teacher training curriculum design in Polish higher education. The study also presents a report about an empirical research on the satisfaction of teacher training students with the curricula of their own training. The research based on questionnaires and document analysis. 223 students of two different institutions participated in the research.

The next chapter written by Barbara Surma and Anna Malina is also related to Poland, but this time the authors focus on the continuing professional development of teachers in the light of the lifelong education paradigm. The study first analyses the evolution of the term “lifelong education” through a shorter literature review. Surma and Malina also present a research based on document analysis. The main research questions are: (1) What are the legal determinants of the lifelong education of teachers? (2) What are the rules of organizing the lifelong education of teachers? (3) What are the forms and ways of providing lifelong education of teachers?

The last chapter of the first part by Edina Márkus and Gábor Erdei gives insight into the educational policy aspects of teacher continuing professional development in Hungary. After a short historical overview of the topic the study describes the current regulations, institutional and financial system of continuing professional development of teachers. The description gives detailed information about the fields and numbers of teacher further education as well. As the study concludes the Hungarian public education system has been restructured recently and the revision of the teacher further education is happening now. Hungary implements a new teacher life path model, which may lead to significant changes in the further education structure.

Based on the above we can say that the first part of the book has a really interesting and rich content with a wide view of its topic. Let's see the second part about future of teachers. All four chapters related to this second part deal with the same questions: who and why becomes a teacher and what are the main factors behind the decision of students who enter teacher training? Of course all these studies have their unique point of views – because they are from different countries – from which they approach and try to answer these questions.

Dana Hanesova – who wrote the first chapter of the second part about Slovakia – has a strong focus on the concept of teacher recruitment. The author explains the meaning of this term in a complex way based on literature review of previous researches on this subject. She states, that it is not only an activity on the part of the teacher education institution, but a complex phenomenon defined by social and personal factors which influencing the motivation of persons to become a teacher. With this theoretical background the chapter analyse questions such as the intake of teacher education students, advantages and disadvantages of the teacher profession, factors influencing the decision for the teaching profession, or the personal motives and formation of attitudes. The study contains a description of an interview based qualitative research resulted a categorisation of teacher training students according to their career motivations.

The eighth chapter by Csaba Jancsák titled as “Choosing teacher education and commitment to the teaching career” presents a Hungarian empirical research. The number of respondents is about 1200. Here are some results provided by the author: the primary motivation for entering higher education is the prestige of tertiary qualifications, the better opportunities at the world of work, the interest in the field of study and the financial benefits received by students. The most important factor when a student applies for an MA study program is to obtain a more valuable degree than their bachelor. More than half of the responders had the definite notion to become a teacher, and only less than 10% of them responded that they would like to use their teaching qualification in a non-teaching career.

The ninth study of the volume by Aneta Kamińska, Marta Prucnal and Irena Pulak deals also with the motivation of teacher training students, but in a specified higher education institution: the Jesuit University of Philosophy and Education “Ignatianum” in Krakow. The research presented by the authors is based on an online survey. 95 candidates and first year students of the pedagogical faculties have filled surveys. The most important motives identified by this research were the desire to work with children and teenagers, the relative stability of working environment, the wider opportunity of employment and the need to develop their competences. Since Ignatianum is a catholic university the research paid attention to motives of choosing a catholic institution as well.

The last chapter of the book is deals with Hungary again. Matild Sági and Kálmán Ecséri provide a detailed report about an empirical research. The number of respondents is also more than a thousand in this case. One of the great strength of this study is the accuracy and transparency of information about the data and methods used in the research. They analyse the transition from BA to MA level in higher education with the focus on the factors influence selection of teacher or non-teacher tracks. They precisely formulate the hypotheses they want to be tested. The main hypothesis is that choosing teacher track is strongly affected by negative self-selection, because a student who performs weaker in secondary school or at bachelor level will more likely choose teacher training MA programs. The second hypothesis states, that the family background has not direct effect on choosing MA program type. The third focuses on the impact of early commitment to a

profession/carrier. They suppose it has a great impact. The fourth hypothesis assumes that women are more likely to choose the teacher track, than men. The sophisticated statistical analysis the authors apply supported the first three hypotheses. The analysis also shows that the gender is not a definitive factor in the selection of teacher or non-teacher MA tracks. A possible reason of it is that the gender plays an important role earlier, at the selection of BA programs.

Based on this short overview of the ten chapters we can conclude, that the discussed book publishes a very rich and highly professional content about today's teacher education. Although the book is definitely interesting, perhaps a conscious cooperation and inner communication within the authors could make it more valuable. In this case a group of experts from different countries publishes a volume about their common interests, but it seems their studies do not refer to each other's approach or conclusions. We can recognise this clearly in chapter eight and ten. There is a considerable overlap between the focus of these two studies and even the examined country is the same, but it seems the chapters do not know about each other's results. Of course it is rather a missed opportunity than a mistake, which assumable has a practical reason. Nonetheless the volume provides us with some interesting food for thought. It has elements related to history of education, to education sociology, or to higher education curriculum design so a broad professional community will presumably find it useful. It definitely worth to take a look at this book.