

Professional development of teachers in the European Union

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Abstract.

The configuration of teachers with a high level of professionalism, their proper preparation for the profession and their appropriate training support, are today a common goal for all countries of the European Union. Nowadays more than ever, the role of the teacher is so close to the role of the student, as teachers teach and at the same time are taught in a continuous environment of professional development. The meaning of teacher's development is found in their personal and professional lives, as well as in the school environments in which they work, since the nature of their profession requires to be committed to the direction of their professional development during their careers. However, teachers are not required to participate in all European countries and their non-participation has no negative consequences. The lack of associate teachers and the cost of the training programs are a disincentive to participate in them in many countries.

Keywords: changes, education, participation, professional development, school, students, teachers

1. Introduction

According to the Lisbon Strategy, a key position of the European Union in terms of teaching staff is to upgrade the initial and in-service training of teachers as well as trainers, so that their knowledge and skills can respond to both changes and the expectations of society and the various groups they train and educate, which is a major challenge for education systems for the next 10 years.¹

1.1. The institution of training in the European Union

A few years later, with the European Commission announcement to the Council and the European Parliament on 3 August 2007 on “Improving the quality of teacher training”, we can see that an important position of the European Union on the issue of teacher training is that the interest, skills and abilities of teachers, educators, as well as other members of the guidance and care services, along with the quality of school managers, are the key factors that lead to the achievement of high quality learning outcomes. The efforts of the teaching staff should be supported by continuous professional development and good cooperation with the parents, as well as by the welfare services for the students and the wider community.²

The same announcement presents a model of in-service training and professional development that covers the entire career of teachers and it proposes:

- Participation in introductory training programs during the first three years of the profession,
- Access to instructions and guidance from experienced professional throughout their professional career and finally
- Participation in annual discussions about their training and development needs.

The Commission supports a lifelong learning framework in which teachers will constantly evaluate their training needs and on the other hand the relevant Institutions (National and European) should provide them with the incentives, resources and support systems needed for continuous professional development. Teachers should therefore:

- Be encouraged, throughout their careers, to broaden and develop their skills by formal, informal and non-formal means,
- Have access to different opportunities for continuous professional development, such as exchanges and placements,

¹ European Commission (2001). Report from the Commission- Specific future objectives for education systems,

COM/2001-0059. Available:

http://eurlex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexplus!prod!DocNumber&lg=el&type_doc=COMfinal&and_oc=2001&nu_doc=59

² European Commission (2007). Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on “Improving the quality of teacher training, in Exploring, recording and capturing the European Training Dimension in relation to Greek reality” (2007). Provision of Specialized Services for the Preparation of studies, Contracting authority Teacher Training Organization, Contractor Euricon Ltd, pp.31

- Have the opportunity and time to study for further qualifications and to participate in studies and research in the context of higher education and
- To encourage the establishment of creative partnerships between the institutions employing teachers, higher education and research institutes, to support high quality training and effective practices, as well as to create innovation networks at local and regional level.³

If we focus on the trends that are formed in the training policy of the EU member states, we would come to the following conclusions:

- The quality of education certainly depends on the quality of teachers
- The development of basic education and training with the modernization of the relevant programs determine the educational policy
- Basic education and teacher training should have a complementary relationship and
- Teacher training is emerging as a mechanism of strategic importance for the support and professional development of teachers.

Based on these conclusions, a comprehensive program of professional development of teachers requires structures and mechanisms such as:

- Perfect mechanism and procedures for collecting material and knowledge related to the training needs of teachers,
- Decision-making mechanisms regarding the directions, the thematic units of the programs, the annual planning, their distribution at national, regional and local level institutions for the implementation and execution of these programs.⁴

1.2. Teacher training in the European Union

The European Council, since 1970, has devoted a massive project entitled “Education fermanrute” (Strasburg, 1970), which analyzes new education data. In 1973 a bulletin of the European Community (Bulletin da Communautés Europennes) gave priority to continuing education, because it is a key element of change in education: “If continuing education is an area functionally more open than the others, it is a principle of transformation of the education system as a whole”. The Declaration, signed in October 1978 by the Ministers of the OECD countries, also states that the signatory countries agree to improve the professional training of teachers, so that they

³ European Commission (2007). Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on “Improving the quality of teacher training, in Exploring, recording and capturing the European Training Dimension in relation to Greek reality” (2007). Provision of Specialized Services for the Preparation of studies, Contracting authority Teacher Training Organization, Contractor Euricon Ltd, pp.32

⁴ Athanasoula-Reppa, A., Anthopoulou, S., Katsoulakis, S., Mavrogiorgos, G. (1999), in Papasavvas, A. The professional development of teachers. Principles, terms and conditions. Available:

http://pek-patras.ach.sch.gr/docs/yliko0910/epaggelm_anapt_t_ekpaideyt_telis.pdf

can respond to the evolution of their needs and tasks and to encourage them to take a more active part in strengthening the ties between school and life.⁵

Under the current institutional framework for education, the European Union does not have the capacity to be directly involved in the field of teacher training/professional development, evaluation and certification in the Member States. Its role, therefore, within the institutional framework set out in the Treaty on European Union and the *acquis communautaire* is more strategic. As it is characteristically mentioned in the Article 149 Of the EU Treaty:

- The Community contributes to the development of a high level of education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and supporting their actions, always respecting the competence of them for the content of teaching and the organization of the education system, as well as their cultural and linguistic diversity,
- Community action has a purpose:
 - to develop the European dimension of education, particularly through the learning and dissemination of the languages of the Member States,
 - to promote the mobility of students and teachers, through the academic recognition of degrees and diplomas,
 - to promote cooperation between educational institutions,
 - to develop the exchange of information and experiences on the common problems faced by the education systems of the Member States,
 - to encourage the exchange of young people, as well as the organizers of social and educational activities and
 - to encourage the development of distance education
- The Community and the Member States favor the cooperation with third countries and competent international organizations in the field of education, in particular the European Council
- In order to contribute to the achievement of the objectives set out in this Article, the Council:
 - acting in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 251 and after consulting the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, shall adopt incentive measures without harmonizing the laws of the Member States,
 - acting by a qualified majority on Commission proposals, makes recommendations.⁶

Thus, it can be argued that EU membership results in specific impacts on training/professional development policies and practices, evaluation and certification of training in the Member States, with at least four starting points:

- the acceptance and implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Strategy for education, as it is implemented in the framework of the Program “Education and Training 2010”. Under this Program, there are published texts that contain guidelines for the educational policies to

⁵ Mantas, P. (2001). Postgraduate Education and Teacher Training in Primary Education, Doctoral Thesis, University of Ioannina, pp.120

⁶ Provision of Specialized Services for the Preparation of Studies. Investigation, Recording and Capture of the European Dimension of Training in Relation to the Greek Reality (2007), Contracting Authority T.T.O. (Teacher Training Organization), Contractor Euricon Ltd, pp.23-24. Available: http://www.oepek.gr/pdfs/meletes/oepek_meleth_05.pdf

be followed, while at the same time trans-European information is provided, through the Open Method Coordination process, regarding the “good practices” developed in the other Member States in specific areas, including the improvement of the quality of human resources in education

- the participation of schools, training institutes and individual teachers in EU-funded “horizontal activities”, such as European action programs in education and training. The exchanges of teachers participating in these programs creates a tank of professionals with international experience and knowledge of international teaching practices
- the participation of the educational principles, institutions and collective bodies involved in teacher training in European networks, in which policies and ways of acting on these issues are discussed and proposed and
- the participation in pilot actions aimed at creating European standards for many issues concerning professionals of education.⁷

Teacher training is very diverse among EU countries. The structures of systems for initial teacher training and education are described in the report Education and Culture, Eurydice and Eurostat (2005), in which there is discrimination between education and professional training of teachers. It is clear, however, that the term “teacher training” refers to organized activities that aim to equip teachers with “the knowledge, skills and competences necessary and sufficient to carry out” their future work. Teacher training includes a general and a professional part. The first includes programs that cover general education and the study of cognitive subjects that teachers will be asked to teach in the future. The second includes programs that deal with the required teaching skills and internship in the school environment. This theoretical and practical vocational training may be done in parallel with the general programs (simultaneous program) or to be followed (successive standard). The goals of teacher training are directly related to the priorities set at the national level, as well as to the special needs of the schools and the teachers themselves. Thus, it is organized in different ways and is offered by many institutions, such as higher or primary education institutions, teacher training centers, teachers’ associations or other training providers, such as non-governmental organizations. In the vast majority of European countries, almost all the training institutions mentioned are coexisting and are subject to regulations either for their certification or for their evaluation.⁸

EU teacher training policy is closely linked to other key areas of European policy and more specifically:

- with social policy, which emphasizes the role of education and training as a way out of poverty and as a key factor in social inclusion,

⁷ Provision of Specialized Services for the Preparation of Studies. Investigation, Recording and Capture of the European Dimension of Training in Relation to the Greek Reality (2007), Contracting Authority T.T.O. (Teacher Training Organization), Contractor Euricon Ltd, pp.25. Available: http://www.oepek.gr/pdfs/meletes/oepek_meleth_05.pdf

⁸ Detection of training needs in secondary education (2008), National Center for Social Research on behalf of the Teacher Training Organization, Kedros S.A., pp.12. Available: http://www.oepek.gr/portal/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=118&Itemid=108

- with the innovation policy, which emphasizes providing assistance to young teachers in order to acquire a spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation,
- with research policy, which focuses on improving science teaching at all levels of education in the EU,
- with business policy, which emphasizes the need for public authorities in the Member States to promote entrepreneurship education through initial and in-service training and
- with the new Strategic Framework for Multilingualism which promotes the value of language learning.⁹

It is easy to see the significant differences in the institutional framework of teacher training in European countries. These relate to the level of institutional regulation and control of training (centralization-decentralization), the obligation or not of teachers' participation in training procedures, but also any defined minimum duration of compulsory training and the connection of training with the professional development of teachers. Regarding to the European dimension, it could focus on exploring the following issues:

- What is the common cultural heritage and what are its main features?
- If Europe is considered a dynamic and constantly evolving world, a world of cohesion but with internal contradictions, are there any limits beyond which Europe and Europeans would risk losing their cultural identity and distinctiveness?
- By teaching which fields of knowledge, transmitting which elements and resorting to which strategy could the European dimension be developed and promoted within schools?
- How could teacher training in Europe be coordinated in order to promote better the European dimension in schools?
- How could trainee teachers from different European countries work together to write books and other teaching materials on the European dimension in schools?¹⁰

According to the decisions of the European Councils from "Bologna" and "Lisbon" to "EU2020", education is the basis on which the EU supports its strategic planning to become "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy globally". One of the main goals of this strategic plan is the professional development of teachers and their trainers through lifelong learning, as training needs differ not only among teachers, but also in the same teacher throughout his career.

In order for the training actions to be more effective, some conditions are necessary:

- to identify the skills that teachers need to develop in order to cope better with the role they are called to play in the educational system,
- to ensure the right conditions so that more teachers are attracted to take part in training programs,
- to create the conditions that will make the teaching profession more attractive and capable against the requirements of the knowledge and information society and

⁹ Organization of a compulsory/periodic training institution for the teachers (2008), Study of T.T.O. (Teacher Training Organization), Athens, pp.31. Available:

http://www.oepk.gr/pdfs/meletes/oepk_meleth_16.pdf

¹⁰ Katsimanis, K. in Mantas, P. (2001), Postgraduate Education and Teacher Training in Primary Education, Doctoral Thesis, University of Ioannina, pp.125

- to ensure the adequacy of people who will be professionally involved in teaching, in all subjects and levels and to make forecasts for their long-term needs, in order to make the profession of teacher and trainer more attractive.¹¹

Common European principles for the skills and qualifications of teachers and trainers have been developed on the basis of the experience of their teachers and trainers across Europe. They describe a view of the European teaching profession with the following characteristics:

- it is a highly qualified profession, as all teachers are graduates of higher education institutions (even those working on the field of initial vocational training have many qualifications in their professional field and appropriate pedagogical qualifications)
- it is a lifelong learning profession, as teachers are encouraged to continue their professional development throughout their careers. Both themselves and their employers recognize the importance of acquiring new knowledge and are able to innovate and introduce new elements into their work,
- it is a profession characterized by mobility, being the central component of teachers' initial and continuing vocational training programs, as they are encouraged to work or study in other European countries for their professional development and
- it is a partnership-based profession, as teacher training institutions organize their work in collaboration with schools, training providers and other stakeholders.¹²

Predicting teacher training and development will be more effective if there is a coherent system at national level with sufficient funding. It is necessary to have a unified system that will provide for the initial training of teachers, their entry into the profession, as well as their continuous professional development throughout their careers, which will include opportunities for formal and non-formal training. This would mean that all teachers participate in effective introductory training programs during the first three years of their profession, have access to structured instruction and guidance from experienced teachers or other competent professional throughout their careers and participate in discussions about their needs in terms of training and development, within the wider development program of the institution in which they work.¹³

It is clear that in many European countries there is reluctance on the part of governments to legislate a national framework for training. This is due to the fact that:

¹¹ Pedagogical Institute (2009). Proposal for teacher training, Athens. Available:

http://www.pi-schools.gr/paideia_dialogos/prot_epimorf.pdf

¹² Organization of a compulsory/periodic training institution for the teachers (2008), Study of T.T.O. (Teacher Training Organization), Athens, pp.34. Available:

http://www.oepek.gr/pdfs/meletes/oepek_meleth_16.pdf

¹³ Improving the quality of teacher training (2007). Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. Available:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal->

[content/EL/ALL/;ELX_SESSIONID=pNnVJJ9dZCGTk2ZYQ3191ZHGpyvHpgSnxGMILLKvQ3tyK30TgkcQ!-](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/ALL/;ELX_SESSIONID=pNnVJJ9dZCGTk2ZYQ3191ZHGpyvHpgSnxGMILLKvQ3tyK30TgkcQ!-)

[1003375468?uri=CELEX:52007DC0392](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/ALL/;ELX_SESSIONID=pNnVJJ9dZCGTk2ZYQ3191ZHGpyvHpgSnxGMILLKvQ3tyK30TgkcQ!-1003375468?uri=CELEX:52007DC0392)

- many governments, especially in countries with a high degree of decentralization of their education system, have authorized relevant regional or local bodies or even schools to regulate training issues. Such cases are Austria, Belgium (French and Flemish Community), Sweden, Hungary and Iceland,
- some aspects of training are provided by institutions with high autonomy, such as universities and are regulated by the respective institutional framework.¹⁴

At the same time, it is observed that the educational institutions are more interested in ensuring and improving the quality of the provided training, resulting in the establishment of central or regional structures for regulating and controlling the quality of the training or criteria that will relate to the quality of the training. This includes actions such as requiring the competent national education authorities (for example in Spain and Estonia) by local education authorities or schools to submit comprehensive training strategy plans for their teaching staff.

1.3. Teacher training in the countries of the European Union

In several EU countries teacher training is obligatory, which started in the mid-1990s and today in more than 15 European countries there is some form of mandatory participation in training programs. Among them are Finland, Portugal, Malta, Hungary etc. this obligation comes in two forms:

- in some countries it is mandatory for new entrants to the teaching profession (such as Greece and Slovenia), while
- in some others the training has become part of the teachers' duties and is their obligation, occupying a part of their annual employment time (such as Germany and the Netherlands).

Another difference that exists between the countries is in the field of the minimum institutionally defined per year of compulsory training. This ranges from 3 to 5 days or from 15 to 39 hours per year. Exceptions in recent years are countries such as Sweden with 104 hours, Hungary with 120 hours and the Netherlands where training occupies 10% of their annual employment time, approximately 170 hours. The last area where some differences are observed is the degree of connection of the training with the service development of the teachers and whether it is a criterion that is considered when occupying an executive position in education. In some countries it is mandatory, such as in Britain and Ireland, while in others, such as Greece and Hungary, it is one of the criteria taken into account in the teacher selection process.¹⁵

¹⁴ Provision of Specialized Services for the Preparation of Studies. Investigation, Recording and Capture of the European Dimension of Training in Relation to the Greek Reality (2007), Contracting Authority T.T.O. (Teacher Training Organization), Contractor Euricon Ltd, pp.40. Available: http://www.oepek.gr/pdfs/meletes/oepek_meleth_05.pdf

¹⁵ Provision of Specialized Services for the Preparation of Studies. Investigation, Recording and Capture of the European Dimension of Training in Relation to the Greek Reality (2007), Contracting Authority T.T.O. (Teacher Training Organization), Contractor Euricon Ltd, pp.42-43. Available: http://www.oepek.gr/pdfs/meletes/oepek_meleth_05.pdf

Continuous professional development is mandatory in 15 European countries; however, teachers are not required to participate in all countries and their non-participation has no negative consequences. However, even in countries where it is compulsory, the participation rate is not necessarily high, while at the same time teachers have the opportunity to attend training programs without them being compulsory. In some countries there is a phenomenon that in-service training is not compulsory, but is a factor that affects career development and teacher salary increase.

Turning now to a more detailed examination of compulsory training hours in European countries, we find that they differ considerably from country to country. However, not all countries, where training is compulsory, indicate the time that teachers should devote to it. More specifically:

- In Belgium (French-speaking community) 3 whole or 6 and a half days per school year should be devoted to training seminars, while teachers are free to choose from a list of subjects determined by the government, which they would be most interested in attending,
- In Belgium (German-speaking community) each school sets a maximum number of days, 3 whole or 6 half days per school year, where teaching is devoted to a topic defined by each school,
- In Estonia the hours required over a five-year period amount to a total of 160 hours of training,
- In the UK every school year for 5 days teachers have to be at school without classes, at which time non-teaching activities are carried out, including professional development,
- In Iceland in addition to school time, teachers have to devote 150 hours per year to preparation, attending training seminars and other professional obligations,
- In Cyprus, at the ISCED 1 school level teachers have to attend 57 hours of training per year, while at the ISCED 2 school level two 90-minute seminars per school year,
- In Latvia, within three school years, teachers must attend 36 hours of training seminars, without specifying whether it is a single 36-hour professional development program or several shorter seminars,
- In Luxembourg since 2007 it has stipulated that Secondary education teachers must attend at least 8 hours of training per school year,
- In Malta at the beginning or end of each school year teachers have to attend 3 and a half days of seminars, while they also take part in 3 two-hour professional development sessions per year, for which they are paid,
- In Hungary within 7 school years teachers have to attend 120 hours of seminars,
- In Romania every 5 years teachers have to attend 95 hours of training seminars, unless they obtain professional degrees during these years,
- In Scotland at least 5 days are provided for in-service training. Teachers should also devote 50 hours per year to scheduled activities, some of which can also be used for in-service training,
- Finally, in Finland 3 to 5 training days are set per school year, 6 hours each.¹⁶

In countries where training is not compulsory, teachers are entitled to a number of hours or days per year that can be devoted to training activities:

¹⁶ Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus (2008), Education and Culture, Levels of Autonomy and Responsibilities of teachers in Europe, Eurydice, European Information Network for Education, Translated by: Fotini Ioannidou Mouzakiti, pp.47-48

- In Italy, due to the fact that there is flexibility regarding the school timetable, schools are given the option to suspend their classes for a few days in order for teachers to attend training programs. According to the employment contracts, teachers are also entitled to 5 days per school year to attend training seminars,
- In Lithuania teachers are entitled to 5 days of training per school year, for which they get paid according to their average daily salary,
- In Portugal teachers may devote a maximum of 10 hours per working year to their training,
- In Slovenia teachers can attend 5 days of training per school year, which are paid to them and
- In the Czech Republic teachers are entitled to 12 working days per school year for independent study and training.¹⁷

2. Conclusion

In fact, in all countries, school principals and educational authorities are responsible for hiring and replacing teachers. The lack of assistant teachers and their recruitment costs are disincentive to participate in training programs in many countries, as no country has a special budget for teachers to take part in training activities. In Wales the Government Assembly offers funding for training scholarships provided to teachers to meet their individual professional needs. In some other countries, such as Bulgaria, France, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Malta, Hungary and Portugal, the total budget for the Continuing Professional Development for teacher is subject of the highest authority for education, in Italy the budget is allocated to schools by the Ministry, while in Estonia at least 3% of the salaries of teachers paid from the state budget must be spent on their vocational training. In countries such as Belgium, Estonia, Cyprus, Liechtenstein, Latvia, the Netherlands, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland, many of the training programs offered to teachers by the Ministry or any other educational authority are free. In Hungary the cost of participation in Continuing Professional Development is 80% covered by the central budget, while the remaining 20% is covered by the school or teacher.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus (2008), Education and Culture, Levels of Autonomy and

Responsibilities of teachers in Europe, Eurydice, European Information Network for Education, Translated by: Fotini Ioannidou Mouzakiti, pp. 50

¹⁸ Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus (2008), Education and Culture, Levels of Autonomy and Responsibilities of teachers in Europe, Eurydice, European Information Network for Education, Translated by: Fotini Ioannidou Mouzakiti, pp. 51

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