

Comparative Analysis of Teacher Education Programmes in Selected Countries

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ABSTRACT

The present study deals with systems of teacher education in several European countries – specifically the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany, France and Finland. A comparative analysis of future teachers' preparation reveals a variety in many areas. We observe that the differences occur especially in admission process, qualification requirements concerning teacher performance, teacher preparation programmes, and teachers' further education.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study is to describe the education of future teachers in selected countries with focus on qualification requirements for teachers, teacher education curricula, admission procedures, and further education. There are various ways to become what is in academic writing referred to as 'an ideal teacher'. For this reason, it is difficult to ascertain the correct methods to cultivate and nurture talent for teaching or the method to become a master teacher. The focus of this study is teacher education in the Czech Republic and abroad, and the readiness of future Czech teachers to teach effectively. Research led to the creation of multiple models of teacher professional development, according to various pedagogical, psychological or integrated concepts. This paper works with the Five-stage Model of Adult Skill Acquisition by the Dreyfus brothers (1986) as it was further elaborated by Berliner (1995). Berliner worked both with Fuller's conclusions and studies of novice and experienced teachers. The model works with the following stages of the professional development of a teacher: *Novice; Advanced Beginner; Competent Teacher; Proficient Teacher; Expert Teacher.*

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The novice teacher focuses on their immediate survival with the help of basic, fragmented methods. They are more interested in simple instructions and focus primarily on the content of lessons, short-term planning and immediate responses to various teaching situations. Most of their professional training is based on imitation and the advice of the others. The advanced beginner starts to develop automaticity of teaching and their techniques begin to acquire routine character. Based on a volume of episodic data, the teacher begins to perceive similarities and patterns. Unlike the novice teacher, they begin to form strategies for different teaching situations. Their focus shifts from their own performance to a more general perception of the teaching process. With that comes the ability to question themselves and search for answers regarding what/how/why they do certain things in the classroom. The competent teacher possesses a repertoire of strategies that allow them to deal successfully with common teaching situations. They use these strategies in full. In this stage of their professional development, they are confident enough to improvise in class and deliberately choose their methods according to the context of the situation. Although in the previous stages their focus was on the lesson content, the competent teacher begins to focus on specific students and their needs. They are able to set priorities and they show a tendency towards medium-term and long-term planning. In the penultimate stage, the performance of the proficient teacher is based both on intuition and explicit rules. They have developed problem-solving strategies of complex teaching situations and the class is more and more student-centred. The final stage of professional development – expert teacher – is characterised by intuitive approach to teaching situations. The teacher's performance is fluid and seemingly effortless. Their planning is flexible. The expert teacher is able to anticipate incidents rather than just react to them, they are aware of universal schemata in the learning process and their manifestations in specific incidents in their class. These models were subjected to criticism as they fail to fully express that a teacher's development may include diversions, blind alleys, occasionally regressions; in addition, not everyone necessarily reaches the expert stage. Despite that, in various countries they to the establishment of standards meant to support professional development and also to allow evaluation of the quality of teaching (Tomková, Spilková, Pišová et al., 2012).

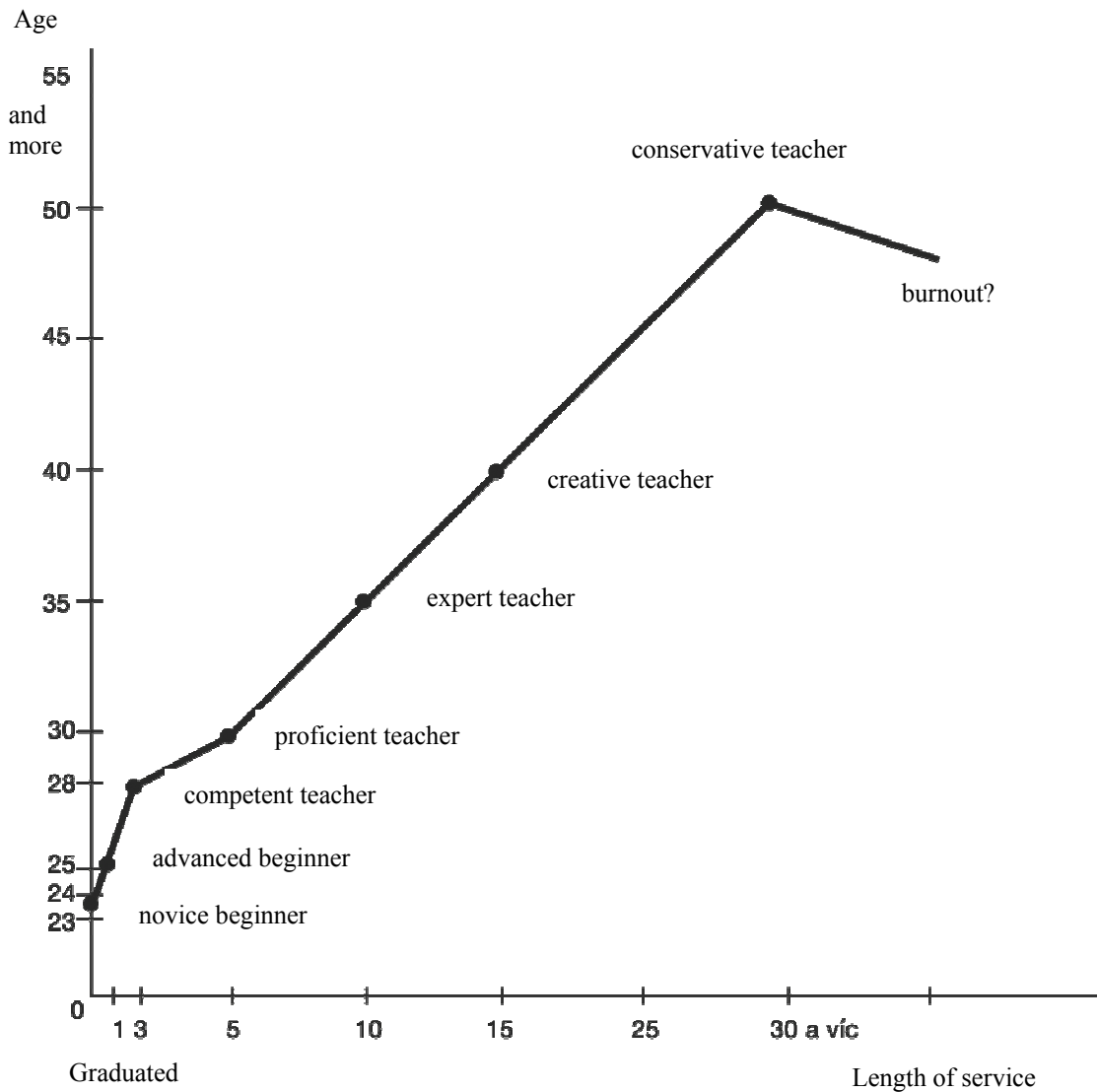


Figure 1: Stages of teacher professional development (adapted from Dreyfus & Dreyfus)

The key issue in quality of teaching and research are teaching competencies. Teaching competencies serve as the basis for the formation of professional standard. The professional standard is the norm that should define the key competencies necessary in the field, that is, competencies indispensable for a qualified standard performance. Professional standard can serve this purpose if it is consistently applied to teacher evaluation and if it is included in the process of professionalization of teaching. A development model of professionalization should be based on this triad of concepts: competence – standard – quality (Slavík et al., 2012, p. 75). In 2007, McKinsey published a paper, in which he studied twenty-five education systems around the world, including the best ten systems in the world, to find out why some schools succeed where others fail. He was trying to find similarities between these highly efficient education systems and learn about the methods used to improve the results of their students. The results imply that there are three key factors involved: finding the right people to become teachers, their further development that leads to effective teaching, and finally, a system capable of providing the best possible education for every child. According to other authors (Hattie, 2003; Barber, Mourshed, 2007) the quality of the teacher influences the students’ academic results more than, for example, the quality of the school curriculum or the material conditions of the school in question. Improving the quality of teachers and the quality of the system responsible for their training and further education is currently generally accepted as the factors that play a crucial role in education reforms and innovations of education systems.

RESULTS OF COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The aim of this analysis is to describe and compare the systems of teacher training in selected countries of the European Union. For the purpose of this analysis, the following countries were selected:

The Czech Republic

Slovakia

Germany

France

Finland

The analysis places emphasis on the description of teacher training and its subsequent comparison, regarding qualification requirements for teaching, teacher education programmes from the point of view of their requirements and whether the requirements are placed centrally by the individual countries or by the universities themselves. Furthermore, the paper deals with the requirements for admission to teacher undergraduate programmes. The last category is further education of teachers, particularly from the perspective of voluntariness/obligation, in other words, whether life-long learning and improvement are mandatory or not. The survey is based on the results of information shared through Eurydice – the European network devoted to sharing information about national education systems and policies, as well as related literature, both Czech and foreign.

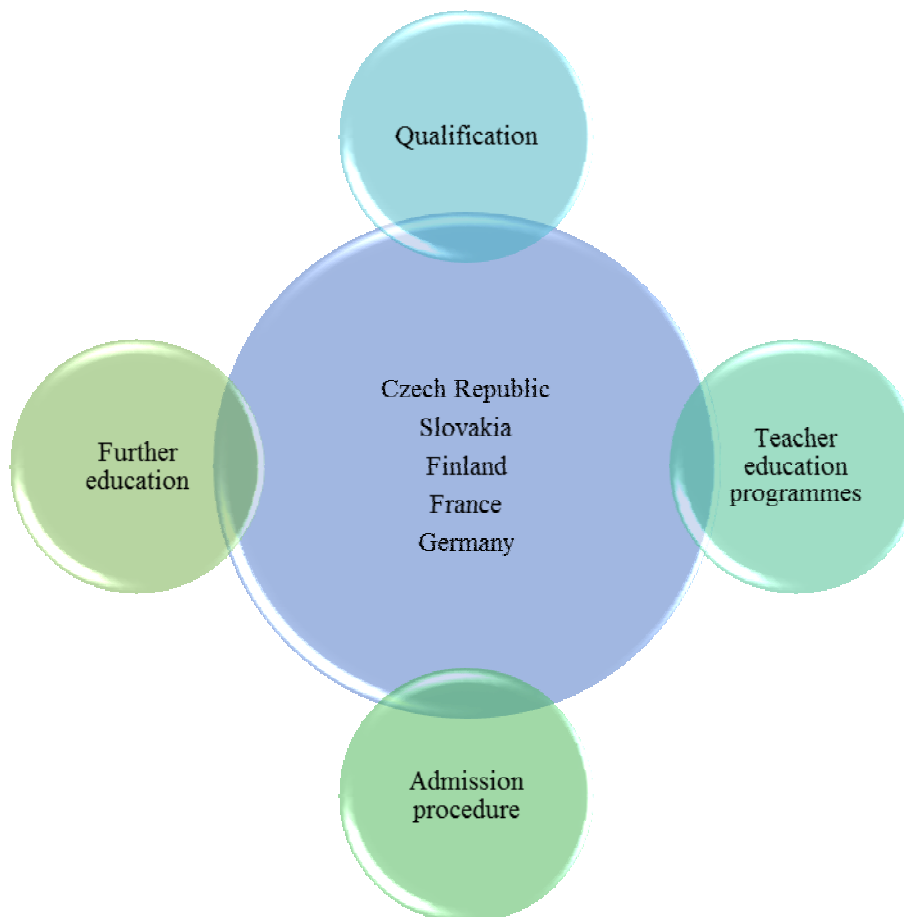


Figure 2: Categories of teacher preparation in selected European countries

The following charts present an overview of teacher training in individual countries in the areas of qualification requirements, requirements concerning teacher education programmes, demands on entrance examinations for applicants for studying teaching. The issue of further training and whether it is voluntary or obligatory is presented in these charts as well.

TEACHER TRAINING IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Teacher qualifications are regulated by corresponding education legislation, in particular the Education Act No. 561/2004 Coll. and The Act on Pedagogical Staff No. 563/2004 Coll. A pedagogical worker shall be a person

who performs direct teaching, direct educational function, or direct special educational needs activities or direct pedagogical-psychological activities directly affecting learners thus implementing education and training pursuant to the special legal regulation, who is an employee of a legal person carrying out the activities of a school, or an employee of the state, or a head teacher unless such a person is in a labour-law relation to a legal person carrying out the activities of a school who is not an employee of the state. Direct educational function shall be performed by a) a teacher, b) a teacher educator, c) educator, d) a special educational needs teacher, e) a psychologist, f) a teacher responsible for leisure activities, g) a teacher's assistant, h) a coach, i) a prevention worker in an educational psychology counselling centre, j) a pedagogical manager.

TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

In the year 2017, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports published a manual concerning the process of assessment of undergraduate programmes that qualify an individual for the teaching profession. According to section 2 of the Act on Pedagogical Staff and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts No. 563/2004 Coll., the regulated professions include the job of a teacher, educator, special educational needs teacher, psychologist, teacher responsible for leisure activities, teacher's assistant and coach.

ADMISSION PROCEDURE

The admission procedure follows section 50 of Act No. 111/1998 Coll. On Higher Education Institutions. The form and content of the entrance exam is left in the purview of individual universities or faculties. The admission procedure begins upon receipt of the application for admission to study at a higher education institution or its constituent part that offers the relevant degree programme. The application must include the applicant's forename/names, surname, identity number, if this has been assigned, and place of permanent residence in the Czech Republic or place of residence outside the Czech Republic; foreigners must also include the date of birth, sex, place of residence in the Czech Republic and their citizenship.

The decision on admission to studies in a degree programme provided by a faculty is made by the Dean of the faculty. The decision on admission to studies in a degree programme provided by a higher education institution is made by the Rector. Admission to studies at private higher education institutions is decided by the official body specified in their internal regulations. General regulations on administrative procedures do not apply to the decision on admission to studies. The decision must be made within no more than thirty days from the time when the admission conditions were verified. The decision must contain a justification, information about the option of lodging a re-examination appeal and it must be delivered to the applicant. If an applicant's place of residence is unknown, delivery of the decision takes the form of posting it on the official notice board. Applicants are entitled to examine their materials relevant for the decision on their admission to studies. The applicant is entitled to request a re-examination of the decision. The appeal is submitted to the official body within thirty days from the announcement. Missing the deadline may be pardoned for serious reasons. If the appeal administrative body is the Dean, they may allow an appeal and review the decision. Failing that, they forward the appeal to the Rector. The Rector shall review the decision, if it was issued contrary to the law, internal regulations of the higher education institution or the requirements stipulated by section 49, subsections 1 and 3. Otherwise, they reject the appeal and confirm the original decision. A higher education institution or faculty must make public the information concerning the course of the admission procedures within fifteen days of their conclusion. Should written entrance examinations constitute a part of the admission procedure, the higher education institution or faculty will release a statistical survey of all the component parts of the entrance examinations, including the requirements for basic statistical data. Higher education institutions or faculties process and make available data about the applicants for statistical purposes in agreement with a special regulation.

FURTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Further education follows section 24 of the Act on Pedagogical Staff. It is stated there that whilst performing their function, pedagogical workers have the duty to renew, strengthen and supplement their qualifications through further education. The headmaster shall organise further education of pedagogical staff in accordance with the plan of further education which shall have been laid down after preceding negotiations with a relevant trade union body. Whilst laying down the plan of further education, the study interests of a pedagogical worker, the school's needs and budget must be taken into consideration. Further education of pedagogical staff shall be achieved at higher education institutions, by self-education, or through a certificate issued by an educational institution which organised further education. If nothing impedes them, pedagogical workers are entitled to twelve working days off per academic year. The headmaster shall assign the days off. Pedagogical staff shall be entitled to financial compensation equalling the amount of lost earnings.

TEACHER TRAINING IN THE SLOVAKIA

Teacher qualification requirements are regulated by Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Teaching Staff and Vocational Training Employees and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts and by Decree No. 437/2009 Coll. by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic which stipulates qualification requirements and specific qualification requirements for various categories of pedagogical workers and expert employees. It is possible to obtain teaching qualification: by studying selected programmes in teacher education programmes at universities or vocational colleges; the graduates are able to teach subjects corresponding to their qualifications in primary schools and high schools, through undergraduate studies at a university or a vocational college and simultaneous supplementary pedagogical studies; the students achieve not only specialised but also pedagogical education and they are able to teach the subjects in their field in high schools, by higher education studies at a vocational college; after graduation from a supplementary pedagogical programme, the graduate is qualified to teach relevant subjects in specialist schools. Specialist employees may broaden the range of their qualifications through participation in retraining programmes (e. g. related to IT or foreign languages). Through further pedagogical studies, new subject or specialisation may be added to the skill set of a qualified teacher, such as work with children with special behavioural and educational needs.

TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The contents of education are stipulated by individual pedagogical faculties. Study programmes are regularly evaluated by the Accreditation Committee (according to the criteria negotiated with representatives of individual institutions of higher education and approved by the Ministry of Education). Every university establishes the number of applicants to be accepted (the government decides how many students in each course of study shall be subsidized by the state). Recruitment of academic staff is within the purview of universities (Mičicová, Šamová, 2016, p. 11).

ADMISSION PROCEDURE

According to section 6 of the Higher Education Act, the number of accepted applicants, the admission requirements, and decision-making in the admission process is in the competence of the institutions of higher learning themselves. Therefore, no law stipulates mandatory testing of vocational qualifications. Talent tests, however, are required in courses of study related to artistic and physical education subjects.

FURTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Organisation, content, extent and forms of further teacher education is regulated by the Decree of the Ministry of Education on continuous education, credits and attestations of pedagogic employees and professional employees. A pedagogic/professional employee shall fulfil the requirements for the relevant professional position and update or renew their competencies. Every school prepares its own plan of further education of pedagogic employees and presents the plan to its statutory authority. The plan should include a list of specific priorities of the institution, schedule, and a draft budget for educational activities. The person responsible for the organisation of continual education is the headmaster, who acts according to a yearly plan. The school administration decides on continual education of pedagogic employees according to the priorities and development strategies. The credit system, salary policy, evaluation and remuneration systems allow for active and inventive teachers to receive higher pay packet for developing their qualifications, competencies and performance. The number of credits assigned to individual accredited programmes of continuing education is based on the scope, difficulty and conclusion. The credits are valid for seven years and they are required when filing an application for the first and second attestation. They are also needed for a teacher to be eligible for a salary bonus (Mičicová, Šamová, 2016, p. 11-12).

TEACHER TRAINING IN FINLAND

According to the Teaching Qualifications Decree (986/1998), the law distinguishes three types of teachers: class teacher – teacher of 1st – 6th grade, who teaches all subjects and may teach in preschool institutions as well; teacher of specific subjects – in 7th – 9th grade of primary school, or high school (both general and vocational) and adult education; specialist teacher – for the education of students with special needs. The initial teacher training is provided by universities. The responsibility is shared between pedagogical and other faculties. Teachers in primary and secondary schools must achieve a master's degree, gain minimum of 60 ECTS credits in basic or intermediate level of study of their qualification subject and 60 ECTS credits in pedagogical training (20 being set aside for work in teacher training schools). Perfect command of the language used at school (usually Finnish or Swedish) is required of high school teachers (Mičicová, Šamová, 2016, p. 12.). Ensuring the quality of education is based on management rather than control (for this reason, school inspections were abolished).

TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Teacher qualifications for general and specialist schools were unified at the beginning of 1999. Training includes study of pedagogy, subject didactics and practical training. Pedagogical faculties enjoy full autonomy in the process of curriculum creation. In 2007, The Advisory Board for Professional Development of Education Personnel was established to support teacher education and to predict changes in needs in initial teacher training. Based on the resulting evaluation and assessments the Ministry of Education published a set of goals and recommendations for the development of initial and continuous teacher education the pedagogical faculties should adopt (Mičicová, Šamová, 2016, p. 13). Teacher education programme requires 180 credits (ECTS) to complete a bachelor's degree (which does not yet qualify one for teaching) and then 120 credits to complete a master's degree. Credits work on the assumption that in traditional place-based study an academic load of a student requires 60 credits per academic year where one credit represents 25-30 working hours per week. Work in teacher training schools is included in the programme (Průcha, Kansanen, 2015, p. 90). Requirements placed on the academic staff of pedagogical faculties are no different for other faculties. The basic requirement is a successful graduation from a doctoral study programme and a Ph.D. degree.

ADMISSION PROCEDURE

In Finland, teaching is a very popular career choice. 10-15% of applicants are accepted to teaching programmes every year, of which 80% are women (Průcha, Kansanen, 2015, p. 89.). The content of the entrance examination developed gradually. The admission is currently divided into two rounds. In order to make the entrance exam to undergraduate teaching programmes easier and to promote cooperation between schools, the Vakava network was created in 2011 – the students must read up on several assigned academic articles, roughly 180 pages. The aim of the exam is to test reading comprehension and the ability to apply the information gained from reading. In the second part, the applicants are evaluated based on their general predispositions for teaching. This part is created by faculties themselves. The interviews are mainly focused on the applicant's motivation for teaching, or more precisely, their motivation for work with people. Academic results in high school are taken into consideration as well as the applicant's artistic or sport activities, or activities related to teaching. In the past, some faculties included so-called microteaching in their entrance exam (Průcha, Kansanen, 2015, p. 88).

FURTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The obligation to take part in further education is stipulated by schools' statutes and collective agreements. Teachers must undergo between one and five days of further teacher education, according to the relevant agreement. Participation in further education programmes does not automatically lead to benefits, such as pay increase or career advancement. The obligation for further teacher education is outlined in the law only in general terms – participation is decided by individual universities (Mičicová, Šamová, 2016, p. 14). Most schools organise training for beginner teachers. A model of peer-group mentoring was established to support beginner teachers (Heikkinen, Tynjälä, Jokinen, 2012, in Průcha, Kansanen, 2015, p. 94-95).

TEACHER TRAINING IN FRANCE

Teachers are civil servants and their role is regulated by *acts on civil service*. In the 2013, the system of teacher training has undergone a significant reform. Students pursuing a master's degree in education must take a competitive exam at the end of their first year. That applies to all future teachers, from pre-school to secondary education. Master's programmes of study take place in *Écoles Supérieures du Professorat et de l'Éducation* (ESPE – colleges of teaching and education), specialised schools within universities. One is located in every *académie* (education authority at the regional level) (Cornu, 2015). After the exam, successful students become trainee teachers. In the second year of their studies, their time is divided equally between learning and practice in schools. If a student from a different branch of study successfully passes the competitive exam, they are allowed to simply continue their studies in a master's programme of study. In their second year, the students become civil servants in a probationary period and therefore they are paid for their work. After a reform, the exam now aims to focus both on theoretical knowledge of the student and their pedagogical skills (Bokdam, van den Ende, Broek, 2014). The number of available places in the exam is regulated by a ministerial decree every year. The decision affects the budget of the Ministry of Education and therefore it must be approved by the Parliament. Every teacher in France should have a master's degree. Master's programmes of study and preparations for the exam are within the authority of individual universities. Regardless of branch of study, a bachelor's degree is required for the admission to a master's programme of study (Mičicová, Šamová, 2016, p. 14).

TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

During their first year, future teachers are required to take part in study visits to gain their first professional experiences with teaching. The study visits are limited to observation and teaching under supervision. The aim of these study visits is to prepare students for the competitive exam and to encourage them to think about possible topics of their diploma theses. According to a survey conducted by TALIS, French teachers are insufficiently

prepared for their job. More than 90% consider themselves well versed in their teaching subject. However, only 40% consider themselves sufficiently prepared in terms of pedagogy. This is the lowest number out of all 34 countries that participated in the survey (Education and Research in Figures, 2015). In 2013, the Ministry of Education published two ministerial orders: *A reference table of professional competencies for pedagogical staff*, which establishes aims and common culture for all education professionals that should be acquired during their training (the reference table lists 14 competencies – a new approach, as the stress was previously placed on acquiring knowledge). *A national framework for the curriculum of the MEEF Master's degree*. The curriculum must be followed by universities in order to gain accreditation. (Supporting teacher competence development: for better learning outcomes [online].) At present, every teacher in France, including kindergarten teachers, should have a master's degree.

ADMISSION PROCEDURE

Applicants to public universities are admitted on the grounds of *Baccalaurréat* or its equivalent. Entrance exams are required only by *grandes écoles* in France. The requirement for admission to master's programme of study is a bachelor's degree, regardless of field of study (Mičicová, Šamová, 2016, p. 15).

FURTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Creating a plan for further education is the responsibility of the rector of every *académie*. They determine the priorities of further teacher education in accordance with the priorities of the Ministry of Education. Primary school teachers are required to undergo 18 hours of further education in courses organised by the local *académie* in cooperation with the relevant university. Professional development, however, is not mandatory. The teachers are responsible for their own professional development – for instance, they may take a sabbatical leave (Bokdam, van den Ende, Broek, 2014).

TEACHER TRAINING IN GERMANY

The responsibility for the education system in Germany lies primarily with the individual states. The coordination of cooperation in education, professional training, higher education, research and cultural affairs is organised by The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, which was founded in 1948. The resolutions of The Standing Conference provide recommendations and must be implemented into the legal codes of the individual states for them to be binding. Teacher training is then regulated by the laws and implementing regulations of the individual states. The regulations deal with studying, examinations, the First State Examination, bachelor's and master's degree examinations, practical teacher training, and preparatory service. In each state, the responsibility lies with the Ministry of Education Culture/Ministry of Education and Science. In Bavaria, teacher qualifications are established by the law on teacher training from the 12th of December 1995. First and Second State Examinations are organised by the state examination authorities or boards of the Land. In the case of bachelor's and master's programmes of study (on the basis of which it is possible to enter preparatory service), the responsibility of the state for teacher training is ensured through the process of accreditation. The programme must be approved by the representative of the highest educational authority (Mičicová, Šamová, 2016, p. 3-4).

TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Teacher training is divided into two stages. The first one comprises of studies in one of the following six types of teaching careers: Teaching careers at primary level – a bachelor's degree study programme (7 semesters, 210 ECTS credits). Studies are focused not only on studying a teaching subject, but also on pedagogical training. The course is concluded by the First State Exam or by obtaining relevant academic qualifications. Teaching careers at primary level or individual lower secondary level (7 semesters, 210 ECTS credits). This type of studies is also focused on studying a teaching subject (one or two) and pedagogical training. The course is concluded by the First State Exam or by obtaining relevant academic qualifications. Teaching careers at all or individual lower secondary level schools (7 semesters, 210 ECTS credits). The studying is also focused on studying a subject (one or two) and pedagogical training in 2:1 ratio. The course is concluded by the First State Exam or by obtaining relevant academic qualifications. Teaching careers for the general education subjects at upper secondary level and grammar schools (6 semesters in bachelor's degree study programme, 4 semesters in master's programme of study, 300 ECTS credits). The studies are focused on studying subjects (180 ECTS credits minimum) and pedagogical training. The course is concluded by the First State Exam or by obtaining relevant academic qualifications – master's degree (Mičicová, Šamová, 2016, p. 4).

ADMISSION PROCEDURE

The only requirement for admission to teaching courses is the successful completion of tertiary education qualifications, usually the *Abitur* exam at the end of grammar school studies (*Basic Structure of the Education System in the Federal Republic of Germany: Diagram. Kulturminister Konferenz*).

FURTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Continued professional development is perceived as obligatory, however, there are no legal regulations for the minimal scope of further teacher education. On the other hand, continued development allows teachers to teach new subjects or to be promoted. The status of a teacher, once obtained, does not change. According to the law, further teacher education is not obligatory. If specified in an employment contract, it may become obligatory (Mičicová, Šamová, 2016, p. 6).

CONCLUSION

This study that we present deals with a comparison of teaching preparation in selected countries. We consider the concept of teaching preparation in Finland to be very inspiring as here teacher training is based on the idea of an autonomous and professional teacher and the ideal of lifelong learning. The aim of teacher training is to cultivate and develop pedagogical thinking of teachers who can combine pedagogical research results with vocational challenges. In France teacher preparation is aimed at getting professional skills, education is based on a concept that mixes academic courses and practical training in schools. The common basis of preparation for all pedagogues is the background that creates their common culture. Teachers should possess learning based on newest research as well as take a scientific view in the classroom using latest knowledge not only of their area of study but also of pedagogical sciences during all their career; therefore, there is a lot of emphasis on research in learning content.

The conducted analysis shows that there is no uniform concept of professional preparation in the selected countries as we can see from the total list of the individual components. However, in all the presented countries it is evident that it is always aimed at achieving better quality and aware of the importance of efficient learning which is the basis of national culture. Qualifications necessary to become a teacher are subject to legal regulations in all observed countries. The found differences between approaches to the individual components are mostly the result of particular and historical situation of each country.

We can see wide differences between the countries in admission process and further education. For example, pedagogy study requirements are evaluated within the admission process in Finland, whereas in Germany only after university graduation and so-called preparation service while taking the second state examination. Some countries have professional standards as the core of the career system which defines several teaching work quality levels. For example, in Slovakia four levels are defined, in other countries professional standards are not defined, while in some countries the introduction of standards is under discussion.

Regarding professional attributes of teachers, there is a request especially for knowledge and skills; in some countries personality and professional characteristics necessary for doing the job have been set. What is dominant is knowledge of the subject taught combined with psychodidactic competences; furthermore, communication related skills as well as a request or motivation for lifelong learning linked to reflection and self-reflection. We can also meet a greater emphasis on an ability to educate in diversified classes. Competences for interdisciplinary and project learning and higher level cooperation including international cooperation have been specified. The analysis we conducted shows the search for a balance between theoretical and practical preparation. Professional forming also includes ethical aspects, it is clear that the study of professional ethics and the existence of ethical chambers develop a sensitivity for value and moral problems, which can help teachers better understand their professional and social role. In these countries we can also notice a trend towards democratization of the teaching profession that leads, inter alia, to gradual reduction of differences in requirements for preparation of various types and levels of teaching. Besides these presented facts, it is interesting to compare European countries that had been divided between Eastern Bloc and Western Bloc for decades, as not only “Eastern” systems have been looking for a new shape since 1990’s. We can notice similar issues for example in France or Germany that also face a lot of problems, and by means of reforms and constant changes try to find an optimal way to teacher preparation efficiency.

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