

Teachers Continuing Professional Development: Trends in European Countries. Towards Teachers' Professionalism

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ABSTRACT

The article focuses on description of different approaches of European countries to the Continuing Professional Development of teachers that leads to certain recommendations on that matter.

The main division assumes the presence of centralised and decentralised systems for such development. However, it is neither clear nor easy to define, which system is used in the particular country. That is why the article covers more categories, even if some of them may overlap in certain conditions.

Having defined the system, the emphasis is put on its correlation with whether Continuing Professional Development is compulsory and to what extent or not.

That leads to the following point that concentrates on considering time during which trainings are conducted and the replacement needed.

The article describes also institutions that provide Continuing Professional Development. Among them, there is the Foundation for Development of the Education System¹, which is presented more precisely.

Having established all the data from these parts of the article, it was possible to make recommendations that should contribute to improvement of Continuing Professional Development programmes.

Keywords: Teacher, Educational System, Continuing Professional Development, Competencies, Qualification Framework.

¹ The Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE) is the largest national organization in Poland. It is a leader in European funded projects management. It directly cooperates with European Union. The authors of the chapter have several years of experience working in the system of professional development of teachers and management of international educational projects addressed also to this group of beneficiaries. The authors also actively serve as experts of the Polish Ministry of National Education in the process of gaining further professional degrees by teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION

The following paper is concerned with the issue of continuing teachers' professional development as well as trends in the European countries.

The starting point for the article is the current teacher education policy in Europe and its focus on developing teachers' professional competencies throughout their careers and the suggestions concerning effective ways of stimulating teachers' lifelong professional learning and assessing their competencies with consistent tools. Regarding this policy direction, the most significant activities and achievements of the Foundation for the Development of the Education System in the field of developing teachers' professionalism is presented in the main part of the paper. Special attention is paid to the types of teachers training abroad, like job shadowing, observation periods, professional development courses or specific events, the European Commission programme for teachers that supports teacher training (Erasmus+), and the platforms for teachers, schools, experts, and others to find information on news, trends, policies, initiatives, and activities in the field of school education, as well as contribute by discussing and engaging important issues with peers, will be presented. In the final part of the article, some important recommendations for fostering teachers' professional in Europe and beyond it are presented.

Many systems of education have to contend with challenges linked to a smooth transition from the stage of initial teacher training to the stage of their professional development. The challenges mainly relate to the question as to which competencies should be developed in pre-service teachers when they are trained and which ones, for various reasons, have to be included in continuing professional development. To get a clearer picture, it is worth emphasising that we are talking mainly about key competencies, but not only. Although a review of continuing professional development (CPD) systems operating in Europe is a complex task, due to the diversity of solutions applied by different countries, it is a challenge worth facing, as it will allow us to determine the level at which these competencies are developed as part of formal and non-formal education. Therefore, using past

experience resulting from a number of attempts to describe various aspects of European education systems, we have to refer to a certain grid or a parameter matrix describing and defining something, which we generally call the system of continuing professional development, in whatever shape it may function in practice. Based on materials published by Eurydice, the European Commission's official source of data, we are able to develop such a parameter matrix linked to the degree of CPD system centralisation/decentralisation, statutory duty to undergo CPD, timing of the implementation of CPD-related tasks, types of institutions offering CPD, development of CPD plans and the accreditation of CPD providers.

2. CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The system of CPD for teachers – centralised or decentralised

An analysis of teacher support models in Europe shows that a growing number of countries are developing so-called decentralised continuing professional development systems (Study on Policy Measures to Improve the Attractiveness of the Teaching Profession in Europe, Vol. II. Final report).

However, the notion of a centralised or decentralised system is neither clear nor easy to define. We can assume that on the one end of the spectrum, we have a strongly centralised system, where CPD is organised by nationwide institutions accountable to the national education authority only, whereas, on the other end, there is a system where the main role in the organisation of CPD is played by schools, e.g. in Slovenia and Lithuania, as a result of the 1998 reform, school principals are responsible for improving teachers according to national educational goals. In order to better understand what relevant processes entail and to go beyond the dichotomy between the centralised and decentralised systems, which does not quite reflect the intricacies and nuances of the matter under analysis, we have to divide the existing or theoretically possible systems into more categories, while being aware that some of them may overlap. Such approach will allow us to analyse the situation more thoroughly:

- Centralised system – Slovakia, Romania, Croatia. In Croatia, the main role is played by a central institution, namely the Education Institute with its four branch offices. The Institute is responsible both for supervision and guidance for teachers.
- Decentralised system (regional, local and school levels) – Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Iceland, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania and Slovenia. For example, as a result of reforms implemented in Slovenia and Lithuania, school headmasters are responsible for CPD for teachers in line with the national objectives of education.
- External/market-based system – a system that is theoretically possible, but not operating in a pure form in any country, where schools use external services of various independent CPD providers.
- Internal system – CPD at school level, for which Norway can partly be an example where each school appoints one teacher responsible for the organisation of training.
- Networking-based system – part of the Malta's system is an example, in which schools are encouraged to develop networks and provide mutual CPD support.

- Mixed system – Poland, Finland, Great Britain. In Finland, for example, the ministry develops a training programme and lists priority topics, which are to be implemented by various institutions at the local level. In Poland, this mixed nature is due to the assignment of responsibility for CPD to all levels: central, regional and local one.

In many countries, the situation is changing dynamically, various reviews are based on data collected in different periods, which significantly contribute to an unclear view of the situation. However, this degree of accuracy is not necessary for our purpose. Above all, we need to determine which elements or parameters should be taken into account when reflecting on CPD systems. As it is difficult to present a single, general and coherent typology, we will analyse the parameters, which determine compulsory and optional CPD support provided for teachers.

Compulsory or optional CPD for teachers

Analysis of the documents published by the European Commission, as indicated in the report entitled 'Status of CPD for teachers in general lower secondary education (ISCED 2), according to central regulations, 2013/14', shows that in Europe CPD for teachers is a professional responsibility in a number of countries, such as Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Austria, Portugal, Montenegro and Serbia. As part of this responsibility, the minimum number of hours of training is stipulated, e.g. from 8 hours in Luxembourg to 68 hours in Serbia. In five countries, the minimum amount is expressed as numbers of days. For example, teachers in Belgium and Finland are expected to take part in CPD for at least three days a year, while in Cyprus this minimum requirement amounts to four days, and five days in Lithuania and Slovenia. In Great Britain (Scotland), teachers have a contractual requirement to complete a maximum of 35 hours of CPD annually, and as part of their working year they must also attend five days of continuing professional development activity planned by their employers. The second group are countries in which CPD is regarded as a professional duty, and involvement in it is further encouraged by making it an element of promotion requirements. For example, in Spain, Croatia, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, and Slovakia, CPD is regarded as a significant asset for career advancement. The third option involves CPD as an optional measure. Although in Iceland CPD is optional, teachers are recommended to engage in 170-190 hours of CPD annually, whereas in France, participation in CPD is regarded as a right and the legislation specifies that teachers are entitled to at least 20 hours of continuing professional development per year. Poland is the only country where CPD is a precondition for professional advancement, which – just as career development - takes account of the degree of CPD plan implementation (Regulation of the Minister of National Education in Poland, of 1 March 2013, on obtaining professional promotion degrees by teachers).

Implementation of CPD - during or after working hours

In most European countries, CPD is organised outside working hours. However, Eurydice sources do not specify whether 'working hours' activities' are to be understood as all working hours or the teaching load. A number of countries allow participation in CPD during regular working hours and the differences refer to whether or not teacher replacement is provided and whether or not hours spent on CPD

are included in working hours. So, in Belgium (German-speaking Community), Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Liechtenstein, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Hungary compulsory CPD is organised within working hours and involves teacher replacement, whereas the Flemish Community of Belgium, Finland, Sweden, Great Britain and Malta provide CPD within working hours but without providing teacher replacement. The French Community of Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Norway, Bulgaria and Slovenia organise optional CPD within working hours and with teacher replacement. Various forms of CPD are provided outside working hours in Romania (compulsory CPD) and in Ireland, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Iceland, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia (optional CPD, at teachers' discretion).

Institutions providing CPD for teachers

In most European countries, higher education institutions (HEIs) and teacher in-service training centres are the main providers of CPD. For example, in Sweden, future teachers and then in-service teachers are trained by the same HEI, which guarantees the continuity of the process. In Austria, teacher training institutions closely cooperate with those providing CPD, which has been a requirement imposed by a recent reform. Similarly, in some federal states in Germany, teacher training centres operating within HEIs coordinate cooperation between these HEIs and CPD centres. In Belgium, Italy, Austria, Finland, Great Britain and Slovenia, CPD for teachers is organised at local or school levels. A private market offering CPD is emerging in Central and Eastern Europe. To regulate this activity, Great Britain and Portugal are considering the introduction of a system registering and accrediting CPD providers. Greece and Cyprus have CPD centres specially established for teachers (European Commission, 2007: 51-52 and European Commission 2003: 111-112). The Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE), which is a foundation of the State Treasury changing the face of Polish Education for over 20 years, is one of institutions providing CPD for teachers in Poland. FRSE offers opportunities to acquire basic and specialist knowledge both in a formal and academic way and also in non-formal and practical settings. FRSE is the only Polish institution possessing an immense experience in managing a dozen or so of EU education programmes. In 2007-2013, it coordinated the 'Youth in Action' and 'Lifelong Learning Programme' (Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius and Grundtvig) in Poland. The credibility of the Foundation has directly translated into entrusting it with the function of the Erasmus+ National Agency in the years 2014-2020. The Foundation also implements EU information and educational initiatives, such as the European Language Label, eTwinning, Eurodesk Poland, Europass, Eurymice and EPALE. Last, but not least, it supports cooperation with Eastern countries through the Polish-Lithuanian Youth Exchange Fund, Polish-Ukrainian Youth Exchange Council and the SALTO Eastern Europe and Caucasus Resource Centre. For some years, FRSE has been the operator of the EEA Scholarship and Training Fund (implemented as the Education Programme in years 2014-2021) and of the Sciex-NMSch Scholarship Fund. Most programmes and initiatives offered involve mobility abroad, including staff mobility carried out to improve skills and professional competencies. School staff are given an opportunity to explore modern and innovative teaching methods as well as educational institution management, which allows them to achieve the main objective

– work quality improvement in their institution in specified areas necessitating changes, and the strengthening of international cooperation. Education institutions present their development plan in an application (European Development Plan), which outlines areas necessitating improvement, compliance of project activities with the needs and specificity of the institution, as well as long-term benefits to be brought by the project. Project objectives are determined by teachers and the school headmaster together, in line with the needs of the school and its employees, owing to which not only the person carrying out a mobility, but also the whole institution derives benefits from the project's implementation. Project participants obtain grants to participate in certain forms of support such as teaching assignments – activities enabling teachers to conduct classes in partner schools; staff training – participation in organised activities or training abroad, job shadowing, and participation in conferences or seminars.

As part of FRSE's extensive offer, teachers can apply for funding of their projects involving international cooperation between education institutions, education authorities and other organisation active in the field of school education. Such activities should focus on the introduction of long-term changes, innovations and good practices wherever necessary to ensure high quality of education. In particular, they should aim at the enhancement of young people's achievements (especially these of students at risk of dropping out of school or with low levels of basic skills), but also at raising the quality of early education and care, as well as the development and strengthening teachers' professional competencies. The eTwinning programme defining the school community as one composed of schools and pre-schools from all over Europe (and not only) and cooperating also in the area of CPD for teachers by using electronic media is another offer addressed to teachers. Teachers and students use the Internet for the purposes of international cooperation – they cooperate, exchange information and learning resources. eTwinning extends the scope of pedagogical opportunities offered to students and teachers, and encourages learning and opening to Europe. The programme has already attracted over 400,000 teachers from 160,000 schools who each year work together on over 50,000 projects.

Awareness of teachers' needs and their regular identification is conducive to the systematisation of training offers. In Europe, three main players might be involved in the identification of CPD needs: the top-level authority for education (usually the national ministry of education), local authorities or schools themselves. In Greece, for example, the top-level education authority on its own determines the types of training teachers need, and those allowed to provide it. In France, Croatia, Italy, Austria, Norway, Macedonia and Turkey, needs and plans relating to training are determined both by the top-level education authority and local authorities or schools themselves. In France, the Ministry of Education develops National Training Programme, which provides general framework for the development of training plans by administrative units called *academies*. In Italy, CPD needs and plans are determined by schools themselves and the top-level authority is involved when training is linked to reforms or modernisation.

In a number of education systems, for example in Belgium (German-speaking Community), the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Finland

and Sweden, CPD needs and plans are established solely at local level and by schools; teachers are frequently consulted. In Norway, a national CPD plan is developed in cooperation between the Association of Local and Regional Authorities, three teacher unions, the Association of School Leaders, the National Council for Teachers' Education, and the Ministry of Education and Science. At local level, the authorities are responsible for identifying the needs of teachers and developing a competence development plan for them together with local employee associations. Luxembourg and Great Britain (Scotland) are the only education systems, in which training plans are primarily the responsibility of individual teachers, although such needs are discussed and agreed with their supervisors.

In almost all countries, schools have a vital role to play in determining CPD needs (except in Greece). This happens through merging the needs of individual teachers into a more general school development plan or by combining those needs with more general interests of the school itself or its education authority. It is compulsory to have CPD plans in place at school level in over two-thirds of education systems. In countries where formal CPD programmes are compulsory, their practical development may be the responsibility of school leaders (e.g. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) or education councils (Belgium, Portugal, Romania).

All education systems provide some kind of support to cover expenditure on CPD. The mechanisms for doing so vary. Most countries adopt two of the following procedures: public authorities offer free courses (run centrally or by accredited providers), schools are subsidised by the authorities for organising CPD (directly or after submitting individual applications) and teachers apply for funding to cover or reclaim the costs of CPD to themselves. In most countries, CPD is financially supported. Teachers may be granted paid study leave and schools may obtain support in the form of temporary replacement.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

As it can be seen, regardless of the form, place or type of teacher support, it is necessary to verify from the perspective of CPD the extent to which strictly professional competencies are linked to other competencies acquired by teachers in the process of everyday education. For example, for the purposes of this discussion the following competencies are important: the ability to reflect on and evaluate one's own skills, ability to develop, implement and adapt syllabuses, ability to cooperate with others and develop joint projects in education, as well as to manage them, etc. Such competencies are difficult to develop in future teachers during formal education. The development of such competencies often requires more time, more experience, as well as the confrontation of knowledge formally acquired during education and real-life teaching work in classrooms. Obviously, the development of those competencies will occur naturally in the course of work, but it has to be supported by teachers' participation in continuing professional development. A matrix containing all competencies – save subject-related competencies – which we should develop in future teachers should be the starting point for that kind of a system. One such matrix

was created in the course of the project entitled 'European Profile for Language Teacher Education – A Frame of Reference' (Kelly and Grenfel, 2004). This profile contains a description of competencies desired in a teacher. Analysis of this document shows that not all future teachers can develop all of those competencies in the course of formal education. Therefore, the development of those competencies has to be continued during CPD. Due to the curriculum implemented by a HEI and to the type of a school where future teachers will be placed, as well as to the context of specific challenges presented by their school, each teacher will start from a different level because their individual competencies will be developed to a different extent and their needs relating to CPD will differ. Therefore, the development of each individual teacher will have to be different. This means that CPD offers should be tailored to each individual teacher's needs and based on the initial competence profile of a teacher leaving the education system and entering the profession. An example of such a profile is shown below:

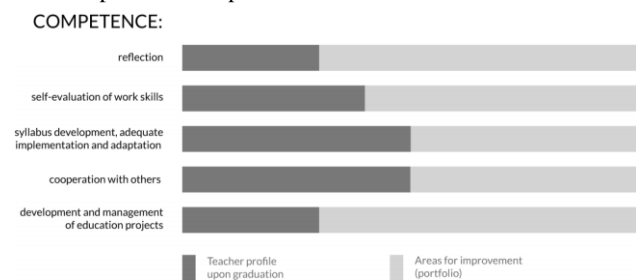


Illustration 1: an example of a teacher's profile.

Apart from the above mentioned text, other documents show the assumptions concerning the development of teachers' profile and good practices in the scope of the development of teachers' skills. These include: Rethinking education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes (European Commission, 2012a), Teaching Professions for Better Learning Outcomes (European Commission, 2012b), Policy approaches to defining and describing teacher competencies (European Commission, 2011) and Supporting teacher competence development for better learning outcomes (European Commission 2013a).

It should be reminded that in the framework of 'Education and Training 2010', a team of EU experts has developed a European reference framework of key competencies for lifelong learning. This framework has, for the first time, identified at the European level basic competencies necessary for citizens' well-being. Eight key competencies, which have been included in core curricula, also in Poland, have been identified (European Parliament and European Council 2006). The latest Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning, published at the end of May, does not change the idea of core approach towards competencies.

These key competencies include:

1. Literacy competence
2. Multilingual competence,
3. Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering
4. Digital competence
5. Personal, social and learning to learn competence,
6. Citizenship competence
7. Entrepreneurship competence
8. Cultural awareness and expression competence

In the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes (European Commission, 2012a) it has been decided that each Member State needs to establish a competence framework or professional profile for teachers, which will form the basis for the introduction of an efficient system of recruitment to the teaching profession and will make it attractive for the best candidates.

Trends in the policy of the European Union clearly show that teacher education needs to be geared to the development of competencies.

In light of the above, the possibility of introducing a teacher competence portfolio is worth considering and the process described above must be seen as part of lifelong learning. In consequence, each teacher should be able to programme a CPD process for himself/herself, whereas somebody else, for example school leaders or methodology advisors or consultants should monitor the process. Therefore, acquiring or developing new competencies must occur as part of CPD and a portfolio containing a set of desired competencies and self-evaluation tools for teachers could be helpful in the process of CPD organisation and planning. Moreover, that kind of a system could easily be combined with the existing teacher professional advancement system. Owing to that, the professional advancement itself could become more rational and effective than it currently is. In that system, direct responsibility for CPD would be assumed by teachers themselves and partly – by the headmaster of the school where they work, or a person appointed for this purpose, such as a methodology advisor or consultant. The remaining elements of the system, that is the national, regional, local authorities, school leaders, universities, CPD centres, etc. would perform tasks supporting the system by providing a CPD offer of reliable quality and monitoring the process, especially whether or not a teacher's competence development plan includes national, regional, local or school priorities and whether or not self-evaluation is reliable. This would be a mixed model of continuing professional development, where a lot of entities have different tasks to perform, but it is the teacher that would be central to the process, which would mean strong decentralisation on the one hand, right to the very bottom, and therefore, not ending with schools but with teachers, and with full supervision of the process from higher levels on the other. The idea of introducing a teacher competence portfolio was presented by the author of this analysis in 2007 in Brussels at a meeting of an expert group of the ELIN network (European Language Inspectors' Network) with European Commission representatives and was well received. Unfortunately, so far this ambitious idea has not been implemented.

It is worth mentioning here arguments which are pro and against the competency based approach. There is a lot of valid criticism which should be mentioned, particularly related to the fact that this approach encourages a system of accountability measures, and more scrutiny, on teachers. Moreover, teaching cannot simply be reduced to competencies.

It is also worth stressing that the above solution offers a fundamental advantage – it is consistent with the idea of Qualification Framework. Qualifications or competencies described for first- or second-cycle study programmes can be

compared against the desired teacher competence profile, thus serving as a basis for the development of individual CPD plans.

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