



XIV ENTEP SEMINAR – Riga, Latvia - 12-14 May, 2005

The conference on **Europe and Latvian Teacher Education Programmes**, organised by Aivars Opincans from the Department of Education and Science in Latvia, took place on 12-14 May at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the University of Riga and at the Majori Hotel in Jurmala (ENTEP meeting).

I Round Table Conference: Europe and Latvian Teacher Education Programmes

The conference was opened by the Dean of the Faculty of Pedagogy, Andris Kangro, and by the Director of the Department of General Education, Artūrs Skrastiņš.

The conference brought together the members of ENTEP and representatives from various Latvian universities. The ENTEP coordinator, Otmar Gassner, chaired the morning session and first gave an introduction to the network. Then ENTEP members presented three topics:

1. **Seán Feerick (European Commission):** Education and Training 2010: Implications for Teacher Education
2. **Angela Walsh (UK):** ECTS and the Bologna Process
3. **Michael Schratz (A):** The European Teacher

Seán Feerick traced the development from the main goals of the Lisbon strategy to the main policy steps and the phase of implementation in eight specific areas of work. With reference to the [First Joint Interim Report to the European Council 2004](#) the need for reform and further efforts were emphasized. There are three levers for success which should inform policy decisions in the individual member countries:

1. Focus reform and investment on key areas
2. Make lifelong learning a concrete reality
3. Create a Europe of education and training

This was followed by the main points from a recent EU paper on Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications, which will be broadly discussed at the Testing Conference in Brussels on June 20-21, 2005.

Angela Walsh presented the main points from her ENTEP discussion [paper on ECTS](#) and Michael Schratz did the same for [the European Teacher](#).

The second part of the conference was chaired by Tatjana Koke, Professor of Pedagogy and Psychology at the University of Latvia, who also gave the first talk.

The overview of the teacher education programmes running in various Latvian institutions showed great diversity and a high degree of professionalism. There were seven presentations:

1. **Tatjana Kože, University of Latvia:** Commonalities and Diversities in Teacher's Education and Profession
2. **Māra Dirba, University of Latvia:** Modern Language Teacher Education: the Multilingual Aspect
3. **Uldis Švinks, Latvian Academy of Sports Education:** Sports Teachers Education to Work in Multilingual and Multicultural Environment
4. **Gunārs Strods, Rezekne Higher Education Institution:** Some Questions about Teachers Study Programmes Design and Realisation at Rezekne Higher Education Institution
5. **Linda Mackēviča, Liepaja Academy of Pedagogy:** Liepaja Academy of Pedagogy on Its Way of Creating a Regional University of Kurzeme
6. **Baiba Briede, Irēna Katane, Latvia University of Agriculture:** Organisation and Evaluation of Student's Pedagogical Practice

7. Ilga Salīte, Daugavpils University:
Teacher Education in the Context of
Purpose, Direction and Continuity

It was interesting to hear that conditions for Latvian teachers have become more difficult and that they are exposed to all kinds of pressure. The following points were mentioned:

- Students' increasing social heterogeneity alongside with the widening differentiation in the level of the students' cognitive abilities complicates the teacher's work in the classroom.
- A change in the model of the student-teacher relationship can be observed. While teachers were in control of this relationship and enjoyed undivided respect twenty years ago, today it is based on egalitarianism. Teachers are increasingly worried about the students' verbal, psychological and even physical violence in their relationships with peers and even teachers.
- Teachers have to face constantly increasing responsibilities at work and a consistent lowering of status.
- As a result of the diminishing role of family and parents in children's upbringing, the teachers are now largely responsible for the transmission of values and for the introduction of general rules of behaviour.
- Decreasing support for and recognition of the teacher's role in society has, in turn, led to a sense of insecurity and loss of self-esteem among teachers.

A number of these points have relevance beyond the context of Latvia and will be found to be of relevance across Europe.

II ENTEP meeting on ECTS

The ENTEP meeting was focused exclusively on a discussion of ECTS in the member countries present at the meeting. The representatives gave an account of the situation in their country, and additional time was allowed for questions of other members. In the following an attempt has been

made to identify key issues across all member states and to reflect the lively discussion at the meeting.

1 What is ECTS?

The biggest problem of the European Credit Transfer System is getting general agreement on how to define a credit. Although the official definition through workload is generally known, differences in practice that have been reported are considerable. One commonly shared experience is that for some courses students will have to put in significantly more work than the defined workload to get the credits, whereas in other courses credits are awarded simply for attending a course or lecture without any work on top of the contact hours at all. (One rather famous university doing this was named in the discussion.)

This means that more effort has to be put into this first phase of implementation: finding a common denominator for the definition of student workload. Most countries still find themselves in this phase as universities are autonomous and often reluctant to implement European regulations. In some countries the question whether ECTS is identical with contact hours or not is still not settled.

Although more work is needed on this fairly basic level, the issue is much more complex. Student workload as the sole criterion of a European credit point has been criticised as a very thin criterion. Meanwhile there is wide agreement that, for full acceptance and impact, outcome needs to be considered as a second criterion. However, most of the work in this area is still to be done, and reaching agreement on ways to define outcome is the challenge of the years ahead.

2 ECTS grading system

The grading system suggested on the official EU website and says: "It is good practice to add an ECTS grade, in particular in case of credit transfer." (http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programm es/socrates/ects_en.html#2) The system, which is also briefly described in Walsh 2004 (www.pafeldkirch.ac.at/entep), is little understood, and no country has reported to be actually using it on any wider scale. The purpose of the exercise is difficult to see as it suggests an additional cycle of grading on top of the grading procedures in the institutional context.

An analogy might help to understand the issue more clearly: Whereas with the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. (Council of Europe, Cambridge University Press 2001) we have defined anchors for the various achievement levels so that a B1 for reading skills awarded in Austria can be understood as a B1 in Spain or Sweden, these anchors are missing with ECTS. The effort of grading any one cohort of test takers (the official user guide suggests a minimum of 30) according to the percentages suggested, fails to generate more useful information or to connect student achievement to any point of reference outside the original system. Students with a two-credit C in Professor Smith's seminar on the modern novel delivered at a university in Estonia and students with a two-credit C in Professor Tannen's seminar on the same topic at a university in Austria are no more comparable that they were before. So, at least for the moment, this does not look like a powerful instrument that could meet with wide acceptance or like one that could be easily improved.

The issues involved are discussed lucidly on the website of the TU Graz (Austria), an institution that was awarded the ECTS label in the first round:

<http://www.international.tugraz.at/ects.html>

3 Transfer versus accumulation

Most institutions of Higher Education in European countries were introduced to the concept of a credit system in the context of student mobility in ERASMUS. ECTS stands for European Credit TRANSFER System, and that is what it was in the beginning and what it still is in a large number of countries.

As a credit system for students studying abroad, it has worked quite well; in fact, it has been one of the key instruments to make student mobility possible on a larger scale. We know from experience, however, that some countries find it harder than others to accept credits acquired abroad as an integral part of their own study programmes. This is certainly not the case in Luxembourg, where at least 30 credits must be acquired abroad by every student (which means one hundred percent student mobility). It is interesting to see, however, that it has worked visibly less well for students transferring from one university to another in the same country (Denmark, Germany, Austria). One reason for this might be that the initial concept of

transfer cannot easily adapt to periods longer than one or two terms and, mainly, because transfers from one institution to another would actually presuppose a credit accumulation system to be in place.

Whereas the need for such a system was clearly seen by the ENTEP representatives, there was little evidence of any such system already in place and fully operative anywhere in Europe right now. On the contrary, some countries have their own credit system and do not actually use ECTS except for transfer (England), others have a national credit system that was in place before and is now running parallel to ECTS (Denmark).

4 European credits for professionalisation?

France and Germany have a common problem to solve. Their teachers go through a teacher education programme at university before they go through a state-run programme to acquire professional skills (IUFM, Seminar). So far it has been impossible to award ECTS points in these programmes, which simply means that they do not conform to Bologna and that the teachers get no "easily readable" recognition for the work done in these courses. The solution envisaged is to create close enough links between these programmes and the universities so that European credits will be obtainable as well. The new bill for education in France makes the collaboration between IUFM and universities possible in order to award ECTS points. However, only the "academic" part of the education programme will be considered for credits (30 ECTS credits for one year).

5 ECTS and the two-cycle structure

"Courses in higher education now have a two-cycle (Bachelor/Master) structure in 33 countries." (Eurydice, May 2005) This statement from the press release for the recent Eurydice study *Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe, 2004/05 – National Trends in the Bologna Process* certainly does not apply to teacher education.

When ECTS develops into a credit accumulation system, it is closely linked with the duration of study programmes. At present there is little agreement on how to structure teacher education programmes in relation to the cycles suggested in the Bologna Declaration. Seeing that there are countries where teacher education programmes

cover three years and others where it takes up to seven years before you get qualified teacher status, the Bologna suggestions make a lot of sense.

There are only a few countries where teacher education programmes that lead to Qualified Teacher Status last only three years (e.g. England, Austria for primary and lower secondary, Luxembourg in the near future). In most countries the Bachelor programmes in teacher education last four years as universities argue that initial teacher education together with extended practice in a concurrent model cannot be delivered in three years. (Denmark)

Bologna allows for flexibility within the two-cycle system describing 3 plus 2 as the default option, but also allowing 4 plus 1. The point of flexibility seems to be overstretched, however, when one component from each of the above options is selected, resulting in 3 plus 1 or 4 plus 2. In both cases the area of comparability (which means five years for the first two cycles in Higher Education) has been left.

There are a number of countries that deviate from the mainstream model in the second cycle, i.e. their MA programmes. England, The Netherlands, and Luxembourg have three-year Bachelor programmes with only a one-year MA programme following.

Some special cases warrant a slightly different approach when for instance The Netherlands demand teachers who have done a “professional BA” (with an emphasis on professional skills rather than on academic ones) to take one year at the university before they can embark on a Master’s programme there. Similar thinking is on the way in Austria where the BA’s from the new Pädagogische Hochschule might have to take a one-year course at the university before being accepted into an MA programme.

6 Teachers as civil servants

One difficulty in a number of member states has to do with the fact that teachers are civil servants and, secondly, with the salary system. Teachers are selected and employed by the state, so each state decides on the profile for employment. When the state is unhappy with a purely academic education the teachers get at university, systems are put in place to address the situation (France, Germany). This division of the education of teachers, however, makes comparisons difficult. In order to align with

Bologna, this second phase needs to be linked back to the university and become an integral part of the teacher education programme of that country.

Another consideration that is a strong undercurrent, but rarely discussed is the national salary system of teachers. In a number of countries it is not just an academic decision to create MA programmes or to have four-year BA programmes and make them a condition for qualified teacher status. We have two factors to consider here: for one thing, the education of the teachers will cost more, and, secondly, better qualified teachers will demand a higher salary. As “budget cuts” has become a high frequency word in recent years, decisions are often not taken by the minister of education or the university, but by the finance minister.

7 New countries are quicker

It is interesting to observe that many of the countries that have been in the European Union for a long time are fairly slow on the road suggested by the Bologna Declaration. Whereas the UK, for instance, is in the favourable position of having three-year teacher education programmes in place already, they have shown little inclination to change the existing MA programmes from one year to two years. But then this decision might not be taken in the ministry of education, but partly in autonomous universities.

Most countries that had four-to-five-year master programmes before Bologna are rather reluctant to change to the two-cycle system (Austria), the situation in France and Germany is different, but will not easily move into the two-cycle structure. In many cases where they do change, the new two-cycle structure is introduced without providing for employability after the first cycle (Czech Republic).

In order to agree with the letter of the Bologna Declaration some technical solutions have been found that are not always equally practical or showing much potential for survival.. The Czech Republic has adopted the two cycle system and the Faculty of Education of Masaryk’s University in Brno awards a BA with the qualification for assistant teacher. This solution is technically perfect, but in reality a person with this type of university degree is hardly employable.

8 Comparability versus diversity

The majority of countries have already introduced two cycles of three and two years in teacher education programmes. But whereas the aim of this exercise was to create “comparable and easily readable” degrees, we seem to be getting a new diversity. There are several cases to support this point.

First there are countries that run four-year programmes in ITE (Denmark, Cyprus) and others that have a classical two-cycle model, but require an MA for employment as a teacher (Czech Republic). Second, even the countries that have adopted a three-two structure have not become much more comparable than before. This is because there is agreement on the number of credits, but on little else. While in general graphs there might be a trend towards convergence as observed by Eurydice, a closer look reveals the underlying differences. On the one hand, you get an increasing number of three-year teacher education programmes; on the other hand, they have not become more comparable as length of study is not the strongest criterion. A basic difference is to be found between programmes based on the concurrent model and others based on a consecutive model. In this way, the three-year programmes in England, those in Austria or Poland and those in France or in the Czech Republic are not really comparable.

It is a bit like saying that five bottles of wine of the same size are “easily comparable” in the sense of “equally acceptable”. It is obvious that this lack of content specifications does not increase comparability, but as Apostolis Dimitropoulos (GR) put it, “it creates a new diversity”. So, ultimately, the work undertaken so far falls short of the objective and needs to be intensified to focus on content and competences in teacher education programmes. Only then will teacher education programmes be truly comparable across Europe, only then will they be a sound basis for employability in all member states.

With regard to ENTEP’s future work, Apostolis Dimitropoulos made a valuable suggestion: the members of the network should look more thoroughly into existing structures, recent reforms and trends in teacher education in Europe, with the view to examine the extent and type of convergence that emerges within the context of the Bologna and Lisbon processes of reforms.

III Other ENTEP business

What is a European Teacher? - Michael Schratz (A)

This text has already created great interest across Europe and an unforeseeable response. On the recommendation of Seán Feerick a final chapter has been added to give it a clear policy edge.

Eventually, the final version is available and should be used for paper publications and translations. The text is copyright “ENTEPE, Michael Schratz”. Please write informally to the ENTEPE coordinator if you intend to publish or translate the text.

The text is downloadable from:

www.pa-feldkirch.ac.at/entep

Continuous professional development - Ursula Uzerli (GER) and Lucien Kerger (LUX)

The two representatives have designed a questionnaire for the other representatives to fill in. This will be the basis for the discussion of the topic at the next ENTEPE meeting in October 2005.

Topics for discussion in ENTEPE – Myrna Smitt (SWE)

The responsibility for this area will be shared by Myrna Smitt and Febe Jansen (NL). Short listed topics for discussion in ENTEPE should be presented at the next meeting.

RECENT EUROPEAN DOCUMENTS

Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe 2004/05. National Trends in the Bologna Process

“A Eurydice report on how higher education in Europe is structured has been prepared for the Conference of Higher Education Ministers which was held in Bergen (Norway) on 19-20 May 2005. The publication covers the situation in the 40 States that were signatory to the Bologna Declaration at the opening of the Conference, in an attempt to illustrate how the Bologna Process is progressing in all countries cooperating to create a European

Higher Education Area. The central topics covered by the study reflect the main features of the Process, namely implementation of the three-cycle programme structure, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement, and enhanced quality assurance measures.”

Text available from:

http://www.eurydice.org/Doc_intermediaires/analysis/en/enseignement_sup.html

➤ **NEXT ENTEP SEMINARS**

(i) Luxembourg: Gender roles and stereotyping in education and training - Luxembourg, October 20-22, 2005

(ii) Cyprus: Nikosia - May 2006

(iii) Finland - October 2006

(iv) Lithuania - May 2007

➤ **RECENT CHANGES OF ENTEP MINISTERS' REPRESENTATIVES**

ENTEPE welcomes **Isabelle Robin**, who has been nominated the French representative of the Minister of Education and Science in our network.

➤ **ENTEPE'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

ENTEPE has been invited to take part in the ‘*Testing Conference on common European principles for teacher competences and qualifications*,’ which will be organised by the European Commission and held in Brussels on June 20-21, 2005. ENTEPE will be represented the ENTEPE Coordinator, Otmar Gassner (A).

Otmar Gassner
ENTEPE Coordinator