Challenges for Teacher Training Colleges in Poland [1]

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Abstract: Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges (TTC) were established in Poland as a need of drastic changes in education, and a need to introduce western languages at all levels of schooling in 1992. By the year 2001 TTC managed to graduate the number of teachers the market demanded, yet the quality of education provided emerged as a need to be examined. The purpose of this paper is to present an in depth understanding of the impact of TTC on teacher candidates' development and learning, and the challenges that TTC face. A mixture of qualitative and quantitative research was done to collect data. Data reveals that teacher candidates mainly applied to TTC to learn a foreign language and use it as a springboard to obtain better-paid jobs. Although the teacher candidates have a positive perception with regard to their teaching skills, building true college-school partnerships emerges as a need to for the development and learning of teacher candidates. Two dimensions are essential for the training of teacher candidates: educational policy concerns about foreign language teacher training as an undergraduate program, and economic and social concerns of teacher candidates as prospective professionals.

Keywords: Teacher training colleges, teacher candidates, Poland, policy making

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Teacher Candidates' Development and Learning:

Challenges for Teacher Training Colleges in Poland

Education in Teacher Training Colleges

In the spur of democratization of social and political life, Poland embarked a major economic and political transformation with the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989. The Ministry of Education presented to Parliament a document called "the main direction for improving the National Education System in Poland (Banach, 1998, cited in Salitra, 2003). This document included issues such as a fundamental democratic quality; flexibility; a system of education for adults; respect for the child, guaranteeing their physical, moral, intellectual, spiritual and social development in normal, healthy conditions of freedom and dignity. No sooner than the document was released, the reform in education was introduced in 1994, which aimed to spread the reform to all levels of formal education and to enlarge and rebalance the opportunities for access to education at all levels. The reform not only aimed to improve the quality of education by restoring the strict proportionality between transmission of information, formation of skills and development of personalities, but also the interaction of education and upbringing processes (Salitra, 2003).

Those drastic changes in education brought with it dramatic needs in tertiary teacher education institutions, especially foreign language teacher education was ranked as one of the crucial needs western languages were introduced into the national curriculum at all levels of

schooling (Hamot, 1998). To meet this huge demand of foreign language teachers, Teacher Training Colleges were founded in 1990. These three-year institutions of higher education became sanctioned by the Ministry of Education in 1992 (Kwaśniewicz, 2000). Teacher Training Colleges are institutions of higher education that primarily educate primary and secondary school teachers. The students who graduate from these institutions receive a licencjat (that is accepted as an equivalent of a BA degree). This title allows teacher candidates to pursue their studies in a higher education institution. Also, the graduates are recruited as full-time teachers in primary level up to secondary and high school levels, whereas this is not the case for other teacher training colleges such as History Education (Nowak-Fabrikowski & Tardif, 1999).

When the Teacher Training Colleges were founded the target was to provide 19,000 qualified secondary school teachers of English. As it was planned, by the year 2001 Teacher Training Colleges (TTC) managed to graduate the number of foreign language teachers. Although the expected number of teachers were educated the question of quality emerged (Pawelec, 2000) as a challenge for mass education.

Education at the Teacher Training Colleges

There is no legislation that defines the curricula for teacher training. Nevertheless, TTC are required to follow framework syllabuses issued by the Minister of National Education and Sport which determine the duration of studies, compulsory subjects or blocks of compulsory subjects and the number of hours assigned to these subjects and to the practical placement in school as mentioned above (Eurodyce, 2001). Apart from other TTC in Poland, teacher candidates attending Foreign Language TTC are subjected to four modules throughout their training: English language arts, philology, teacher training, and optional subjects such as European studies (Kwasniewicz, 2000). The purpose of language arts teaching is to take

students beyond the Cambridge Proficiency Level with a high level of linguistic proficiency. The changes brought about in the preparation of future teachers in higher education has been based on the curriculum in which greater number of hours is devoted to pedagogical, psychological, and methodological coursework than to the teaching practice in schools (Salitra, 2003). The teaching practice module consists of pedagogy taught in the first year, and methods of teaching in the second and third years.

The Ministry of Education requires that any foreign language teacher candidate is to attend a minimum of 420 hours of pedagogical preparation, including a total of 270 hours in pedagogy, psychology, and a field-specific study, and 150 hours of teaching practice in schools to gain the right to be recruited as a teacher with a licencjat degree (National In-service Teacher Training Center [CODN]). It is essential that the teaching practice should not represent less than 40% of the time devoted to university coursework (Salitra, 2003). Ultimately, teacher candidates are expected to submit a diploma project. They identify a teaching problem relevant to the area, and deals with this problem as evidence of their skills and creativity in theory and practice (Kwaśniewicz, 2000).

Senior teachers are expected to serve as mentors to new teachers and to students teachers during the practicum. What follows is an account of the challenges (Farrell, 2003). The mentorship system could be supplemented with a more informal system of collegial working relationships. The formal mentorship program can continue but it could be well be supplemented by a buddy system to help familiarize new teachers with the school routines (Farrell, 2003: 107). The system of educating teachers and improving their qualifications, quite simply was not prepared to take on the instruction, in such a wide range, of all currently employed teachers (Salitra, 2003).

The reforms in the Polish education system overall are the actual reflections of the need to support the transitions to democracy and a capitalistic economy (Pawelec, 2000) and such needs are reflected in the training process of foreign language teachers at TTC. The policies adopted by governments or states regarding teacher education, licensing, hiring, and professional development may make an important difference in the qualifications and capacities that teachers bring to their work (Darling-Hammond, 2000), which is why this study tried to examine the TCS perceptions about their development and learning. In other words, this study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1) How do teacher candidates perceive their development and learning in TTC?

2) What challenges do TTC face overall with respect to teacher candidates' development and learning, teaching practice, and curricular and instructional issues.

Method

This study is a combination of a survey method and an in-depth case study. First, a case study design was used to collect data in a prestigious three-year TTC. The issues that emerged during the case study (through interviews and observations) were analyzed to construct a baseline for the survey questionnaire and reach a larger sample.

Participants

The sampling process for the study embarked by selecting six TTC in four big cities through stratified random sampling based on the criteria to reach TTCs with the largest number of student population and having at least graduated teachers for the last one year. Among those teacher training colleges, three were English, one German, and two French medium. All TTCs were contacted for permission to conduct the survey in their school with TCS who were in

their final month of the sixth semester since this period was close to their graduation and the TCS could be considered as novices already. Nevertheless, one of the TTC had to be excluded from the study because the students were celebrating a special fest, and the number of TCS (n=3) available for the research was too small. A total of 205 TCS were administered the survey questionnaire. All data collection was realized by the researcher herself. Nevertheless, six of the questionnaires were cancelled due to the internal validity considerations as they included a large amount of missing data. As a result, the sample consisted of 199 teacher candidates (Female=161, male=34, 4 did not indicate their gender) in their final semester at various Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges (n=5) in Poland. Among those who participated, 138 were English, 36 German, and 25 French language teacher candidates.

Data Collection Procedures

The case study was conducted at a public TTC that has a high reputation for the teachers they graduate and to be one among the first TTCs established after the reform. The case study initiated by observing the methodological and the pedagogical classrooms to gain an understanding of the learning environment. Data collection first started through semi-structured interviews with the Teacher Training College Director (Ph.D), two supervising instructors (Ph.D. candidates), one methodology instructor (Ph.D. candidates), two mentors (M.A. Degrees), and two purposefully selected focus groups among nine teacher candidates. All of the individuals, except for the Director, were employed in another institution as a language teacher. The case study was conducted at a public TTC that has a high reputation for the teachers they graduate and to be one among the first TTCs established after the reform. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the Teacher Training College Director (Ph.D), two supervising instructors (Ph.D. candidates), one methodology instructor (Ph.D. candidates), two mentors (M.A. Degrees), and two purposefully selected focus groups

among nine teacher candidates. All of the educators, except for the Director, were employed in another institution as a language teacher. There were only two supervising instructors for the third year teacher candidates. Therefore, the focus group was selected based on the criteria that half of the teacher candidates would present the supervisor they worked with, and also that each focus group has a sample of teacher candidates visiting different school sites for their teaching practice. Among all TCS, four of them were teaching at a private school, and others offered one to one private lessons (tutoring). All interviews lasted between 30-45 mins. All subjects were given pseudonyms in reporting the findings due to confidentiality reasons. Prompting and probing questions were employed to gain a deeper understanding of the teacher candidates' development and learning. Moreover, since the researcher was an external evaluator, the focus group interviews with teacher candidates were conducive to environments in which genuine conversations among teacher candidates, who were destined to a similar learning and/or teaching environment, emerged.

In-depth field notes were obtained during TCS' teaching practice followed by the feedback sessions by the supervisors and mentors. There were only two supervising instructors for the third year teacher candidates. Therefore, the focus groups with TCS were selected based on the criteria that half of the teacher candidates would present the supervisor they worked with, and also that each focus group has a sample of teacher candidates visiting different school sites for their teaching practice. Among all TCS, four of them were teaching at a private school, and others offered one to one private lessons (tutoring). All interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes. All subjects were given pseudonyms in reporting the findings due to confidentiality reasons. Prompting and probing questions were employed to gain a deeper understanding of the teacher candidates' development and learning. Moreover, since the researcher was an external evaluator, the focus group interviews with teacher candidates were

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Second, document analysis and expert (teaching staff) opinion based on the teaching practice and the curriculum were used to validate the interview data and compare the curriculum in the TTC with the national requirements. Based on the interview data and document analysis, close-ended and open-ended items were constructed to obtain more detailed information of the issues reported in the development and learning of TCS via a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher.

The content and construct validity was controlled by two professors, one of whom was one of the main actors in the establishment of TTC in Poland. Also, two instructors, one of whom held a M.A. Degree and one a prospective Ph.D. candidate, validated the items based on their experiences and the teaching practice curriculum. As a conclusion the survey instrument consisted of two five-point Likert-type scales and one four-point rating scale, and open-ended items aiming at obtaining richer information. Teacher candidates' self-assessment [α=.83, N=125(16)] (items rating a four-point scale from not successful at all to very successful) of their teaching skills and their perceptions of the teaching practice [α=.67, N=181(16)] and TCS' perceptions of the variables that contributed most to their development and learning (items rating a five-Point Likert-type agreement scale) they went through [α=.65, N=175(13)], and TCS' Expectations from supervisors [α=.85, N=148(22)].

Data Analysis

Data analysis for the survey consists of a mixture of descriptive and qualitative analysis. Descriptive statistics of the close-ended items are given in percentages, means, and standard deviations. The open-ended items are subjected to content analysis, and frequencies are taken.

Responses to open-ended items validate the quantitative data. All qualitative data (interviews, field notes, document analysis) were thematically analyzed through content analysis to understand the curriculum of the TTC: the pedagogical courses, the language development courses, the cultural courses (e.g., democratic values, European studies), and the teaching practice overall. Thematic content analysis was conducted as follows: 1) themes in the open-ended items were examined and thematically coded; 2) these codes were utilized in coding one of the transcribed interview data, and additional codes were included: 3) themes were constructed and organized and data were recoded based on the themes that yielded. Next, themes were defined and interpreted, and meanwhile good quotes in the data were identified to provide evidence of the theme. The main themes that emerged were: emergence of teacher training colleges; TTC as springboards; internationalization in TTC and mobility; TCS' development and learning; and building college school partnership. Data were triangulated with the thematic content analysis results in the transcribed interview data, and extracts from field notes, and the open-ended items. Ultimately, the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data collection means and the triangulation of data sources (teacher candidates, instructors, teachers, director, and mentors) provide evidence for the construct validity of the study (Yin, 2003).

Results

The results are explained with regard to the five themes that emerged respectively: emergence of teacher training colleges; TTC as springboards; internationalization in TTC and mobility; TCS' development and learning; and building college school partnership.

Theme 1: Emergence of Teacher Training Colleges

During the transition period into the European Union, TTC were established to meet the dramatic needs of foreign language teachers. Therefore the number of TTC both private and public increased dramatically between the years 1999 and 2001. The director of the TTC in the case study indicated that the Minster of Education realized with the changing political situation in Poland there is an urgent need for training a lot of language teachers. These were supposed to be Western language teachers, not Russian. Since training language teachers in five years was too long a process, they debated on the issue of having three year colleges rather than the master programs. As a result TTC were established. The curriculum of these institutions were similar to that of the four-year licentiate degrees, but were squeezed into an intensive three-year program. This change was especially difficult for Poles who were coming from a strong traditional education background (four year B.A. and one year M.A) in teaching languages. For that moment, the director asserted that only language teachers owned certain privileges when compared to other graduates of TTC, which means they are allowed to teach from elementary through secondary levels, whereas, other TTC graduates can only teach at elementary level. Consequently, there was a dramatic increase in the demand for foreign language TTC as they could start early in the market. However, this brought with a drastic consideration: the challenge to meet this demand.

In Poland, applications to higher education was traditionally based on the Matura exam, which is similar to the French Baccalaureate, an exam administered by the high school administration indicating that the students graduated high school and have a license to enter higher education. Nevertheless, some mal applications, and unethical tendencies of some institutions, build mistrust regarding the scores to students received from the Matura. Therefore, the TTC constructs its own entrance exam for the applicants holding a successful Matura score. This new method, nevertheless, was still not a guarantee to overcome unequal participation opportunities for students with rural and urban educational backgrounds. The

director and the TCS refer that grades applicants receive from the Matura exam to graduate high school are biased due to mainly several reasons. First, the exams the rural schools administer are far easier that the ones in the urban, and an unequal first selection is based on this grade. Second, selection is limited to the TCS' level of English language proficiency. Mostly, students living in the city center and in big cities are likely to have better foreign language proficiency than the ones in the rural. Consequently, the second challenge that foreign language TTC face is the criteria they set for selection of their stakeholders.

Theme 2: Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges as Springboards

Although the demand for TTC is dramatic, both quantitative and qualitative data indicate that TTC are preferred as mainly springboards to attend five year higher education programs or find jobs better paid than teachers. Descriptive statistics reveals that the first aim of teacher candidates (TCS) was to learn a foreign language when they applied to their institution. More than half of the TCS (63%, $N=125$) wanted to learn a foreign language, one fourth (12%, n=24) wanted to become a teacher, and less than a fourth (11.6%) wanted to become a translator, and the rest (13%) wanted to learn a language to either to enter a Language Philology department that offers 5 years of graduate education with a Masters' Degree, or find a better paid job. At the moment, when the TCS were about the graduate only 60 (30.2%) TCS were determined to become a language teacher, 50 (25.1%) were not determined, and 89 (44.7%) TCS were still uncertain. The TCS reported they would become a teacher if they were not able to find a better paid job, or if teachers' wages would rise. Others reported that they were already teaching as full time teachers, but were not satisfied to teach without a Masters' Degree as they earn less. On the hand, the Director in the case study assured that it was more prestigious to teach with a Master's Degree in the education market. Fortunately, one point was that TCS graduating from language departments stood out among other TTC

graduates since the latter are only able to teach at primary levels. Since learning and teaching a foreign language is regarded as a very reputable issue during and after the transition period, foreign language TTC graduates were considered to be reputable over other TTC. Recently, a law has been legislated to permit TTCs to offer post graduate education programs, which the Director calls the three plus two application, meaning three year college education and two years of graduate education, for a post graduate degree. Nevertheless, the faculty believes that the TCS' teaching skills are sufficient to teach in a qualified way, and should not feel obliged to receive a Master's Degree unless there are other concerns: "Many of our students start working on a master's degree. I try to discard them from doing. They are qualified. They don't need another degree to become better teachers. But it (indicating a master's degree) looks good and sounds good."

Theme 3: Internationalization of TTC and Mobility

The Republic of Poland was a strong candidate of the European Union in 2001, and traces of globalization were evident in every section of education. Foreign language TTC seem to be the most advantageous ones among other higher education institutions in the internalization of education. Polish education program became eligible to participate in some European education and research programs from 1989. TEMPUS was one of the first programs to impact the development of higher education enormously. Next, came INCO_COPERNICUS, which mainly dealt with research (Filipkowski, 2003).

It was with the SOCRATES-ERASMUS, LEONARDO DA VINCI, and with the start of the Bologna Process student, and teaching faculty mobility dramatically increased. Also, the successful attempts of the administrative boards in higher education made it possible for TTC to make bilateral agreements for the exchange of teachers and the TCS in other Western countries for a semester or two. The increasing number of exchange students from different

countries, were incentives for the TTC to establish beginner level Polish language classes, and modify their curriculum based on the demands of globalization. Courses such "European studies" were included in the curriculum of TTC. The Director of the TTC stated that courses like European Studies were helpful for students to learn to live in a democracy and a Western World. Nevertheless, Filipkowski (2003) reported that the number of outgoing students and teaching staff is less than the ones coming in the internationalization process.

Descriptive data shows that one third (n=63) of the TCS sample were abroad for at least one semester for education purposes. While six percent of them joined the Erasmus/Socrates programs, the rest found other means to leave the country for educational purposes, mainly learning a foreign language. Three of the TCS in the focus group stated that they attended the Socrates program for at least one semester (n=2), and one female attended the program for two semesters. All TCS that indicated they had opportunities to join an exchange program emphasized that it offered them more than teacher training opportunities. It enabled them to reconsider the instructional process they went through as TCS, and the instruction their prospective students will expect from them as novices. Four interviewees indicated that it was important for them to learn about the politics, geography and history of other countries they teach the language, yet, they complained that they had difficulty in relating those to their development as foreign language teachers. Especially, in courses other than the methodology courses, the teaching staff mostly preferred traditional methods in their classes, and the TCS found that those did not relate to what the TTC preached them to do (Holt-Reynolds, 2000; Jadallah, 1996; Kroll & Laboskey, 1996).

Thus, TTC are more than institutions that offer TCS with the essential skills for teaching, but also are institutions that offer TCS with learning opportunities as a democratic citizen. Consequently, a third challenge for TTC is to transform their curriculum and education

system into a western European form that complies with both modern teaching and learning theories and the western teacher training curriculum.

Although teaching staff are motivated and are dedicated to implement the new requirements to keep pace with the new education reforms and the Bologna Declaration on the European space for higher education by attempting to implement new technologies (video programs, OHP, the Internet as a resource in courses) to enhance productivity, they fall short in teaching the way they preach. There are several reasons that lead to such conclusion.

First, teaching staff is devoted for the self-development, and attend Masters and Doctorate programs for to obtain a tenure track position as a qualified faculty member. Nevertheless, the small number of tenure track faculty leads to burnout among teaching staff. Especially, the number of teaching staff with masters' degree is higher compared to the ones with doctorate degrees in TTC, and this causes various problems. For instance, the intensity of the classes at the TTC as well as moonlighting in other schools as part-time teachers are some of the main problems of teaching staff as to why they may not complete their doctorate studies in a required period, and cases of burnout are easily observed. Some experienced and well-qualified teaching staff who do not receive their Doctorate Degrees in due time need to leave the institution, and this leads to vacancies in the experienced teaching staff. Also, the ones with doctorate qualification are likely to transfer to universities. Thus, there is a risk that qualified faculty transfer to better-paid jobs, and this requires the making of urgent policies to make the teaching profession at TTC more attractive and awarding.

Theme 4: Development and Learning of TCS

Data regarding the variables that influence TCS' development and learning are reported as parallel in the case study as well as in the survey. TCS reported that the main contributors

were "teaching classes in a row during my teaching practice (M=4.38, N=195, SD=.82), teaching a whole session in the cooperating school (M=4.06, N=197, SD=1.21), observing student attitudes toward certain activities (M=3.90, N=193, SD=.93), discussing teaching issues in methodology classes (M=3.94, N=197, SD=.85).

While the TCS reported in the open-ended items that they were powerful in building a positive classroom environment (n=21), preparing interesting activities (n=20), and coping successfully with time management issues, a large number of TCS reported a difficulty in time management skills (n=47) and lesson planning (n=45). TCS suggested they needed more feedback (n=36) in order to overcome their weaknesses. Yet, the reported mainly their concerns regarding the skills of the mentors they observed in the practicing school (n=30). Research provides evidence that both mentors and university supervisors play a key role in the in the development and learning of teacher candidates. The most important seemed to be the quality of the dialogue that was maintained during practicum. The more open and the more divergent views allowed, the more the student teachers were satisfied (Talvitie, Peltokallio, and Mannisto, 2000). A fourth challenge that emerged is the education of teachers, especially, who cooperate as mentors for TTCs.

Data with regard to TCS's development and learning was based on understanding how they constructed a teaching and learning environment, how they evaluated their teaching skills and what variables contributed most to their development and learning as teacher candidates. The TCS perceptions of their own teaching skills was rather positive, yet findings indicate that still had difficulty in constructing a student-centered learning environment. Data reveals that the classroom environment TCS constructed was positive (M=4.04, N=196, SD=.65); the students participated in activities assigned during sessions (M=4, N=195, SD=.74), which were rather student-centered (M=3.99, N=192, SD=.85); yet, it was likely that more than half

of the students were involved in off-task behavior (M=2.76, N=193, SD=.89). As for their self-evaluation report, TCS indicated that they had a rather high rating on their teaching performance. Data show that TCS were satisfied with developing a positive classroom environment (M=3.27, N=192, SD=.65); building successful interactions with students (M=3.08, N=192, SD=.67); teaching new vocabulary successfully (M=3.01, N=190, SD=.64); and making lessons enjoyable (M=2.91, N=188, SD=1.73).

TCS' were asked about their expectations from the supervisors with regard to their development and learning in teaching skills. The highest expectations are reported as "give provide or individual feedback on my performance (M=4.27, N=171, SD=1.09), which is parallel to their written statement; ask my opinion about my own teaching performance (M=4.16, N=170, SD=.98); provide suggestions to improve their weaknesses (M=4.32, N=169, SD=.93); discuss the weaknesses in my teaching skills (M=4.17, N=169, SD=.91); discuss the strengths in my skills (M=4.26, N=168, SD=.86); give constructive feedback on my classroom management skills (M=4.10, N=169, SD=.96). On the other hand, the TCS reported they did not want their supervisors to give provide feedback in the presence of their classmates (M=2.43, N=172, SD=1.48); ask their classmates about his or her teaching performance (M=2.87, N=171, SD=1.46). Thus, reflective feedback is expected by the faculty on evaluating TCS' own performance; however, this is preferred to be done in privacy. Such finding may indicate 2 aspects. One aspect is that the competitive environment in the TTC influences the TCS. Second, the feedback offered is not as constructive as expected, but rather critical. As a result, the TCS may feel uncomfortable in front of their peers. To enable the student teachers to be more critical and reflective in their practice, Tatto (1998) suggests developing shared understandings or norms within programs and across the field of teacher education. While McIntyre (1994) states that it is important that student teachers receive feedback regarding some criteria as pupil attention, interest, and comprehension. However,

since critical reflection can trigger a deeper understanding of teaching. It should also involve examining teaching experiences as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for change (Richards, 1999).

The interview data indicate that TCS benefit most from the reflections done after teaching practice in the schools they visit. They reported that classroom observations and reflections of how they taught teach them a lot. Their reflections on the teaching practice also enables them to see a difference between how they were taught to teach and how their teacher taught them at high school. One female interviewee reported that when the supervisor asks her that question (to evaluate her class performance), she really needed to analyze the lesson. It made her think, for the next time she is going to prepare it better and is going to expect such a question again, and therefore she needs to be more accurate in her reflections. Such strategy makes the TCS set a goal for their follow-up teaching practice. Consequently, the success of the student teachers' achievement relies on the sensitive support given by the mentor in the schools and in the institution of higher education by the supervisor (Cohen et al., 1998). If the supervisor does not give support and provide the student teacher with opportunities to explore dilemmas and contradictions, it is likely that student teachers withdraw from the search rather than take further risks (Talvitie et al., 2000).

Data obtained from the TCS are parallel with that of their supervisors in that the number of observations and teaching practices increase, so does the quality of the TCS' teaching improve. The improvement is also parallel to the quality of reflections provided after the teaching. Supervisor 1 exclaimed that what they do is just to provide them (TCS) with certain tools from the beginning of their careers. Most of the things they have to learn on their own in practice teaching. Whereas, Supervisor 2 sees the training of TCS as an in-service training since some of the students do have some outside teaching and experience in private schools

already. Yet, she asserted that a weakness is that they should be doing more teaching hours in the practicing schools because TCS have hardly get to teach 3 lessons in a row.

As it can be seen the process of teaching practice is far more essential that the formal education the TCS' receive. Although TCS have a positive attitude toward their teaching ability, data emerge with several challenges for TTC. The challenge of establishing strong cooperation with partner schools (namely, partners based on a courtesy agreement), providing TCS with good models of mentor teachers, and providing sufficient amount of teaching opportunities for TCS' practice teaching.

Theme 5: Building School Partnerships

Since the three-year intensive program offered at TTC aim at preparing TCS for the teaching profession in a short period. The issue of quality is of high concern. Therefore, TCS' formal training at the higher education institution and their teaching practice training through observing an experienced teacher and teaching whole sessions themselves are essential in their development. Figures given above show evidence of how the number of teaching hours and reflections provided may contribute largely to the development and learning of TCS. Nevertheless, during the case study the stakeholders pointed on the lack of formal school-college partnerships, whose existence may ensure the retention of quality opportunities during the teaching practice for TCS.

Lesson plans for teaching practice mostly cover one-two hour lessons. Planning for short durations is considered as a threat as these may not be formulated into longer hours of lesson planning during actual practices. The teaching practice is perceived as inauthentic, or like one of the subjects says: "a 45-minute show."

The first theme that emerged was considered by the director, and both supervising faculty during field practice: A need for *establishing strong cooperation with partner schools*. The director explained that the TTC itself was responsible to make an agreement with mentor teachers, and have TCS work with them on the basis they were full-time teachers. Based on the TTCs' budget, it is possible to pay the mentors on an hourly basis. Data indicate that the mentors are often selected among the earlier graduates since they are more familiar with the philosophy of the higher education institution they graduated, and their teaching is more likely to match with the type of teaching and learning environment that the faculty preach TCS during their methodology classes. The female supervising faculty complained that it was difficult to find mentors because they were mostly reluctant because they were either underpaid, or did not consider themselves as good enough to be a model for TCS. For the latter, the female supervising faculty explained that some teachers may find themselves offended seeing that TCS may be teaching better than they do. Such data is also supported by the male supervising faculty, nevertheless he emphasized that this unwillingness was changing since there was a new criterion being introduced that offered teachers who were mentoring TCS with extra scores on their professional performance evaluation documents. Research shows evidence that flexibility and openness on the part of mentor teachers are conditions that provide optimal support to teacher candidates and increase the opportunities for learning to occur for both the mentor and the teacher candidates. Such evidence is important in establishing collaborative inquiry for the mentor teachers involved in partnership with the teacher education institution (Grisham, Ferguson, & Brink, 2004).

Both the female and the male supervisors emphasized that the main point was to focus on the behavior in a positive manner during teaching practice, and discuss how it relates to students' learning. The female supervisor exclaimed that one could learn by observing a so-called bad teacher as well. However, the duration of the formal training could be too short to have TCS

internalize the well-proven practices, and improve mal-applications. The male supervisor saw these as challenges for further improvement because, "our students will go to schools very soon and then they'll be inexperienced teachers." And these might be interesting to see what sort of problem an inexperienced teacher can have." Both supervising faculty thought that both the mentor as well as the TCS needed to benefit reciprocally from each other during teaching practice. This expectation is validated by the mentor indicating that when she watches them (TCS) teaching, she sometimes learn from them by noticing what is wrong, or what is good. Yet, the mentors have other concerns regarding the feedback sessions. They stated that the reflective hours after the teaching practice were too long and the male mentor, especially, focused on the financial shortage.

As for the teaching practice, the male mentor, felt that there was a need for more collaboration between the supervisor and him as the mentor. They asserted that TCS constructed interesting activities, but complained that those did not match the curriculum. The male supervisor wanted to be asked what to be done in the teaching practice and decide how to evaluate the teacher candidate. The overcome various issues due to lack of school-college partnership, the supervisors as well as the director of the TTC suggest building a true partnership with a school and contribute to the development and learning of teachers as an investment for the development and learning of the teachers.

Intensive field practice is means to not only practice the teaching profession, but also to understand the organizational school culture and interpersonal relations among various parties (e.g., principal, practicing teacher). Reflective supervision of TCS by faculty members lead to higher order thinking skills and TCS become self-directed learners in the long run. TCS are highly motivated to improve their language competency. Knowledge about the development and learning of mainly adolescents is emphasized and these are regarded as the essentials in

becoming professionals. The recognition of theoretical elements in the field is combined with pedagogical knowledge. Therefore, the methods classes are considered to be means to understand and practice teaching and learning processes.

Many TCS start TTC with little Foreign Language knowledge and therefore, there is much focus on intensive language skills, while there is little time devoted to subjects such as classroom management pedagogy, instructional planning and evaluation, and child development and learning. In addition, although there is a core curriculum for the foreign language classes at secondary schools, each school selects their own course material. With this respect the TCS graduate with lack of knowledge of designing a curriculum and evaluating course-books.

Teacher education curriculum needs to comply with other European teacher education curriculum to further develop partnership at the international arena through exchange programs.

Although the instructional designs and methodologies introduced are very constructivist or innovative, the instructional delivery used by faculty, staff or by mentors are rather traditional and teacher candidates do not feel they are provided with a model that their educators preach. Although the curriculum is established to facilitate the transition process from the old educational systems process under reform, the content of courses such as geography and history do not reflect the actual needs of prospective foreign language teachers. Moreover, "intercultural knowledge and sensitivity are elementary soft skills for international cooperation" (Vogel, 2001, p. 386), and TCS need to acquire this knowledge through pedagogical experience, and cooperation with other cultures at university.

Discussion and Conclusions

Data indicate that strengths of the TTCS are mainly devoted to the reputation of knowing a foreign language and teaching a foreign language in the society as a crucial means in the process of transition. The recognition of theoretical elements in the field is combined with pedagogical knowledge. Therefore, the methods classes are considered to be means to understand and practice teaching and learning processes. Knowledge about the development and learning of mainly adolescents is emphasized and these are regarded as the essentials in becoming professionals. Unfortunately, many TCS start TTC with little Foreign Language knowledge and therefore, there is much focus on intensive language skills, while there is little time devoted to subjects such as classroom management pedagogy, instructional planning and evaluation, and child development and learning.

Although teacher training colleges are means to meet the dramatic needs in the market of the education reform, TCS may use these institutions as springboards to other professions or institutions to receive foreign language competency. Being less paid than foreign language teachers with Master's Degrees from pedagogical or Foreign Language Philology Departments decreases the motivation of the TTC graduates to pursue a job in the teaching profession. Some TTC have started offering graduate education to meet the needs of the graduates of TTC in that respect.

In addition, since teacher candidates can be hired as full-time teachers after a three-year intensive program and contribute to the needs of the market at a younger age than their counterparts graduating from pedagogical faculties or philology departments. Their experiences may have a long-term impact in schools and in turn contribute to the development and learning of prospective TCS in the TTC that they graduated from.

Although the intensive teaching practice program is one of the key elements for the successful development of teacher candidates, it has some drawbacks. There are no true partner schools.

Faculty members at TTC make arrangements with mentors based on personal relations. Therefore, there is the risk that mentors may not renew contract with the TTC. Urgent new policies need to be developed to increase and develop true school-TTC partnerships, and make contracts more attractive to hire mentors.

In addition, mentors may lack the essential tools to be involved in the mentoring process. , therefore, it needs to be professionally recognized. Also, mentors may use instructional strategies that were popular before the transition, and these may not serve as good teaching practices for TCS who are subjected to or are recommended to use more innovative constructivist type of teaching and learning processes. New policies need to be developed to strengthen the school-TTC partnership in order to provide opportunities for the professional development of mentors.

Faculty and TCS have opportunities to experience different school culture abroad via faculty mobility and student exchange programs offered via education-based programs such as the Socrates and Erasmus. Such mobility may establish new synergy into Polish school culture and teachers' professional life. Curricular content such as European studies with the TTC is means to understand different cultures and countries and topics such as democratic citizenship.

Based on the bulk of data, the following concluded: educational policy concerns about teacher training, and economic and social concerns as prospective professionals. First, Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges need to attract students with good foreign language competencies to give priority to pedagogical development rather than foreign language development to keep the quality of their graduates high. One suggestion to attract teaching as a profession can be offering scholarships to TCS who will become language teachers. Second, the present framework for teacher education in Poland is rather complex. TTC need to

construct policies to establish a core curriculum for teacher education institutions to compete with teacher education institutions in Poland and abroad. Therefore, TTC all over the country need to establish a common mission. Third, Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges are challenged to establish educational policies to construct school-college partnerships and attract successful language teachers as mentors. These policies need to satisfy the needs and interests of both parties.

Mentors at cooperating schools are encouraged to deal with reflective practice that is means to improve the professional development of the mentors themselves. Improvement may yield creating better teaching and learning environments based on exposure to innovative instructional means as well as better foreign language competencies. Eventually, they should be benefit the opportunities offered at the TTC such as attending pedagogical courses, methods classes dealing with teaching and learning approaches. In return, the TTC may benefit from mentors as cases with authentic experience in the field and have them visit students in their early years of the TTC for interviews or other classroom activities. Fourth, TTC are challenged to teach in diverse cultural contexts and different grade levels, and they reveal a need to learn more about classroom management pedagogy, student assessment and grading, and primary school kids' learning. Fifth, to make professional development meaningful in a reform environment, deeper coordination between schools and Teacher Training Colleges must occur to ensure its relevance Scribner (2003). Policy-makers are challenged to establish new policies for considering equal payment criteria for teachers who are graduates of Teacher Training Colleges and other teacher education institutions teaching in the same contexts. Such policies may influence the traditional public opinion that considers teachers with master's degrees as more efficient than others.

To sum up, the findings of this study may contribute to the knowledge and research of training foreign languages teachers in teacher training colleges from several perspectives. First, it is important to assess the current status of TTC in Poland regarding its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to retain the strengths and improve the weaknesses, and establish new policies for these institutions with respect to the needs of the internal and the external stakeholders to meet present as well as future challenges. Second, an evaluation provided by an external evaluator may have pinpointed different perspectives that were not included in earlier policy analysis studies such as the hidden curriculum of hiring TCS in primary and secondary schools. Also, aspects such as teacher burnout, and tenure track positions, student mobility are few of the topics raised during the evaluation and need further in-depth research. It is suggested that more in-depth research need to be conducted to delve into these topics. In conclusion, this study indicates that new educational policies need to be established to highlight on the challenges that Foreign Language Teacher Training Colleges face.

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