



The Bologna Declaration and professional teacher training in Latvia



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Overview

Professional teacher training and the status of the teaching profession are currently a serious problem in Latvia.

One of the most important factors in determining the quality of education is teachers' work, their initial and further education and their status and conditions of work.

Modern society sets a very significant aim for education: to prepare students for their future life and lifelong learning, so that they acquire knowledge, skills and competences, which will ensure their personal and social well-being. Achieving this goal should be guaranteed despite the changes taking place in society: introduction of new technologies; increasing numbers of students representing different ethnic groups learning together at the same school; the increase in negative behaviour (drugs, etc.).

Universities continue to want more highly educated school graduates. This runs contrary to the situation of higher education becoming a more mass-scale phenomenon, i.e., a constantly increasing number of school graduates applies to study at higher education institutions.

Thus society's demands of the school system, and ultimately of teachers' work, are increasing, as is the scope of the teacher's responsibilities. It is the teacher who has to implement new obligations and reforms, with appropriate support from educational institutions and their administrations. There-

fore, teacher education, opportunities for professional development and improvement in working conditions are also very important. This article is mainly devoted to teachers' initial education.

Data show that the majority (75 %) of teachers in Latvia considers that society does not value their work, and 45-48 % would be prepared to change their profession if they could (Geske, 2000). Many head teachers complain about the shortage of teachers in one subject area or another.

But average statistical data on the number of school pupils and teachers in Latvia (the ratio of pupils to teachers is approximately 10:1) and on graduate teachers (Global Education Digest, 2003), and especially demographic indicators concerning the reduction in class numbers, suggest that there ought not to be a shortage of teachers.

This data should not be grounds for premature opinions or decisions to cut down significantly on initial teacher training. Unfortunately, however, the number of state-financed places allocated by the Higher Education Council (AIP) and the Ministry of Education and Science (IZM) for first-degree courses entitled 'Teacher education and science of education' have been reduced significantly (by 23 %) in the last two years.

The only reasonable grounds for a budget reduction would be accurate observations on the necessary numbers of teachers in specific stages of schooling, particular subjects and groups of subjects in Latvia as a

This paper examines teacher education in Latvia and ways of developing it in the context of the Common European Educational Area (the Bologna process). It examines current models of teacher education in universities and other higher education institutions, as well as ways of developing these in different types of higher education institutions. It demonstrates the advantages of the integrated teacher training model over the consecutive model, with respect to teacher training that responds to current demands. The paper analyses the way in which both of the main models are used from the perspective of the state and the academic traditions of various types of higher-education institutions. It examines the employment of graduate teachers and other factors that characterise the work and status of teachers in Latvia. It discusses appropriate education policy measures in teacher training.



whole and in different regions, taking into account the existing age and educational profile of the teaching workforce, staff changes, etc. This type of analysis has not, however, been carried out by the IZM. It has not taken advantage of precise statistics by using either the school or teachers' registers kept by the Latvian Education Information System (LIIS) or the information systems of higher-education institutions, to analyse the current situation of teacher training, the employment of graduate teachers and whether or not they remain in the profession.

In place of comprehensive analysis and prognosis, it is argued that graduates of teacher-training courses do not take up employment in schools. By way of justification, the IZM cites only the number of 'new teachers', that is, the number of graduate teachers who have just left higher-education and take up work in schools as of 1 September - the first day of the new school year - in the same calendar year. Furthermore, this statistic includes only the number of those studying with state support, even though over 50 % of students on professional teacher-training and all higher education courses in Latvia pay for their own part-time or full-time studies. This concept of the 'new teacher' was already used in Soviet-era statistics, when these new specialists were centrally appointed to workplaces. It has long since ceased to correspond to reality, if only because the majority of full-time students drawn to the teaching profession begin working in schools while still in their final year(s) of study, and so, apparently, are not included in this 'new teacher' status after receiving their teaching diploma. This leads to the false conclusion that very few graduates of professional teacher-training courses take up employment in schools.

The information technology introduced into the Latvian educational system allows a more accurate survey to be carried out and reveals that of those completing full-time professional teacher training courses, almost half immediately begin work in schools. Furthermore, if we also take those completing part-time professional teacher-training courses, we find that 70 % to 75 % of professional teacher-training course graduates work in schools. These data actually refer to the University of Latvia in 2002 and 2003. It is difficult to imagine that the situation in the other higher-education institutions in Latvia is very different.

These indicators are not, of course, particularly high. Nevertheless, they equal or exceed the relevant indicators for many other professions both in Latvia and throughout the world. In Latvia, growth of these indicators is hampered by the still relatively low level of teachers' pay, overwork, working overtime, lack of satisfaction with time restraints which result in work being left undone, the strict requirements for the teaching profession, which the majority of our teachers are aware of, etc.

There is currently a great shortage of teachers in many European countries and elsewhere. In Latvia, students graduating from professional training are invited to go and work in England, Austria, Germany, the US and other countries once they have obtained their teaching diploma. This sort of situation - namely the development of a significant shortage of teachers - cannot be allowed to occur.

We cannot allow the issue regarding teachers in Latvia to be resolved superficially, either in a quantitative sense (which we have discussed above) or in a qualitative sense.

It certainly cannot be said that, with regard to professional qualifications, teachers in Latvia lag behind their colleagues in other countries. The comparative international research we have carried out indicates that teachers in Latvia are well prepared professionally and carry out their jobs to a high standard, despite the relatively poor funding of training. To cite just a few examples, the results in 2003 of the IEA (International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement), Progress in international reading literacy study (PIRLS) and several previous studies (IEA TIMSS1995, IEA RLS) show that our primary-school teachers are working to a very high standard: an international comparison shows that pupils achieve averages of good and excellent in reading, mathematics and natural sciences (Mullis, 2003; Geske, Grinfelds, Kangro, 1997).

However, today's teaching profession faces an increasing number of demands and teachers have long since ceased to be solely experts in their subjects. Today's teacher is required to do more than merely impart a given amount of knowledge of a given subject to a pupil and test how accurately the pupil has absorbed that knowledge. Rather, a



teacher's main task is now to secure a pupil's learning opportunities - 'teaching how to learn' - both at school and throughout life, and also to help the pupil acquire many other life skills. These many duties and skills are reflected in the draft standards for the teaching profession, drawn up this year in Latvia. Teachers are constantly being faced with new challenges as a result of changes in the family, the labour market, value systems, the unprecedented swift growth in new knowledge and its continual updates, new technologies, globalisation, multiculturalism, etc.

We must, therefore, pay greater attention in particular to the existing teacher training in our universities and other higher-education institutions. This is especially important now, given the planned restructuring of study programmes in Latvia and other European countries. The question is, in what way should professional teacher training programmes be improved, and how should they be structured?

Models of teacher training

There are two main categories that characterise the structure of teacher training in Europe and elsewhere in the world (Busch, 2002; Buchberger et al., 2002; Galton, Moon, 1994, etc.):

- integrated / concurrent;
- consecutive.

A more detailed analysis also reveals four models; the integrated and concurrent models can be analysed separately, and a further model, based on modular courses taken in a sequence freely chosen by the student, can be added. In such a case, we now have the following structure:

- integrated;
- concurrent;
- consecutive;
- modularised.

We shall examine these models in detail below, but shall begin the analysis by reference to the two terms integrated and consecutive.

The comparative advantages and disadvantages of these two broadly used models have been the subject of analysis and discussion for several decades already (Galton, Moon, 1994, Buchberger et al., 2002). This discussion has recently come into the mainstream again in European countries and throughout the world, and significant reforms are under way (see, for example, previous references and also *A new system of teacher education*, 2000, and Želvys, 2001). One of the stimuli for the discussion on the quality of education, educational reforms and particularly the reform of teacher training has been provided by the results of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the resulting discussion in many countries. See, for example, the report of the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Bundestag (Schröder, 2002; *Knowledge and Skills for Life*, 2001).

Under the integrated model, the various study components - the academic (subject-specific), pedagogical, psychological, professional, etc. - are combined. In the consecutive model, the student first takes his or her bachelor's degree in a particular area and in the next stage of study (this could be a master's degree), makes the choice to become a teacher and obtain the necessary knowledge and skills (pedagogy, subject methodology, teaching practice, etc.). It follows that in the case of the consecutive model, the bachelor's degree course (e.g. physics, history, English philology, etc.) is not essentially very linked to the teaching profession.

In the consecutive model, therefore, the student first obtains basic knowledge in a particular subject (to first degree level) and then knowledge of how to teach that subject to school pupils. Legal requirements for the length of a teacher's higher education (four to five years), as in most countries, are thus satisfied, in principle. However this education consists of two components with differing volumes of work which are not very interconnected, of which only the smaller component is directly relevant to teacher training, and this does not guarantee a fully rounded education for teachers. Such a scheme is no longer adequate to prepare a teacher for his or her task in modern society.



A teacher is no longer required to impart a given amount of knowledge of a given subject to a school pupil and to test how accurately the pupil has absorbed that knowledge. Rather, a teacher's main task is now to secure a school pupil's learning opportunities - teaching how to learn - at school and throughout life, and also to help the pupil acquire many other skills for life. It is as though the teacher's subject is of secondary importance in relation to the teacher's pedagogical work. Essentially, no matter what the subject, it is, from a psychological point of view, a means of realising the teacher's pedagogical goals, theories and practice. And teachers are much better prepared to realise these goals if they have followed a high-quality integrated teacher-training curriculum rather than one based on the consecutive model. The integrated model does not mean that new teachers lack the necessary degree of subject-specific knowledge. It is a question of the basic aim of the one or the other model.

The advantage of the integrated model is that it puts forward a single aim for the entire four to five year period of study, which is the opportunity to acquire the competences needed by today's teacher. Such an aim secures a unity of purpose between the different study components - the scientific basis of knowledge of the subject (or subjects), teaching methodology, pedagogy, psychological studies, repeated teaching practice in schools - beginning with the earliest courses and other study components.

In the consecutive model, there is essentially no single (integrated) aim for the process of teacher education. Such an aim exists only in the second one to two year phase of study. In the first phase, which lasts for three to four years, the aim of the first (bachelor's) degree is to acquire basic knowledge of the relevant branch of science, with no attempt to link this to a teacher's professional work, given that only a small proportion of graduates in that particular subject will opt for the teaching profession.

Alongside the concept of the integrated model, use is also made of the concept of the parallel model (Buchberger, 2002). This emphasises the fact that subject-specific studies, as well as the methodological studies, teaching practice in schools and other components of the teacher's professional studies, take place (in parallel) within the frame-

work of a single curriculum. However, the different study components are not interconnected sufficiently but if the student can choose the order in which he or she acquires one or other study components (which take the form of course modules), we have the modularised teacher's professional study model. This is, at present, rarely used.

There is a view that the consecutive model is suitable for training grammar school teachers, whose task is to teach the basics of one or other subjects to grammar school pupils, who are highly motivated to learn and whose education supposedly poses far fewer pedagogical problems. However, it is impossible to agree with such an assertion because it neglects the pupils' overall personal development, which is essential in every type of educational institution, and which is defined, for example, in the standard for the teaching profession in Latvia.

The possible defects of the consecutive model of teacher training (its emphasis on knowledge of the subject content with, at the same time, an inadequate development of the teacher's professional skills, study divided into two separate and poorly connected academic areas, the teacher's inability to make use of academic knowledge in his or her professional teaching activities, etc.) are also repeatedly referred to in the green paper on Teacher education in Europe (Buchberger et al., 2002).

For its part, the very latest research on lower secondary teachers in the Eurydice programme leads to the unambiguous conclusion that most teachers are university-educated and that it is precisely the integrated model that has become the norm in Europe, regardless of whether the consecutive model of teacher education exists alongside it or not (European Commission, 2002). Hence, it is thanks to the qualitatively designed and implemented teacher training integrated model that we can expect to produce new teachers much better suited to contemporary demands.

Teacher training in universities and other higher education institutions

Higher costs are sometimes cited as a defect of the integrated model, in the belief that within this model the education of teachers for every separate subject (or subjects) takes



four to five years, whereas, under the consecutive model, it takes only one to two years (after obtaining the first degree). It seems to be assumed that first-degree level study in various areas is completed in every case, regardless of the particular model of teacher education being applied in the relevant university, teacher training college, country as a whole, etc.

This way of thinking gives rise to the essentially incorrect premise that integrated teacher training curricula needlessly 'duplicate' the relevant first-degree curricula, and that a comparatively short (perhaps only one-year) 'pedagogical superstructure' on top of the first-degree curriculum is sufficient as teacher education. Such a premise exists largely in universities, where these first-degree curricula are one of the basic aspects of the university's main activity, whereas teacher education is sometimes not so highly regarded. This in turn gives rise to an apparent contradistinction between universities, on the one hand, and other higher-education institutions, on the other; it is to the latter that professional curricula would appear to be better fitted, as they lack a 'purely' academic first and second degree structure.

Integrated teacher training curricula are the norm where teacher education takes place in a separate higher education institution, although from the general point of view of the interests of the state and of costs, the question remains the same. How best and most economically should teachers - the representatives of this most important and numerically significant profession - be educated (independently of the particular interests of the higher education institutions, internal structures, etc)?

Where universities follow purely academic curricula for the first and second-degree structure, professional studies (including teachers' professional studies) become the responsibility of other higher education institutions, a situation that simply does not correspond to contemporary international practice and tendencies. Nor would it satisfy the principles of the Bologna Declaration, insofar as it does not define significant differences between academic and professional studies. In essence, the process of 'inclusion' of teacher education in universities is in its final stages in Europe (Strategies of change in teacher education, 2002; European Commission, 2002).

The initial stages of teacher education in universities only seems to be less expensive under the consecutive model, since first-degree studies in science subjects receive more funding than teacher training studies. For this reason, it is necessary to carry out an accurate estimate of costs. And it could be predicted that an insufficiently professional initial stage of education will correspondingly require a higher input of funds at a national level for the further education of the teaching workforce.

Moreover, if the relative proportion of privately financed study (including teacher training courses) is as great as it is in Latvia today, then the issue of the relative budget costs of one model or the other would not appear to be relevant, given that students are studying at their own expense, freely choosing between academic and professional curricula (as teachers, lawyers, economists, doctors and philosophers). The state can regulate the employment of the necessary number of specialists in the public sector with more generous terms for repayment of student loans (or cancellation of debts).

Occasionally, the fact that not all graduates of four to five year integrated teacher training courses take up their chosen profession is used in Latvia to argue against integrated teacher training curricula. Such an argument, however, can be applied to graduates of any other professional or academic course anywhere in the world - there is never a 100 % rate - even where there are vacancies in the particular profession or sector (an exception might be students of military or similar academies).

The Bologna Declaration and teacher training models

The choice in various countries between different models is often determined, not directly by analysis of the goals and results of teacher education, but simply by academic traditions and the existing structure of faculties and curricula associated with them in universities and other higher education institutions, or also by a comprehensive reorganisation of these structures.

Now the whole structure and length of study courses in Latvia and other European countries can be influenced by restructuring curricula according to the Bologna Declaration



on the European Space for Higher Education and its follow-up documents (*Diplomatzišanas rokasgrāmata* = Guide for diploma recognition, 2000). One of the objectives in that document provides that, by 2010, European countries shall have a two-cycle type of degree structure (undergraduate and postgraduate, or bachelor's and master's degrees) for higher education. The first degree could be conferred as study credits after a course of study of at least three years. However, it should be immediately pointed out here that the Declaration also defines that 'the degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market', which is essentially the most important undertaking in the whole document (Rauhvargers, 2002; Haug, Tauch, 2001). Another international document declares that 'the two-cycle model makes sense only if the graduate is employable both after completing the first and the second cycle' (Rauhvargers, 2002).

If we associate the first degree with the shortest recommended period of study - three years - then this is a shorter period than that required for teacher education under current legislation in Latvia and practically every other country. Consequently, a graduate of the first three-year cycle of teacher education could not be employed as a teacher. Essentially, a similar problem faces all the so-called regulated professions such as medicine, teaching, law and engineering. This two-cycle scheme (3+2) is not really appropriate since, after three years of study in these professions, a specialist in possession of a full degree is not yet qualified, and there is nothing (not even in the Bologna Declaration) to suggest that the situation will be any different in 2010.

If we return to the integrated and consecutive models of teacher education as currently used, it can be seen that, approached formally, only the consecutive model falls partially within the two-cycle scheme with its three-year first degree in a particular branch of knowledge. Moreover, a first degree obtained after three years of study can, according to legislation, in no way be associated with teacher education; the teaching profession would essentially be entered into only later, on completion of a one to two year higher-degree course of study. In this way, the consecutive model will retain all the defects referred to in the previous section.

For this reason, a structural 'reform' of teacher education along these lines would not be desirable. However, obtaining a teaching qualification after a four-year course of study for a professional first degree (in accordance with Latvian legislation, see below), in the framework of which the integrated model of teacher education could be applied, is at odds with the Bologna Declaration. Subsequently, the qualified teacher could, if he or she so wished, progress to a higher level of academic education, and might also obtain an additional qualification by further study for a second (master's) degree or professional master's degree. Teacher training programmes of the 4+1 or 4+2 variety are, therefore, not at variance with the Bologna Declaration, if professional skills, also including subject-specific knowledge, are already obtained by the end of the period of study for the first degree.

German colleagues have objected to ill-considered division of teacher education into two apparent phases, of which one would consist of study devoted solely to knowledge of the subject to be taught, and the other to acquisition of professional teaching competence (Busch, 2002). Professor F. Busch of Oldenburg University has taken a stand in his work in favour of the integrated (single-phase) model of teacher education. Professor Busch emphasises the need to connect theoretical studies with teaching practice from the earliest stage of the course, so that the future teacher's observations in schools and the resulting questions can be resolved by the application of theory in the lecture theatre immediately afterwards. He is also in favour of a simultaneous and interconnected acquisition of the scientific fundamentals of the subject, on the one hand, and of its teaching methodology, on the other.

A truly radical reform of teacher education has begun in Sweden, where the integrated model of initial teacher education is being introduced together with a sharp increase in funding for research and postgraduate studies specifically in teacher education (A new system of teacher education, 2000). Integrated teacher training degrees are being introduced and correspond to 120 to 220 credit points, depending on the subject concerned (of which there will definitely be several) and the stage of schooling.



It is also the case that the Language Centre of Germany's fourth largest university - the Wilhelmine University of Westphalia at Münster - and the Federal Teacher Examination Centre have taken the decision to undertake the transition to an integrated teacher training model within the framework of the Bologna process, paying particular attention to integrating the university teaching process with teaching practice in schools.

The integrated model of training foreign-language teachers at the Faculty of Education and Psychology of the University of Latvia is cited as an example of best practice in the documents of the European Union's TNP project (Davis and Kelly, 2002, p. 13).

Both models of teacher training referred to earlier can be encountered in Latvia at this time, which is also the case at the University of Latvia. The Senate has twice resolved that both these models be applied and developed at the university. This should be considered a positive step, since it enables both a theoretical and practical comparison of the two models to be drawn. Data from the University of Latvia show that, in the last five years, of all teachers graduating from the University of Latvia, 75 % to 80 % have studied under the integrated model in the Faculty of Education and Psychology, and correspondingly 20 % to 25 % in other faculties, largely under the consecutive model. The exception is mathematics teachers in the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics, where the integrated model is also applied).

This comparison of the two models of teacher training does not mean that current integrated teacher curricula in Latvia are perfect and do not require alteration and improvement, and that, for their part, applied teacher training curricula based on the consecutive model are wholly inappropriate.

The analysis is intended to compare the two models and to demonstrate that, in restructuring and improving teacher training curricula, the integrated model with its many potential advantages should be retained and developed further (by, *inter alia*, strengthening the integration of various components of study) as this better ensures teacher education in line with current demands.

Placing an emphasis in the university solely on the consecutive model would largely

lead to a diversion of teacher education to other higher education institutions. In such a case, those secondary-school leavers who had decided to follow a teaching career and wished to obtain a teaching qualification would not be interested in commencing their studies at a university, since they would first be required to study for at least three years for a bachelor's degree and only then be able, in a two-year period, to acquire the necessary professional skills for teaching (resulting in a total duration of studies of at least five years).

A conceptual approach to teacher training, applying the integrated model, is intended to achieve unity of purpose between a scientific basis of knowledge of the given subject (or subjects), teaching methodology, pedagogy, psychological studies, repeated teaching practice in schools (beginning at the earliest possible stage) and other study components; this gives the student the opportunity to acquire the skills needed by today's teacher. The various study components must be mutually integrated.

Under current legislation in Latvia, such a conceptual approach could be applied within the framework of a professional first-degree curriculum, amounting to at least 160 credit points (four years). After this, the student would 'be awarded a fifth-level professional qualification and a professional bachelor's degree in a branch of knowledge (area of professional work)'. The particular branch of knowledge in which the professional bachelor's degree would be awarded could be 'teacher education', and the professional qualifications, which are various, corresponding to the subject (or subjects) mastered by the new teacher and the stage (or stages) of education in which he or she intended to work (secondary education and/or primary education, and other variants).

Integrated teacher training programmes applying the four-year professional bachelor's degree approach, have already been developed at various higher education institutions in Latvia.

Carrying out improvements to the structure of academic and professional programmes and curricula at the University of Latvia, and developing professional study programmes for the teaching qualifications necessary in Latvia, demands development and im-



plementation of the integrated approach, with cross-faculty study courses on a modular basis.

The development of study programmes or optional modules for obtaining teaching qualifications in several subjects in two stages of education, which is currently not taking place to a sufficient extent in Latvia, would be desirable. The narrow (single-subject) specialisation of the majority of working teachers is causing additional difficulties for teachers in the labour market and for head teachers in staff recruitment.

Conclusions

□ The structure of teacher education throughout the world falls into one of two categories: integrated (parallel) and consecutive. Up to and including the lower secondary level, the integrated (parallel) model of teacher education has become the norm in Europe. Upper secondary school teachers are currently being educated under both models; frequently, both models are applied in the same country. Teacher training for all stages of schooling is increasingly being undertaken in universities, and it is considered that the development and inclusion of teacher training courses and curricula in universities has reached its final stage in Europe.

□ It is the integrated model that ensures a form of teacher education more appropriate to current demands. In Latvia, the integrated model can be applied within current legal requirements in the form of a professional bachelor's degree (teacher training) study programmes.

□ The restructuring and reorganisation of teacher training curricula must be carried out by analysing the demands and situation of teacher education itself, and not by applying general 'universal' schemes. Reforms based on this latter approach may achieve a unified common structure for courses of study in higher education, but at the expense of a substantial reduction in the quality of teacher education and its relevance to current demands, and lead to the need for increased funding for further education.

□ In the course of improving teachers' professional curricula in Latvia, it is necessary to switch to training teachers in two or even several subjects, and at two stages of schooling.

□ There has still been no accurate assessment in Latvia of requirements regarding teacher numbers in specific stages of schooling, specific subjects or groups of subjects, either in Latvia as a whole or in different regions, taking into account the existing age and educational profile of teaching staff. There have, though, been drastic reductions in state-financed places on teacher training courses for several years now.

□ Data and methods for analysis of the professional workforce must be selected on a sound basis, which is already possible given modern information technology and its application in the educational system in Latvia. Analysis of the current situation with respect to teacher training, the entry of graduate teachers into employment, and the degree to which they remain in the profession, must use school and teacher registers held by the Latvian Education Information System (LIIS) and the information systems of higher education institutions.

□ Not all graduates of professional teachers' study programmes in Latvia take up work in schools; this can be attributed to the insufficiently high prestige of the teacher in society, relatively low levels of pay and other factors. Comparison of LIIS and University of Latvia information system data show that, in recent years, the percentage of graduates of the University of Latvia's professional teacher programmes working in schools is no less than 70 % in total; for full-time the figure is 42 %. A similar situation exists in many other countries and also in other study programmes within Latvia.

□ Latvia must develop a teacher education development programme, containing a quantitative analysis of the current situation and a prognosis of the future, regular monitoring of the developing situation, analysis and improvement of the quality of teacher education and further education, including focused research and development of teacher training models, integration and modernisation of components of study programmes, the application of practice in schools, the employment of new teachers in schools and other considerations.



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Key words

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