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Cluster 'Teachers and Trainers'
Report of a Peer Learning Activity
held in Copenhagen / Malmö, 7 – 11 October 2007
**‘Relationships between
Teacher Education Institutions and schools’**

This note summarises the main policy conclusions of a Peer Learning Activity, in which experts from several European countries exchange ideas on policy and practice on a key topic in Teacher Education. The ideas contained herein do not constitute EU policy.

Background

1. In the different European countries new models of partnership between Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) and schools are being developed. In these new models responsibility for initial Teacher Education ranges from TEIs being fully responsible for the education of new teachers at one extreme, to schools being fully responsible for school-based teacher education at the other.
2. In many Member States, relationships between TEIs and schools have often encountered difficulties:
 - it has often been a ‘one-sided’ relationship, in which the school is the passive recipient of trainee teachers and in which most power lies with the TEI;
 - communication between the two parties has not always been optimal;
 - schools may have negative perceptions of TEIs, and vice versa;
 - a gap is sometimes perceived between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’;
 - the contribution that a TEIs can make to a school’s programme of continuous professional development (CPD) for its staff, the contribution that student teachers can make to school development, or the contributions that school staff can make to Teacher Education have not always been recognised, leading to wasted opportunities.
3. A number of Member States in the Cluster Teachers and Trainers had expressed an interest in exploring the ways in which a partnership approach could help overcome such

difficulties, and the Cluster agreed that that this issue should be the focus of a Peer Learning Activity (PLA).

4. In many countries policies concerning partnerships between schools and TEIs are already effective. The results of the Peer Learning Activity summarized in this document can be used to review existing policies.

The PLA

5. The Danish Ministry of Education hosted the PLA in Copenhagen from 7 to 11 October 2007, with local organisation being in the hands of CVU-Vest and CVU-Syd. The nearby University of Malmö hosted discussions on 10 October.

Preparation

6. This was the fourth PLA organised by the Cluster 'Teachers and Trainers'. It was planned with the help of a small Preparatory Group of Cluster members and DK/SE colleagues.
7. A background document was circulated before the event which provided the theoretical framework for discussions. The Commission Communication on Improving the Quality of Teacher Education was also referred to.
8. Participants were, as usual, asked to identify their counties' learning objectives before taking part.

Participants

9. Excluding representatives of the two host countries, 13 people representing 8 countries (AT, DE, ES, FI, ISL, NL, NO, SI) took part. Four participants kindly agreed to act as Chairpersons during the PLA.

Programme

10. The PLA focused on policy examples provided by Denmark, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands. The main inputs in the programme were as follows:
 - a) Denmark:
 - an overview of the challenges posed by the theme, by Asst. Professor Hans Dorf;
 - a presentation of one example of the Danish model of collaboration, based upon written partnership agreements between TEIs and schools;
 - a visit to a school and a TEI that take part in such an agreement and discussion with the school leaders, teacher educators and trainee teachers involved.
 - b) Sweden:
 - a presentation of the Swedish model of collaboration, in which responsibility for Teacher Education is devolved to local level and in which municipalities play a key role;

- a presentation of examples of two specific collaboration projects.
- c) Germany:
- a presentation of the current administrative and legislative framework for Teacher Education in Germany, in which responsibility for Teacher Education in each Länd is shared amongst a variety of organisations.
- d) The Netherlands:
- a presentation of the Dutch model of partnership. Here, the schools formulate their demands and needs, and purchase support from a variety of institutions (for curriculum development, in-service training and teacher education). TEIs have been stimulated to increase their responsiveness to school needs by, amongst other things, stimulating regional partnerships between schools and TEIs.
11. These inputs provided a stimulus for discussions that focused on the aims, benefits, and possible forms of partnerships between schools¹ and teacher education institutions, and the conditions for their success.

Aims of partnerships

12. The aims and ambitions of partnerships can vary. In its most basic form a partnership should support the ambition to provide the best education for pupils. In this ambition three elements are crucial:
- a. improving methods for teaching and learning,
 - b. raising the quality of teachers, and
 - c. developing knowledge about teaching and learning through research.
13. In many countries, traditionally, support for these measures is organized separately from schools: for example in institutes for curriculum development, in TEI and in research institutions. However, this separation creates problems in transfer and in implementation within schools. In the growing complexity of society and the demands on the educational system, there is a view that schools should play an active and central role in developing teaching methods, improving the quality of teaching, and extending knowledge about teaching and learning.
14. Partnerships between school and TEI should create a system of support to help schools to handle this ambition.
15. The interest in partnerships between schools and TEIs is rooted in European policies on education and training, as the teaching profession is a ‘profession based on partnerships’².

¹ In this document the terms ‘schools’ and ‘teachers’ are not meant in an exclusive or restrictive way. Schools can imply a wide variety of education institutions existing in a country. Teachers also include trainers.

² Common European Principles on Teacher Competences and Qualifications, quoted in Commission Communication *Improving the Quality of Teacher Education* (3.8.2007) (COM (2007) 392 final.)

16. The changing demands of society create heavy expectations on teachers to ‘help young people become fully autonomous learners by acquiring key skills, rather than memorising information; they are asked to develop more collaborative and constructive approaches to learning and expected to be facilitators and classroom managers rather than ex-cathedra trainers’³. ‘As with any other modern profession, teachers also have a responsibility to extend the boundaries of professional knowledge through a commitment to reflective practice, through research, and through a systematic engagement in continuous professional development from the beginning to the end of their careers. Systems of education and training for teachers need to provide the necessary opportunities for this.’⁴ Partnerships between schools and TEIs can provide such a support system.

Models of partnership

17. A wide variety of partnerships models can exist, depending on local and national structures, conditions, traditions, etc. Partnerships may vary, for example, according to:
- the nature of the contract or partnership agreement;
 - financial arrangements;
 - number of partner institutions involved;
 - type of partner institutions involved (TEI, local authority, national agencies, one school, several schools ...)
 - focus of the partnership (the training of student teachers / in-service training of school staff / training of mentors in school/ school development / research ...)
 - The geographical extent of the partnership (involving local partners, regional or national stakeholders or also focussing on international exchange and networks)
18. During the peer learning activity, different interesting partnership models were presented or discussed:
1. Partnership models between schools and TEIs in Denmark, focusing on strengthening the mentoring role of the schools. The models were designed locally, based on the local situation.
 2. Partnership models between schools and TEIs in the Netherlands, focusing on strengthening the involvement of schools in the teacher education curriculum and strengthening the contribution of the TEIs and student teachers to school development. In these models, schools take a very proactive role.
 3. Partnership models between local authorities and TEIs in Sweden (Malmö), focusing on using student teachers to support educational developments in schools. In these models local authorities play a crucial initiating role.

³ Commission Communication *Improving the Quality of Teacher Education* (3.8.2007) (COM (2007) 392 final.)

⁴ op. cit.

4. The Think Tank project in Sweden, in which research groups of teachers, teacher educators and other experts are created to analyse and solve specific problems faced by teachers and schools.
 5. The Finnish model, in which special teacher training schools are connected to (and part of) universities. In these schools, student teachers have room to experiment and to do research and are supported by specially trained supervisors.
19. These examples show some of the wide variety in partnership models with respect to intentions, focus, partners and initiative.
20. In several of the models presented, partnerships only existed between certain schools and TEIs. It was felt that, if the focus is on school development, there is a need to find solutions that can support *all* schools in a national system: all should have the opportunity to benefit from the (outcomes of) partnerships. One possible solution to this scale problem is to work with networks or cascades, where special partnership schools have the role of supporting other schools.

Benefits of partnerships

The school

21. The partnerships can vary in the types of benefits for the school:
- involvement in the initial education of new teachers;
 - in-service development of staff within the School;
 - increase school's capacity for innovation and knowledge development through support from teacher educators and through student-teachers' development and research activities;
 - the feedback of the outcomes of education research into the reality of the professional within schools.

The TEI

22. Benefits for TEIs are:
- opportunities to relate the curriculum of teacher education more closely to the complex reality within the school;
 - to provide student teachers with a realistic learning environment;
 - to get realistic and relevant research questions and assignments for student teachers

The student teacher

23. As student teachers are a crucial factor in partnerships, it is also important to make explicit the benefits for student teachers:
- involvement in the reality of schools helps to reduce the 'practice shock' sometimes experienced by students at the end of their studies;

- Students will get a more realistic view of the profession and the demands that it places on teachers;
- Students will be involved in a wider variety of activities, better reflecting the breadth of the profession.

The system

24. At the system level,

- partnerships can play a role in moving towards a more coherent and integrated approach to Teacher Education that links initial education to induction and continuous professional development;
- partnerships can create strong connections between innovation, professional development and research.

Conditions for success

25. In discussing the partnership examples a number of crucial conditions have been identified. These conditions can be divided into conditions regarding the quality of structures, of process and relations, and of results.

26. Quality in structures

1. The partnership should be based on a (loose) national framework, identifying aims, expectations, outcomes, conditions and resources.
2. The partners need to be clearly identified. This can be done on two levels: the institutional level (schools, TEIs, local authorities ...) and the participants level (teachers, teacher educators, student teachers, school leaders ...). On both levels it is important to identify the benefits for each involved.
3. The partnership is based upon, supported and strengthened through concrete activities.
4. For each of the institutions and participants, the contribution, roles and responsibilities need to be clearly stated. In most countries, this is made explicit in some kind of contract. (e.g. as regards initial Teacher Education, it would be necessary to negotiate how responsibility should be shared for:
 - deciding the content of the curriculum
 - input on Didactics and input on Subject Studies
 - mentoring of student teachers
 - assessment of student teachers
 - training of mentors...)
5. The partnership model, the activities and the roles and responsibilities should fit the local context of the partnership; therefore, the concrete structure of the partnership may vary.

6. Partnerships should have clear mechanisms for creating a shared understanding and involvement, e.g. through the exchange of staff or by creating pairs of participants (one from each partner) which work closely together.
7. Partnerships should explicitly take responsibility to exchange, spread and disseminate the partnership results to schools and institutions outside the partnership.
8. Partnerships should have the opportunity to grow and to extend their focus beyond the initial education of student teachers and to extend to CPD of staff, innovation and research.

27. Quality in process and relations

1. For each of the partners the benefits must be clear, leading to a 'win-win' situation in which each partner understands the tangible benefits to be obtained by taking part.
2. An essential condition for effective partnerships is to have a shared vision, purpose and understanding between all participants in the partnership.
3. The partnership should model the values of the educational system within which it operates, e.g.:
 - a. The partnership should be based on parity, equity and recognition of the qualities and competences of each of the participants;
 - b. The partnership should be based on mutual trust. This has consequences on different levels: trust between partners within a partnership and trust between stakeholders inside and outside the partnership. Trust can have different manifestations and should not only be based on formal contracts, but also on the relation and intentions of the partners⁵.
 - c. The participants in the partnership must have a feeling of personal control and ownership.
4. All participants should have the opportunity to contribute to selection processes (e.g. with respect to selection of participants, selection of research questions, etc.);
5. The partnership should be arranged in such a way that both the long term continuity and sustainability of the partnership and the medium and short term dynamics of the partnership activities are addressed.

28. Quality in results

1. The partnership should invest in the quality of its participants (e.g. the quality of the mentor, research quality, etc.).

⁵ See: Byrk, A.S. & Schneider, B. (2002). Trust in schools. A core resource for improvement (The American Sociological Association's Rose Series in Sociology). New York, Russell Sage Foundation

2. For the partnership as a whole, and the partnership activities, the intended outcomes need to be clarified.
3. Indicators for measuring the outcomes should create a support system for the partnership.
4. The partnership should include outsiders to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the (outcomes of the) partnership.

Policy support for partnerships

29. To create the conditions for effective partnerships there is an important role for educational policy at national and regional level. Alongside the issues mentioned above, some additional aspects can be identified:
 1. Policy plays an important role in the creation of partnerships by intentional steering, while at the same time allowing some degree of autonomy so that partnership models can be designed according to local conditions and needs and give room for participants to own the design of the partnership. Different policy approaches can be used, depending on national contexts and policy traditions:
 - Structures and regulations creating formally binding frameworks for schools and TEIs (as is the case in Denmark where TEIs are expected to have regional partnerships in schools or in Finland where teacher training school have a special legal status);
 - Support and stimulation e.g, through project funding for partnerships programmes (as was the case in The Netherlands where both schools and TEIs have been given the possibility of applying for project funding for partnership projects) and publication of good practices and their benefits for different stakeholders;
 - Quality criteria in which partnerships between TEI and schools are a condition for accreditation (as in the case of The Netherlands where quality criteria concerning school based teacher education are included in the accreditation framework.
 2. Although partnerships between schools and TEIs need to be addressed at the policy level, partnerships are not an aim in themselves; they are a means to improve the quality of teacher education (both initial and in-service) and to support innovation within schools and school development. Consideration should therefore be given to the locus of partnership policy within government structures; it may need to be a concern of different departments (e.g. primary education, secondary education, teacher education, teacher policy, etc.).
 3. Policy activities should support and stimulate ‘trust generating events’, both within the partnership and between partnerships and other levels in the educational structure.
 4. Policy activities should support the dissemination of the outcomes of partnerships, both with respect to the partnerships in themselves (presenting overviews of good practices of partnerships) and their outcomes.

5. Finance can be used as an explicit instrument to stimulate, facilitate and steer the development and activity of partnerships. The sources of finance can vary, depending on national structures, resources and possibilities; they can be: institutional (by changing priorities), regional (e.g. through local authorities), national (e.g. by project funding) or international (e.g. through the EU Lifelong Learning Programme). Financial support should always take into account the need for the long term sustainability of the partnership.