



Conclusions and recommendations of the 35th ATEE Annual Conference Budapest, 26-30 August 2010

From 26 to 30 August 2010 the 35th Conference of the Association for Teacher Education in Europe was held in Budapest, Hungary. This conference was hosted by the Association of Hungarian Teacher Educators in collaboration with the Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest and the Eszterházy Károly College of Eger.

Under the conference title, ‘Responsibility, Challenge and Support in Teachers’ Life-long Professional Development’, the conference programme focused on the lifelong learning and continuous professional development of teachers and the role of pre-service and in-service teacher education. The choice of this conference theme was motivated by the awareness that initial teacher education is not sufficient to guide a teacher’s life-long career and performance. Life-long professional development is an essential condition for high quality education to pupils and students in the schools inside and outside Europe.

Inspiration for the conference was provided not only by ATEE’s policy statements on the quality of teachers (ATEE, 2006) and on schools in the 21st century (ATEE, 2007) and the previous work of ATEE’s research and development centres, but also by European policy documents, for example, the Conclusions of the European Council on improving the quality of teacher educators (2007) and professional development of teachers and school leaders (2009), the outcomes of the Teaching and Learning International Survey TALIS 2009 and reports of the Commission’s Thematic Working Group on the Professional Development of Teachers.

During the conference, 250 teacher educators and researchers from 56 countries discussed issues concerning lifelong professional development of teachers through exchanges of experiences, good practice, strategies and research findings. The theme of the conference was elaborated in an opening session with key stakeholders from the Hungarian educational system, through keynotes with well-recognized experts from Russia, Hungary, the United States and The Netherlands, in parallel sessions with more than 175 research papers, workshops, round tables and symposia and in thematic working sessions of the ATEE’s 14 Research and Development Centres.

This created a wide variety of perspectives on the theme of the life-long professional development of teachers and teacher educators.

Key messages

At the closing session of the conference the academic contributions and lively debates during the conference were summarized in the following key messages which need to be addressed by policy makers, teacher education institutions, teacher educators, teachers, school leaders, researchers and other relevant stakeholders:

Considering that:

- Teachers are key actors in the educational system, with the responsibility to support pupils and students in their learning and development, while taking into account inclusively each individual pupil or student and his/her capabilities, ambitions, opportunities and preferences. Consequently, policy makers, teacher educators and teacher education institutions must recognise and acknowledge that the teaching profession is ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse, and value such diversity.

- This key role demands a professional mandate for teachers where they can negotiate between the broader needs of society and the individual and diverse needs of their pupils/students.

Part of the professional development of teachers needs, therefore, to be focused at understanding the value of diversity and inclusion, at increasing the teachers' awareness of political and societal agendas and at strengthening the engagement of teachers in active political dialogue with key stakeholders like parents and government agencies.

- Initial teacher education is not sufficient to guide a teacher's life-long career and performance. Life-long professional development is an essential condition for high quality education to pupils and students in the schools inside and outside Europe. This life-long professional development covers initial teacher education, induction and continuous in-service professional development.

- Life-long professional development implies an attitude that is focused on permanent growth. Therefore it is necessary that teacher education curricula prepare students to reflect on their professional development. Both the content and the methods in the curricula need to foster this attitude and associated skills. In this, teacher educators have to be models for their students.

- The involvement of teachers and teacher educators in practitioner inquiry is one of the strongest means for their professional development, as indicated by the TALIS report. In this way, they are not just consumers but also producers of knowledge, contributing to the professional knowledge from within. However, practitioners' inquiry ought not to be seen as just an instrumental tool for professional development, but as a stance, a habit of mind of the members of a profession who critically investigate and question their work within the educational system, and also critically question the system itself. By doing so they are able to contribute to with the intention of transforming the practice of the profession and improving the lives of their pupils/students and of their families.

The conference participants therefore strongly recommend that:

- *Teachers* need to take ownership and responsibility for their own individual and collective life-long professional development. They need to support professional development of colleagues, like new colleagues entering the profession. They should take responsibility for the development of frameworks for the quality of the teaching profession, so that life-long professional development will not be dominated by political agendas and educational programmes which are forced upon teachers, but by a shared understanding of teacher quality within a profession focused on balancing the needs of their pupils and students and the needs of society.

- *Teachers* need to be aware that they are part of a wider profession, creating a collaborative responsibility. This collaborative awareness can be strengthened by the development of professional associations that take responsibility for and contribute to the professional development of the members of the profession.

- *Teachers and school leaders* need to be aware that involvement and collaboration in in-school, inter-schools, local, regional and (inter)national communities can strengthen and challenge the professional learning of teachers. It is crucial to support the life-long professional development of teachers by creating a learning environment in the school that stimulates and supports collaborative learning both for beginning and experienced teachers. Therefore, teachers and school leaders need to develop and promote school cultures and organizational conditions that foster collaborative learning of teachers.

- *Governments and school leaders* should stimulate and facilitate the engagement of teachers in practitioner inquiry, while more *experienced researchers and teacher educators* need to play a strong role in supporting teachers who take the first steps in practitioner inquiry.

- *Providers of pre-service, induction and in-service courses* should provide evidence about the impact of professional development activities on teacher practice and on the outcomes of pupil or student learning.

- To support the life-long professional development of teachers and the applicability of the outcomes of educational research to teachers' practice, *educational researchers* are challenged to take responsibility for unlocking their research for teachers by publishing not only their findings but also indicating the practical relevance of their research and the implications for the teaching practices. To facilitate this process, practitioners ought to be included in research teams and be co-authors of articles. Additionally, researchers and research teams need to recognise the different potential audiences for the dissemination of their work.

- *Policy makers and decision makers* need to involve practitioners in the development of new policies. Together, *policy makers and teachers* ought to evaluate policies, their implications for teaching and their impact on learning.

- *Policy makers* need to develop systems that not only recognize and accredit professional development activities that are undertaken in formal settings, but also those activities that are undertaken in informal and non-formal settings.

- *Policy makers* need to ensure that there is coherence in policy-making, where agendas and ambitions on one area are not frustrated by policies on other areas. Guidelines for curricula in teacher education, induction schemes, appraisal systems of teachers, teacher standards, professional autonomy, salaries and working conditions, and other relevant aspects, should all be linked and aimed at strengthening and supporting teachers' lifelong professional development.

- With respect to the life-long professional development of teachers and teacher educators, *policy makers* need to base their decisions and policies not only on political agendas and realities and on societal needs, but also on the experiences of teachers in the reality of schools and the outcomes of educational research. In this way, long-term policies can be created which link policy, practice and research.

- *School-leaders* need to negotiate and seek a balance between the broader needs of society (and its accountability systems) and the individual and diverse needs of the, beginning and experienced, teachers within their schools and their unique communities.

- *School leaders* need to create opportunities and structures that effectively harness the professional expertise and competencies of teachers to enable them to contribute to coherent whole school policies and practice to ensure effective school experiences for their students. Feedback from professional development experiences should be given a platform for dissemination and collective learning within the school.

- *Teacher educators and those that define the curricula in pre-service teacher education, induction and in-service programmes* need to rethink the content and methods in the curriculum ensuring that the curriculum stimulates teachers and student teachers:

- To develop an inquiring habit of mind and to engage in practitioners inquiry
- To develop awareness of their professional role and responsibility in society and schools
- To develop political awareness and ability to critically engage in discussions and debates with stakeholders in the system
- To develop an attitude and willingness to account for the quality of their work to stakeholders
- To develop an attitude of lifelong learning
- To understand the value of diversity and inclusion and promote it as a natural way of working
- To collaborate with colleagues and stakeholders outside school, in their teaching practice and in their professional development.

- *Teacher educators* need to contribute to the development of tools that support professional development of teachers, like tools that help teachers to articulate their learning needs, that present new approaches for inspiring productive learning activities for teachers, and that unlock examples of inspiring practice

- Considering that *teacher educators* both in school and teacher education institutions are role models to teachers and student teachers, they need to look at their professional development as teacher educators. Teacher educators should commit themselves to the development of frameworks for the quality of the teacher educator profession, both in schools and higher education institutions, tackling fragmentation of the teacher educator profession. Teacher



educators need to take charge of a collective professionalism, induction and life-long professional development. This can be supported by the work of professional associations for teacher educators. Such professional development can be focused on a variety of topics that are relevant in the curriculum of teacher education, as for example, stimulating and addressing critical thinking skills or diversity in their work as teacher educators and stimulating diversity in the professional group of teacher educators. In this, teacher educators need to combine both teaching and research.

Taking up the challenge of these recommendations, a number of research and development centres of the ATEE will take up collaborative research projects investigating teacher educators' professional development.

The Association of Teacher Education in Europe,
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