
COMPARATIVE RESEARCH ON TEACHER EDUCATION

Gabriella Pusztai and Ágnes Engler (2014, eds.): Comparative Research on Teacher Education. Ružomberok: Verbum. pp. 173.

Katalin Zoller

University of Debrecen, Debrecen (Hungary);
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca (Romania)
katazoller@gmail.com

The volume *Comparative research on teacher education* is one of the two international comparative volumes which has been prepared within Teacher Education Central European Research Network (TECERN) project implemented during 2013/2014, supported by Visegrad Fund. The project is based around relevant issues regarding the quality of teachers and teacher education in post-socialist countries facing difficulties. As stated in the Preface “the lure of this profession is decreasing, a professional identity fails to evolve, teachers are unmotivated to obtain specialized knowledge or unwilling to self train themselves and have a low social esteem” (Pusztai and Engler 2014, Preface¹).

The volume is a collection of studies whose main purpose is to create a dialog between Central-Eastern European countries regarding their most present educational issues and strengthen the role of teachers in ensuring quality in education. It is the result of a collaborative effort by education researchers from Czech Republic, Hungary, Polonia, Romania and Slovakia. The joint attempt of editors and authors to respond to the above mentioned challenges offers valuable content for policy-makers and education researchers as well. As for the structure of the content, there are two main research areas offering common understanding of the knowledge of problematic issues from different countries: Teacher Education System Social Context; Present Students in Teacher Education. The reviewer follows the volumes’ thematic structure in showing the main attributes.

The first part of the book details how are different countries approaching the education of teachers, how the systems of teacher education were evolving and how they function in the present. Structure and the content of education are verified in the process of the development of national frameworks. Equally relevant issues are emerging in the dialog as the European integration or the insertion of the Bologna system into the discussed teacher education programmes: Slovak, Hungarian and Czech. As the reviewer is particularly interested in Romanian teacher education it is important to mention that similarities are appearing with the national systems described. Teachers’ professional standards are also a main focus, which typically embody the characteristics of high-quality teaching. Described components as subject knowledge, pedagogical expertise, ethical code and “general professional moral norms” (Magdolna Chrappán, Jiří Dostál, Ján Gunčaga et al. 2014, 42.) are shaping the perception of teaching as a learned profession. Music teacher training systems are also examined in three countries

¹ All the references are within the reviewed volume

from the Middle-European region emphasizing the variability of the systems which is not necessarily a difference in quality, only different ways in reaching the same target (Katinka Boruzsné Búdi, Mihály Duffek, Alice Hausmann et al. 2014, 68.). As the content of teachers training authors accentuate the compatibility. Regarding the prestige and social construction of the teacher profession arguments are presented along the following question: What is the solution to the dissonance between the social expectations for teachers and their abilities to meet these (Mihály Fónai, Ágnes Dusa, Michaela Moldová Chovancová et al. 2014, 88.)? Research based evidences suggest similar answers in three countries: poor financial evolution contributes the most to the de-professionalization of the profession.

Taken together, these developments outline a way forward for the teaching profession and could have a direct implication for all stages of teacher education: selection, in-service and continuous education.

The second part of the volume gives the audience a comparative overview of the students in the present teacher education system. Selection, initial education and in-service stages are in focus as well. Characteristics of entering teacher candidates have been the focus of the first studie in the second chapter. Major categories of variables are analyzed in comparatistic view: demographics of entering students, students' goals and values – perception of the roles and responsibilities of teachers. The motivation to teach is buildid up from different sources in the case of Hungary and Poland. Authors state that while Hungarian students choose teacher training because they have a teacher family background and a calling for this profession, or they want to have any kind of degree to get a job, Polish students use teacher education to step up in social hierarchy (Zoltán Györgyi, Aneta Kamińska, Zsuzsanna Márkus et al. 2014, 105.). Also the students in teacher education are the focus of the studie where prospective teachers' pedagogical knowledge is presented. Throughout the work we can identify a clearly outlined idea how is possible to analyze this domain of knowledge in teacher education, which is difficult to be operationalized (Stadler-Altman, 2014, 119.). The role of social networks in the wellbeing of students in teacher education represents a highly relevant issue in this stage, because as future teachers they are model groups for younger generations (Gabriella Pusztai, Klára Kovács & Katalin Kardos, 2014, 135.). In comparison with student taking other majors the profile of teacher education students is characterized by the following features: rich connections with their lecturers and more extensive intergenerational networks; less free time with their peers; more powerfull external connections; enable to find enough opportunities to choose from the intra-campus supply that they would like to join, such as research groups, talent care programs or civil groups; religious networks and activities are the most important internal connections; better mental status (Gabriella Pusztai, Klára Kovács & Katalin Kardos, 2014, 135-136.). Future professional and private plans of students in teacher education are emerging from the studie presented in the chapter. The research theme gives information about an other important component of the teacher education students' profile: the majority of respondents in the survey presented has clear view about in-service learning, they prefer to work while still studying; many students prefer to work at lower school levels and they do not intend to participate in PhD courses (Agnes Engler, Edina Kovács, Zuzana Chanasova et al. 2014, 156-157.). The last studie of the volume presents procedures of teacher training in a multicultural and intercultural environment, a viable possibility for multicultural education (Aniela Róžańska & Andrea Bordás 2014, 159-173). The authors concluded that the training in intercultural education offers a greater chance for extending teachers professional capacity. Two regions represent the focus of the studie: Cieszyn Silesia, Poland, and Transylvania, Romania.

Reviewing in a comparatistic context, those “dialogs” reveal particularities of students in teacher education which suggest that teachers' work is deeply rooted in tradition and context; by the identification of similarities, same approaches to the emerging problems there is now a valuable opportunity for the countries in the region to draw on this experiences.