La formation des enseignants

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Teacher Education

In this letter, we present and comment upon a number of resources regarding teacher education at primary and secondary level, both in Europe and further afield. Our aim is to bring together and put into perspective a range of recently published (2004 – 2005), though non-exhaustive, data from current research in this field.

Some major trends in Europe | Teacher education in France | The reflective practitioner | The learning organisation | Bridging the gap between research and practice | From professional thesis to portfolio | Measuring effective training programms?

Some major trends in Europe

Eurydice, the information network on education in Europe, provides access to invaluable data sources that are key to understanding the context of teacher education in Europe- in particular, the report published in spring 2004 on Keeping teaching attractive for the 21st century, and especially Section II ("Teachers") of Chapter D ("Resources") of the 2005 edition of Key Data on Education in Europe. It may also be useful to refer to Reforms of the teaching profession: a historical survey (1975-2002), published in February 2002. We have selected a few salient points from these reports in order to give a clearer picture of the context of teacher education in Europe.

Few teachers are career civil servants

The first important point to establish is that teachers in different countries have very different employment statuses. In half of the countries studied, teachers are employed as contractual agents under common law; in the rest, teachers are civil servants, although only a minority of these are appointed for life. Teachers are career civil servants in only nine countries (Germany, Austria, Greece, Spain, France, Cyprus, Malta, Portugal and Luxembourg); teachers with civil-servant status in other countries are employed on a contractual basis.

Concerning recruitment, there is so much variation that it is impossible to generalise. One of the few common points is that initial teacher-training courses favour relatively young candidates, with no professional experience, who have completed secondary or higher education.

Teachers' working hours, though often defined in terms of time spent in the classroom, are determined in almost half of the countries concerned using a combination of teaching hours and hours spent in school for other activities (teamwork, management duties, meeting parents, etc.).

Practical training provided at the same time as, or after, the theory

Theoretical and practical teacher training is provided either at the same time as students' general studies (simultaneous model) or after these studies (consecutive model). In almost all countries, primary and pre-primary teachers are trained using the simultaneous model (except in France and, more recently, the UK); lower-secondary training is usually organised using the simultaneous model, while training at general upper-secondary level (the equivalent of *lycées généraux* in France) uses the consecutive model. The higher the teaching level, the longer the training and the greater the likelihood of the consecutive model being used. Primary teachers are generally trained over a three- to five-year period, while secondary-level teacher training takes between four and five years. In all cases, the proportion of professional training (compared with general studies) is greater in training programmes based on the simultaneous model.

Newly qualified teachers benefit from little support at the start of their careers. Only half of countries offer support – often basic – during this initial period, although Germany, Norway and the UK have recently launched initiatives specifically aimed at helping new teachers.

Ongoing training is rarely well structured and always optional, although certain countries (e.g. Poland, Portugal, Bulgaria) make it an explicit criterion for career progression and salary increases.

Teacher education: the shift towards universities

Even when initial teacher training ends with a final qualifying phase in working conditions, most of the training takes place outside schools, in separate training establishments. For a long time, teacher education has been provided in teacher-training colleges for the primary and lower-secondary levels and in universities for upper-secondary level and above. However, in more recent years the general trend has been for teacher education to shift towards universities, a move which is complete to a greater or lesser extent in different countries. The result is that, in certain countries, teacher training is now the preserve of education faculties, whereas in others training is shared between universities, higher-education colleges and occasionally

other types of establishment. In some other countries, university-level institutions dedicated to teacher education exist alongside universities. In many countries, the situation is constantly changing, as in France, where IUFMs (university-level teacher-training institutes) are to merge with universities, or in Switzerland, where the cantonal training schools are being replaced by HEPs (higher-education institutions specialising in teacher training).

A move towards closer links between teacher education and schools

In all of the countries studied, the content of initial teacher training has undergone reform – several times in some cases – since the early 1990s.

One of the overriding trends has been to bring teachers, their employers and the training authorities closer together. Certain countries go as far as to encourage schools to work in partnership with universities in the training of future teachers, and even to act directly as training institutions in some cases. We should also point out here that in certain countries (Czech Republic, UK, Sweden, Finland, etc.), schools have the right to recruit their own teaching staff.

Often, greater independence is granted to initial-training institutions with regard to the curriculum; however, this is counterbalanced by requirements that national or international quality standards be respected. Certification based on candidates' knowledge of the subjects on the teacher-training syllabus still prevails in Europe, although countries such as the UK and the Netherlands have introduced certification based on a final assessment of trainees' competencies against criteria defined in standards, as well as alternative teacher-training streams.

A topic on European policy agendas

As part of the 2010 objectives set out by the Lisbon Strategy, the European Union is looking particularly closely at the issue of teacher education. To this end, a "European 'testing' conference on the Common European Principles for the competences and qualification of teachers" was held in June 2005. Various documents resulting from this conference can be found on the web pages of this conference, in particular the report prepared by the European Commission based on preparatory work by groups of experts over a two-year period (bearing in mind that this expert groupwork also continued after the conference).

The summary highlights the main points of consensus regarding teacher training in Europe: the need for degree-level training, but with strong links with schools; multidiscipline training; participation in lifelong training programmes, in line with research and innovations; the opportunity to support and consider teacher education as a subject in its own right worthy of study and research, etc.

Rather than producing recommendations, which clearly play no role in determining the major teacher-education choices at national level, the most important aim is to show that **teacher education is considered a "key priority" of the European Union.** In taking this approach through the Lisbon Strategy, the EU also implies that it considers the quality of teaching to be linked to teacher education, something that cannot always be taken for granted in public policy principles.

❑ See also

– Initial Teacher Training in the international comparative database maintained by the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Internet Archive (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority of England, Eurydice Unit at NFER, UK).
– Françoise Cros, Préparer les enseignants à la formation tout au long de la vie : une priorité européenne ? ("Preparing teachers through lifelong training: a European priority?"), L'Harmattan, 2005.

Teachers in France: difficult training based on professional knowledge

Teacher-training in France, though not subject to reform as frequently as in England (cf. below), has undergone significant changes since the late 1980s. A detailed history can be found in the French contribution (written and presented by Françoise Cros et Jean-Pierre Obin) for the OECD report entitled Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers (published in 2004 by La Documentation française).

The scope of this letter does not allow us to present or discuss in detail the measures of the blueprint law of April 2005 , which, in particular, lays down significant changes to teacher education, including the integration of IUFMs (university-level teacher-training institutes) into the French university system. However, interested readers may wish to find out more about the position of the Conference of IUFM Directors, which proposed a "successful integration" charter and defined eight principles for the organisation of teacher education. For a more critical approach, you may wish to consult articles from the Café Pédagogique on this subject.

In his summary of the main characteristics of teacher professionalisation in IUFMs, Vincent Lang (in Claude Lessard and Maurice Tardif, La profession d'enseignant aujourd'hui ("The Teaching Profession Today"), De Boeck, 2005) lists the following:

– assertion of the principle of ongoing professional development throughout one's teaching career (integration of MAFPENs (agencies for the continuing professional development of teachers) in 1998);

– the transfer of teacher training to universities;

– the attempt to construct an integrated training programme that incorporates workplaces, training centres and training institutions; that takes account of discipline-based knowledge, professional knowledge and knowledge of human and social sciences; and which deals with the tension between the tradition of primary training and the fantasy of a loss of culture at secondary level;

– the development of new teacher competencies and requirements in terms of organisational skills, interpersonal relations, ethics and group work.

But he notes that, in reality, **continuity prevails over change:** the common training provided in IUFMs has had a primarily symbolic impact in recognising a specific teacher professionality, an observation backed up by most research.

The "teacher factory" has not changed

Jérôme Deauvieau (in his contribution at the September 2004 conference: Savoir, travail et organisation ("Knowledge, Work and Organisation")) has been looking into what constitutes secondary teachers' professional knowledge when they enter the profession. He notes first of all that new teachers have a close link with learned knowledge and discipline-based knowledge. This includes both the knowledge that often justifies students' choice of teaching as a career and the knowledge that forms the basis of recruitment examinations (for more on the centrality of the university discipline, please see the article by the same author in issue no. 150 of the Revue française de pédagogie).

Knowledge of the curriculum, which allows the transfer of learned knowledge and discipline-based knowledge, is taught in a somewhat informal way at the IUFM, through training sessions to some extent, but largely through the teaching placement.

Reflection on the teaching process and all aspects of the teacher – pupil relationship is supposed to be covered at the same time. However, the teaching of these aspects of education – largely uncharted territory for new teachers – takes place when the new teachers are just discovering their profession and expecting, above all, to receive advice and tips on how to "survive" in the classroom. **"They move from student mode, where the emphasis is on learned knowledge, straight into teacher mode, where they are confronted with a class full of pupils, without any transition period"; furthermore, knowing they could soon be posted to a secondary school anywhere in France, they are so eager to learn their craft in practical, "concrete" terms that they pay little heed to formal education theory.** As far as professional knowledge is concerned, they make do with knowledge acquired through experience: knowledge received from a few, more experienced teachers during rare chats with colleagues in the brief socialisation time available, and knowledge acquired on the job in the isolation of the classroom.

Jérôme Deauvieau thus concludes that the "teacher factory" has not changed, despite the creation of the IUFMs. As the open competition for entry into the IUFM marks the end of formalised learning for student teachers, the training received in the IUFM comes too late. "Professional knowledge is caught between formal teaching knowledge, which today remains largely peripheral, and knowledge acquired through experience, unsettled by recent changes in education."

"Personal development" often ignored

The *Cahiers pédagogiques* dedicated their September 2005 dossier to the theme of "teaching, a profession that is learnt". Among the different contributions, Catherine Yelnick (in *Mettre au travail la personne et le groupe en formation ("Individual and group work in training")*) strives to show that it is the conception of professional training methods itself that is the problem, with training reduced to the transfer of information, virtually ignoring the issues of the learning and training processes. At the same time, student teachers expect to cover the "theory first" and the "practice later", and are sometimes thrown when their tutors take a different approach. This is shown particularly clearly by the extent to which the psychosocial dimensions of classes ("group phenomena") are ignored. **Far from allowing teachers to "get a feel for" group work and use it as a learning resource, teacher training encourages them to consider it a parasitic element that impedes the transfer of knowledge.** More generally, the author regrets that training does not create conditions favourable to professional "self-improvement work", whereas becoming a professional teacher requires skills that go beyond the theory of teaching and teaching methods.

Philippe Meirieu, in a contribution from October 2005 on teacher education, also highlights the fact that the applicationist approach in training is not enough, since recognising problems and identifying symptoms do not, on their own, allow practical skills to develop. "The teaching profession could not under any circumstances be reduced to a collection of facts and skills, even if these were mastered completely", and, as the director of Lyon IUFM explains, "teachers are not trained: they develop", by following training projects through to their conclusion and developing the necessary skills to carry out their job with a strong personal commitment.

Agnès van Zanten and Patrick Rayou also observed in their *Enquête sur les nouveaux enseignants ("Appraisal of new teachers")* (p. 31) that "*the routines traditionally used by training institutions no longer enable teachers to deal with situations that may arise. Teaching now includes as many emotional as intellectual aspects, as teachers have to be able to use different skills and know-how in order to ensure the interactions that make learning possible*".

❑ See also

Memorandum (November 2005) from the DEP (Evaluation and Forecasting Directorate) of the Ministry of Education regarding IUFMs.

The reflective practitioner model

In contrast, Christain Maroy sees in the "reflective practitioner" the new ideal model for the profession – a model to which most teacher-training bodies in Europe subscribe – in order to move towards producing teachers capable of adapting to any situation by analysing their own practices and results. We should point out here that the very popular "reflective practitioner" theory derives from original work by Donald Shön, published in 1983, an interesting presentation of which can be found on the Infed (Informal Education) website.

A collective model

Christian Maroy (p. 9, Les évolutions du travail enseignant en Europe ("Changes in the work of teachers in Europe"), issue n°42 of the Cahiers du GIRSEF) differentiates between this model and that of the "educated schoolteacher" (who, first and foremost, knows his subject and relies on traditional "transmissive" teaching methods) or the "technical teacher" (who possesses and applies an extensive repertoire of teaching techniques and precise, efficient procedural know-how derived from scientific studies). The reflective practitioner applies a constructivist and varied approach to teaching, works as part of a team and takes an active role in the collective management of school life.

Danièle Houpert (in Les Cahiers Pédagogiques, issue n°435) questions the theoretical "detour" in the pattern of "practice/theory/practice" that forms the basis of the reflective practitioner's competencies; she concludes that initial training is

largely insufficient for the theoretical aspects to be instilled in an in-depth, durable and effective manner. This presents a case for developing professional competencies within a framework of ongoing training for teachers.

Christian Maroy (in Lessard and Tardif, op.cit.) takes a different angle and considers the conditions that would be necessary for this model to be applied to the reforms that took place at primary and lower-secondary level in Belgium in 2000. Although the reform listed 13 fundamental skills to be developed in teacher education – inspired by the reflective practitioner model – the teachers themselves seem to have given it a mixed reception at best. Maroy judges that the source of resistance lies in the internal division of labour within the system. A rift seems to have between the teachers "on the front line", who are supposed to implement the new prescriptions of the reform, and the administrative and intellectual elites of the teaching world who developed and imposed these reforms. **In other words, it would not be possible to promote a model of reflective teaching if, from the outset, there is a lack of democratic involvement among those to whom the model would apply.**

"Curriculum workshops" for reflection on teaching practices

On the same theme, Manfred Lang (in *Collaborative Reflective Practice in School-Based Teacher Education,* a contribution made at the Conference of the International Study Association on Teachers and Teaching – ISATT2003) emphasises that the process of enculturation of the teacher's professional self, induced by the reflective practitioner model, is for the most part generated within communities of practice and research. In this framework, discussions between teachers and researchers must not only be of an instrumental nature, but must also consider the aims and purposes of teaching; these discussions are a means of sharing thoughts on teaching practices and on different degrees of control and management within education. In this context, deliberation on such matters cannot be the isolated activity of just one individual teacher, but is, by its very nature, inextricably linked to interactions with pupils, colleagues and management staff. It is thus with the aim of constructing a "public sphere" (in the Habermasian sense) in which teachers are able to share that Manfred Lang presents the experiences of the EUDIST project, a science-teaching "curriculum workshop" where discussions culminate in the creation of a joint document concerning teaching practice.

The learning organisation

Another model that fuels much debate on teacher training is that of the learning organisation. This theme – first developed in the fields of organisational psychology and management – when applied to education, aims to produce teachers who are engaged in a dynamic of projects and learning that allows them to update their teaching methods in order to respond to the challenges of change, as Léopold Paquay explains (in *Devenir des enseignants et formateurs professionnels dans une "organisation apprenante" ? De l'utopie à la réalité ! ("Becoming professional teachers and trainers in a 'learning organisation': From utopia to reality")*, *European Journal of teacher Education,* Vol. 28, N° 2, June 2005).

Learning schools are lively, changing schools

It would take too long to mention all the elements listed by Léopold Pasquay; however, we shall consider one of the characteristics of these communities, namely the "de-privatisation of teaching practices: teachers are not afraid to talk to each other about their teaching practices". Central skills include a strong professional identity and a "feeling of power with regard to the way things change (empowerment)".

For the purposes of initial training, the idea is to place the learner in contexts of meaningful action, i.e. situations that are at least similar to those that may be encountered professionally. Consequently, **the most efficient way to prepare teachers who are to work in schools that are learning organisations is to train them in institutions that are themselves learning organisations!**

Piet Coppieters (in Turning schools into learning organizations in the European Journal of Teacher Education, op. cit.) looks at the alternative that learning organisations present to the "School Effectiveness, Improvement and Culture" movement that has influenced educational policy to a very large extent in certain countries. In his eyes, this movement has a major flaw, in that it implies a stable – even static – organisational structure through its failure to acknowledge that schools are living social organisms.
Educational establishments considered as learning organisations, on the other hand, are fluid, more complex systems in which, for example, "the managers can only coach", in contrast to classical theories, which maintain that they are supposed to "control the organisation".

Stephen E. Anderson and Dennis Thiessen (in Lessard and Tardif, op. cit.) sweep aside the common principles of learning teacher-training communities in the United States and identify six dimensions in these communities:

– a social dimension: interaction between teachers and pupils, among teachers, and with the environment;

– an ecological dimension: in the classroom, in the corridors and in the community;

– a philosophical dimension: ongoing professional dialogue regarding the project's values and aims;

– a political dimension: collective authority through global participation, beyond the confines of administrative management circles;

– a historical dimension: common memories and a clear, explicit history of changes;

– a strategic dimension: a considered commitment to making changes through collaboration, integration and investigation.

Working as a team for the right reasons

The question of whether co-operation between teachers should be encouraged is one that turns up time and again in teacher training, with the "one teacher – one class" model being prominent in many places. Monique Gather-Thurler and Philippe Perrenoud summarise opinions on this subject in their work, *Coopération entre enseignants: la formation initiale doit-elle devancer les pratiques ? ("Co-operation between teachers: should initial training anticipate practices?"), Recherche et Formation, n ° 49, 2005*, in which they advise that future teachers discard any "romantic" ideas of professional co-operation and

should understand that co-operation is not a virtue in itself, nor indeed always necessary, but one way of working more efficiently. From then on, they will appreciate that, in a culture of professional teaching, priority must be given to resolving pedagogical problems in a utilitarian and selective manner, rather than through an idealistic or prescribed view of working in a team.

However, it would seem that national cultures play a significant part in this regard. As Régis Malet and Estelle Brisard show in *Modernisation de l'école et contextes culturels : Des politiques aux pratiques en France et en Grande-Bretagne* ("Modernising education and cultural contexts: from policy to practice in France and Great Britain"), L'Harmattan, 2005), teachers in England, for example, are part of a professional community culture that is more in tune with "learning organisation" -style methods than their French colleagues, for whom the dominant model is still one where classroom practice is an almost private matter.

Bridging the gap between research and practice

Whatever the ideal model, it is clearly the case that many of the issues surrounding teacher education concern the middle ground between educational research, the knowledge resulting from this research and that part of this knowledge that can be put to practical use by teachers. Furthermore, the universality and permanence of this theme – despite the profound cultural differences between countries – is remarkable. The *Cambridge Journal of Education* (Vol. 35, No. 3, November 2005) dedicates a special issue to this theme, not just because it concerns the academic community, but also because it has been noticed – in the UK, but elsewhere too – that, over the last decade, public authorities have been placing researchers under a lot of pressure to ensure their work is "useful" for teachers and the education system.

Availability of useful and effective theories

One of the chief editors of this issue, Donald McIntyre ("Bridging the gap between research and practice", Op. Cit.), tries to identify the various elements that distinguish research-based theories from those implemented by teachers on a day-to-day basis.

Of the many differences, he highlights the fact that ideas for practical application are worthless in the eyes of teachers if they are not both feasible and effective in a classroom context. Research-based knowledge must have a minimum degree of relevance – scope for abstraction or theory development, even – in order to have some potential value. The pedagogical knowledge required of teachers, on the other hand, must allow them to respond to a specific context and to single, even unique, characteristics of each class, each pupil or each lesson. Equally, research-based knowledge is impersonal, whereas classroom teaching must, by its very nature, be very personalised.

Teachers have to act immediately, not just to achieve their various objectives, but also in accordance with different considerations regarding their pupils, available time and resources, the teaching environment, etc. **Researchers who are keen to produce work that is useful should aim to find models that simplify situations in order to help teachers deal with these complex issues.**

It is also useful to encourage teachers to articulate knowledge acquired through professional experience in conjunction with research-based knowledge by finding a way to link research-based knowledge to their existing practices. In this regard, it is crucial that good scientific literature reviews are easily accessible to teachers, in terms of both content and distribution.

Without doubt, dialogue between researchers and teachers could also be more fruitful if researchers suggested changes inspired by existing practices, rather than criticising teachers' methods in order to bolster their own proposals for change.

Research-based teacher training

The experience of Finland related by Ian Westbury, Sven-Erik Hansen, Pertti Kansanen and Ole Bjökvist (*Teacher Education for Research-Based Practice in Expanded Roles: Finland's experience, in the Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, Vol. 49, No. 5, Nov. 2005*) is interesting in this regard. In Finland, the decentralisation of school management is one aspect of an overarching policy that aims to bring decision-making as close as possible to the place of application; schools are thus able to determine their own curriculum.

In the field of teacher education, this means that teaching practice must start as early as possible for trainee teachers. Periods of teaching practice have therefore been included in each year of study, and each period of teaching practice is combined with theoretical and scientific studies relating to the subject of the "practice" period. The programme culminates (after two years) in the completion of a research thesis, the theme of which is taken, as far as possible, from students' personal experiences of teaching practice.

Students thus learn to discuss and argue with constant reference to research, rather than citing "mystical" arguments "magicked" out of thin air. In contrast to the traditional image of the teacher – centred on the teaching process and individual day-to-day organisation – the contemporary Finnish image of the teacher's role is expanded to include determining the curriculum and group decisions. However, the authors acknowledge that determining the curriculum at local level seems to represent a real problem for Finnish schools. It is felt to be a supplementary task that does not form part of teachers' "normal" work.

Frédéric Saussez and Léopold Paquay present a different experience (in Lessard, Altet, Paquay and Perrenoud, Entre sens commun et sciences humaines. Quels savoirs pour enseigner ? ("Between common sense and human sciences"), De Boeck 2004), specifically a training method used in Luxembourg that combines practice in the classroom with theoretical training over a long period (five terms), with student teachers taking classes in the mornings and benefiting from teacher training sessions in the afternoons.

This method is founded on the following principles: alternation, consistency between theory and practice, interdisciplinary training, teamwork, learning through action, active trainee participation and project work. From the authors' point of view, the benefits lie in the research-based training process between teachers and training staff that is able to occur thanks to the use of an investigative approach that conceptualises the teaching experience. In other words, the interweaving of research

and practice concerning issues raised through practice does not remove the tension between theoretical knowledge and knowledge derived from experience, but makes this tension potentially useful and productive.

❑ **See also**

– Maurice Tardif, Ahmed Zourhlal, *Enjeux et difficultés de la recherche sur l'enseignement entre les milieux scolaires et universitaires* ("Aims and difficulties of research into teaching between school and university environments"), *Les Sciences de l'éducation, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2005.*

– François Baluteau, La sociologie, une science pour former les enseignants? Le savoir sociologique chez les formateurs d'enseignants ("Sociology: a science for teacher training? The place of sociological theory in teacher education"), Fabert, 2005.

From professional thesis to portfolio

The IUFM thesis: between certification and training

In France, one of the tools that is supposed to make the acquisition of theoretical knowledge easier and encourage the development of practical reflexes is the professional thesis required of all IUFM trainees. The subject of many expectations, but also many criticisms, this thesis serves to crystallise many questions regarding teacher training.

Following a number of workshops in 2003, a paper edited by Jacques Crinon takes stock of The professional thesis in teacher education: a platform for observing practice and a lever for training ("Le mémoire professionnel des enseignants, observatoire des pratiques et levier pour la formation") (L'Harmattan, 2004). In this, Patrick Rayou highlights the "peripheral" status accorded to this thesis by the students, who – owing to the fast pace of their course – misjudge the aim of the exercise: **they confuse training and certification,** and it is clear that the reflective aspect of the exercise (deliberation on teaching practice) is introduced far too early. Another synthesis on the same subject has been produced, led by Annette Gonnin-Bolo and Jean-Pierre Benoit (*Le mémoire professionnel en IUFM : Bilan de recherches et questions vives ("The professional thesis in IUFMs: An appraisal of research and current issues"), INRP 2004*). The results of this work show that there is a great deal of diversity in these professional theses, depending on the IUFM concerned, local organisational contexts, ideas of different parties involved, the streams and disciplines in question, etc. Indeed, these theses are far from uniform, even if the same tension between the fascination of the "chalkface" and the knowledge that is to be imparted there is expressed in almost all cases.

Works of a similar nature to the "professional thesis" can also be found in different forms elsewhere. For example, comparisons between French professional theses and American portfolios have been undertaken by Michèle Gigue and Jacques Crinon (in Crinon, op. cit., p. 113) and also by Eliane Ricard-Fersing (*ibid.*, p. 193). Ricard-Fersing does not present the American portfolio as a miracle solution to be imported wholesale to replace the French thesis; instead, after highlighting the many points on which the two share common ground (not least the fact that both are very difficult to write), she explores their defining characteristics. The American portfolio is described as a "narrative", a term which, in English, embraces much more than simple narration: in this particular case, it means recounting and making sense of one's personal and professional history; in France, on the other hand, the thesis concentrates much more on rational arguments and conceptualisation. **Much of the portfolio is dedicated to personal subjectivity and commitment, while the thesis is more analytical and more traditional in format.** Furthermore, the French thesis is much more an academic work on a defined subject, whereas the portfolio allows more of an all-round examination of the educator within the professional setting.

The portfolio: the best teacher training tool

From a more general point of view, Wil Meeus, Linda van Looy and Arno Libotton compare (in *The Bachelor's Thesis in Teacher Education in the European Journal of Teacher Education, Vol. 27, No. 3, Oct. 2004*) the different forms of final thesis that exist in teacher education using four models: the scientific literature study, the portfolio, action research and, finally, the didactic box. They conclude that the dominance of theory-oriented work – particularly common in the literature review model – cannot meet the training needs of new teachers today. The portfolio, on the other hand, was judged the most appropriate model, as it covers several periods of practical training in a variety of contexts – putting it at an advantage over action research, for example. Moreover, as it explicitly includes a dimension of reflection and justification regarding one's own teaching practices, it satisfies training objectives more effectively than the didactic box. We should note here the definition that the authors give of the portfolio: **an extensive curriculum vitae in which the students demonstrate their teaching and learning skills by showing the results of their teaching activities and considering their performance.**

Robert Beck, Nava Livne and Sharon Bear, writing about the American model (in *Teachers' self-assessment of the effects of formative and summative electronic portfolios on professional development in the European Journal of Teacher Education, Vol. 28, No. 3, Oct. 2005*) look into the effects of four different types of electronic portfolio, differentiated by (among other aspects) the extent to which they are used for training or evaluation. In the United States, around 90% of teacher-training programmes use portfolios to make candidate recruitment decisions, while 40% use them for certification purposes. The authors set out to determine to what extent this tool is better suited to teacher evaluation or teacher training, and whether these two objectives are compatible. To do this, they compared a prototype summative portfolio used in California (Teacher Performance Assessment) and three other (formative) portfolios. The results proved to be very much in favour of the formative portfolios, which not only had a greater impact on teachers' professional development (as expected), but also allowed for a better evaluation of candidates' competencies. In other words, portfolios should not be used for summative accountability purposes.

❑ **See also**

– Patricia Goldblatt and Deirdre Smith, *Illuminating and facilitating professional knowledge through case work* in the European Journal of Teacher Education, Vol. 27, No. 3.

– Presentation of e-portfolios and associated resources, VST Information Letter, March 2005.

"Measuring" the most "effective" training programmes

Teacher education is directly affected by reforms, implemented in certain countries, that are centred on the notion that it is possible to isolate, measure and bring into widespread use a whole range of criteria that will indicate whether such-and-such a teacher, measurement or training programme is efficient with regard to predefined quality standards. In English, the term "accountability" is often used with regard to these reforms, which have come into force to varying degrees in a number of countries (England, USA, Australia, Poland, Netherlands, etc.), often alongside policies that force institutions to compete against one another.

Too technical a vision in England?

In England, Robert Moon (in Claude Lessard and Maurice Tardif, La profession d'enseignant aujourd'hui ("The Teaching Profession Today"), De Boeck, 2005) shows that the Conservative approach to over-theoretical and inefficient teacher-training methods began in the 1980s; however, since the late 1970s, there had been concerns regarding the quality of wholly university-based training in previous years, which led to the creation of a national Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE, based on the American NCATE model, with inspections of university teacher-training programmes). In the late 1980s, the Clarke reforms replaced the CATE with the Teacher Training Agency.

In the mid-1990s, in a climate of general reform on the principle of "accountability", training establishments' funding and student quotas were linked to the results of inspections. Schools and employers were encouraged to form consortiums in order to develop alternative solutions to university training.

While training establishments were to some extent competing against one another, a government circular established a very detailed national curriculum which formed the basis for standards in teaching qualifications. Moving training into schools was encouraged and the practical placement in working conditions was further developed. In addition, student teachers were monitored and evaluated during their training by a "mentor" – an experienced teacher specially trained for this task. **In other words, the practical, "hands-on" approach (as opposed to theoretical, university training) was encouraged.**

This general trend in England has proved somewhat controversial among education researchers. Adam Lefstein (Thinking about the technical and the personal in teaching in the Cambridge Journal of Education, Vol. 5, No. 3, Nov. 2005) analyses these two opposing visions of teaching: "technical teaching" and "personal teaching". Proponents of the former are clearly identified as the inspiration behind recent developments in education in England – in particular, the National Curriculum, Standard Assessment Task (SAT) tests and determining policy according to the results of "what works" in research – and are accused of "deprofessionalising" teachers and dehumanising relations in education. While deploring the fact that the polarisation of the discussion between these two positions has overshadowed any critical discussion regarding interaction between teachers and teaching methods, Lefstein comments nonetheless that, from the point of view of the reflective practitioner, technical rationality does not take into account skills implemented by teachers in complex situations that require improvisation, judicious application of knowledge and sometimes talents of an almost artistic nature.

Formal measures and real-life practices: an international debate

In his contribution ("Autonomy versus accountability: measuring university teaching performance", Association for Teacher Education in Europe, 30th annual conference, Amsterdam, October 2005), Peter Ling presents the introduction of a learning and teaching performance fund by the Australian government, intended to be distributed on the basis of measurable performance in terms of university results. However, in this programme, Australian students grade teacher-training courses more harshly than other university disciplines. According to the author, this does not necessarily mean that the average quality of the training is lower, but that student teachers have, as professionals, higher expectations than other students. Whatever the reasons may be, the fact remains that, because of the types of measurement used, teacher education departments must now improve their results in the subject, in order to help their universities compete for this public funding.

At the same conference, Dorota Klus-Stanska (*In-service training and professional development of Polish teachers in the light of the reformed requirements of professional promotion*) presented the Polish government's new initiative regarding documentation for teachers that proves that they have completed ongoing training, in order to progress in their career. Although initially presented as a measure to encourage professional development, it is now – according to surveys presented by this researcher – considered by teachers as just another useless bureaucratic regulation. Teachers see the exercise as a new formal constraint, attesting to skills that exist on paper more than in reality.

President of the American Educational Researcher Association, Marilyn Cochran-Smith dedicated her very rich and comprehensive 2005 paper (*The New Teacher Education: For Better or For Worse?* in the *Educational Researcher,* Vol. 34, No. 7, Oct. 2005) to new teacher-training methods in the USA and strives to answer the following important question: is it for better or for worse? **She highlights the fact that teacher training is unavoidably a political issue, and therefore an issue that concerns the values and objectives that are the subject of discussions and debate in society in general.** An assertion that also aims to deny new policies the strict "technical" aspect behind which they sometimes hide, by promoting accountability measures (cf. above): contrary to what is sometimes asserted, many teaching and training methods cannot be chosen simply on the basis of research results that are often far too uncertain. It is therefore a matter of selecting methods according to political or moral values and criteria. While generally acknowledging the merits of approaches that strive to identify ever more precisely the factors that make for effective teaching and improve the quality of teachers, Marilyn Cochran-Smith shows the limits both of the temptations of aligning training with market criteria (we should point out here that there is no monopoly on teacher-training in the USA; nor, indeed, is there any compulsory certification for teachers) and of using training performance measurements on the basis of quantitative research results that are often limited to standardised tests only. In her view, new teacher-training methods should consequently be determined by studies and investigations that are not just empirical, in order to reflect the diversity and complexity of real situations that teachers encounter. She also comments that teacher training is without doubt the only field of professional training that is judged on the basis of its students' subsequent professional performance: neither medical schools nor law schools are judged on the performance of their graduates in hospitals or courtrooms.

❑ **See also**

– Peter Gilroy, "The commercialisation of teacher education: teacher education in the marketplace", *Journal of Education for teaching,* vol.31, n°4, 2005

– D. Scott Ridley, Sally Hurwitz, Mary Ruth Davis Hackett, Kari Knutson Miller, "Comparing PDS and Campus-Based Preservice Teacher Preparation. Is PDS-Based Preparation Really Better?", *Journal of Teacher Education*, vol.56, n°1, 2005

– Marylin Cochran-Smith, "Studying Teacher Education. What we know and need to know.", Journal of Teacher Education, vol.56, n°4, 2005

– Sharon Castle, Rebecca K. Fox, Kathleen O'Hanlan Souder, "Do professional development schools (PDSs) make a difference?", *Journal of Teacher Education*, vol.57, n°1, 2006

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