The analysis of pre-school teachers training in European countries

N. I. Melnyk

Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Kyiv, Ukraine
*Corresponding author. E-mail: n.melnyk@kubg.edu.ua

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Abstract. The article analyzes the peculiarities of preschool teachers' professional training in West European countries. The requirements to the future preschool teachers' training in Europe and their influence on teachers' educational system in Western Europe are presented in the issue. The analysis of the mentioned aspects enabled the determination of appropriateness and necessity of studying the educational process of universities. The author points out components of teacher preparation programmes. There are four components of teacher preparation programmes that contribute to their effectiveness. The first is the existence of high standards for entry. Over the past two decades, there have been increases in the entry-level qualifications of students enrolling in teacher education programmes, both in terms of undergraduate grade point average and standardized test scores. The second and third components of effective teacher education programmes are strong content (subject matter) preparation and substantial pedagogical training. The author emphasizes that in order to adapt Ukrainian preschool teacher education system the effective transformation of the national higher pedagogical education to European standards of professional training should be provided. More over it must coincides with the European pedagogical qualification the is presented by different requirements. In most European countries the minimum requirement for working as a core practitioner (responsible for a group of children or for the centre) with children aged three years up to compulsory schooling and this is mostly a Bachelor-level degree awarded at the end of a three-year full-time course of study at a specialised university department or a university college as the author mentions in the issue. Different titles of profession in a variety of European countries are presented in the article as well: "kleuterleidster or institutrice de maternelle", "early childhood educator", "preschool teacher", "educatrice", "paedagog" ect. That is very important for giving qualification and forming requirements to the profession. The author makes some trace to the educational policy of European countries in the field of preschool teachers education and point some area for its improving in the context of European countries, such as: simplify and streamline hiring processes; particularly in "hard-to-staff" schools; ensure that all new teachers participate in quality induction and mentoring programmes; reinvent professional development for teachers; ensure better pay for teachers who demonstrate knowledge and skills that contribute to improved student achievement and others. The author summarizes that al these factors will make a lot of profit for preschool teachers' training in the Ukrainian context.

Keywords: *preschool teachers training, training requirements, professional competence, education policy, the system of teacher education.*

Modern development of Ukrainian teacher education closely correlated with the process of European integration and globalization of the state, the country's entry into the European educational space. In this regard, the trends observed adaptation of the national system of higher education teaching European-level training specialists' educational sphere. Within the actuality of modernization and educational reforms in Ukraine, its integration into the European educational and social environment the problem of future preschool teacher's qualitative training is of a high importance. It's firmly connected with the Bologna system implementation in Ukrainian pedagogical education. That's rises the question of European countries experience in future preschool teachers' training and the detailed characteristic of their qualification educational grade should be done. It'll improve the national system of pedagogical education and will enforce the educational transformation of pedagogical education training system.

Through the comparative analysis to present the description of future preschool teachers' training in Europe and to distinguish the strategy of Ukrainian preschool teachers' professional training system reformation.

The findings are of the investigation are outlined by two directions: the analysis of the preschool teachers' professional training in different European countries; the distinguishing of the strategy of Ukrainian future preschool specialists' training through European Commission's recommendations. As it has been already indicated, the reasons for such a comparative search is laid in its perspectives to create a new specific ways or mechanisms to transformation of Ukrainian pedagogical education system to European level and connected with different factors that influence the effectiveness new preschool teachers' professional training system formation as follows:

- the adaptability of National occupational standards to the European Qualification Framework;
- the peculiarities of preschool teachers' training in Europe and Ukraine (similarity and differences);
- the integration process in Ukrainian pedagogical higher education system into European.

The main work of the investigation has accumulated analytical methods: during first stage of the investigation, when the information about different systems of preschool teachers' professional training was gathering – analysis of the scientific researches, sorting out different approaches to the distinguishing of the profession in the European context so on; on the second stage, when the strategy of Ukrainian preschool teachers' training system reformation was distinguishing – the comparative methods was used in order to find out better practices or recommendations in the preschool teachers' professional preparation. The empirical methods were used as well – observing practices, interviewing practitioners and teachers of high schools, testing future preschool teachers, practitioners.

In this context the investigation that has been started by the author, an associate professor of preschool education department, in 2012, based at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, in Pedagogical Institute, set out to map the qualification requirements and workplace settings of Western European countries in their country-

specific context for implementing of the experience into the early years practitioner – Ukrainian educational system. In the context of this investigation the SEEPRO (Early Education/care and Professionalisation in Europe) study, which was based at the State Institute of Early Childhood Research in Munich and funded by the German Federal Ministry of Family and Youth Affairs, by Pamela Oberhuemer should be taken into attention. The study showed out similarities and differences across the 27 countries of the European Union, which were documented and analysed. The findings of the study show considerable divergences across Europe in terms of formal education and training requirements and the desired professional profiles for working with young children. Against this background of diversity, similarities in terms of workforce emergencies and challenges have also emerged: one is a common lack of truly flexible and inclusive pathways linked to formal professional recognition and status for all practitioners in the field [7, p. 56].

In the greater majority of countries, an ISCED 5-level qualification is the minimum requirement for working as a core practitioner (responsible for a group of children or for the centre) with children aged three years up to compulsory schooling. This is mostly a Bachelor-level degree awarded at the end of a three-year full-time course of study at a specialised university department or a university college. In all cases the focus is on education and pedagogy, although not necessarily only on early childhood pedagogy. In an increasing number of countries the requirements are higher in terms of the duration of study or the formal qualification. For example, since 2007, it is now a requirement in Portugal to have a four- to four-and-a-half year Master's degree for work in both public and private kindergartens for this age-group. (This is now also the case in Iceland, a non-EU country.) In Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Luxembourg, prospective early childhood educators undertake not three but four years of professional studies – although in Italy and Luxembourg these are not exclusively focused on the early years. In Denmark and Sweden, the core practitioners working in early childhood settings follow a three-and-a-half year course of studies; and in France, the requirement is a post-graduate qualification following the successful completion of a three-year university degree. In the case of England (and Scotland), the three-year requirement at higher education level applies only for a sub-group of the ECEC workforce – for teachers working in the state-maintained sector with 3 and 4 year olds. However, it does not apply for the practitioners working in the significantly larger private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector. There are now only five countries in the 27 EU states where a Bachelor degree is not (yet) a requirement for working with the 3 to 6 age-group: Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and Malta. However, in all of these countries, there have been recent moves to introduce more higher education level qualification routes for work in early childhood settings. Qualification Requirements for Work with Children up to 3 Years: Widely Divergent Approaches.

Although there is in some countries a similar drive to upgrade the minimum qualification requirements for work with children from birth to three, the starting-points are very diverse, both in terms of disciplinary orientation and formal level. Whereas in the Nordic EU countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden), the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and the central European state of Slovenia the core practitioners are required to have an ISCED 5-level qualification with an educational/ pedagogic orientation, in several other countries (e.g. Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Poland, Portugal, Romania) the requirement is a health/care qualification, sometimes without a specific focus on work with very young children.

These health/care qualification requirements are also at different formal levels; some are post-secondary awards at ISCED 4-level (Poland, Romania), while others are upper secondary qualifications (Italy, Netherlands). And in a few countries, there are no minimum requirements for working with this age-group at all. Until very recently, this has consistently been the case in Ireland and Malta, both countries with largely market-led private childcare sectors, and also in Belgium (Flanders) for work in private infant-toddler centres.

Professional Profiles: Another Case of Variation and Diversity in the SEEPRO study we identified six main professional profiles of core practitioners. The first (although this order does not have hierarchical significance) is the early childhood professional with a specialist education and training to work with children across the age-span from birth up to compulsory schooling. One example is the 'kindergarten teacher' in Finland. A last entarhanopettaja works either in an early childhood centre for children from birth to 6 – in a multi-professional team with mainly health/care professionals – or (independently) in a pre-school class for 6 to 7 year olds, which may be located in an early childhood centre or in a primary school.

Another example is the "early childhood educator" in Slovenia. A vzgotijelj may work – as in Finland – in an early childhood centre for children from birth to 6, or in the first class of primary school alongside a teacher.

The second is the pre-primary professional. These practitioners are not trained for work with under-threes; their workplace settings are located within the education system and they are responsible for a group/class of children in the two or three years immediately preceding compulsory schooling. The kleuterleidster or institutrice de maternelle in the Flemish-speaking and French-speaking regions of Belgium are qualified in this way, as are the core practitioners in Cyprus (nipiagogio), the Czech Republic (učitelka), Greece (nipiagogos), Hungary (óvodapedagógus), Italy (insegnante di scuola dell'infanzia), Malta (kindergarten assistant), Poland (nauczyciel wychowania przedszkolnego) and Romania (educatoare). All are educated/trained at higher education level.

The third category is that of the pre-primary and primary school professional. In most cases these are teachers trained for work in primary schools and pre-primary settings within the education sector, such as the professeur des écoles in France or the primary school teacher in Ireland, who also works with 4 and 5 year olds in school-based infant classes preceding compulsory schooling at age 6. One inherent problem of this approach is that schools are compulsory and a school-biased professional training curriculum may (and often does) pay

too little attention to the non-compulsory pre-school years. The fourth kind of profile is that of the social pedagogy professional. This is a much broader profile to be found, for example, in Denmark (paedagog) and Germany (Erzieherin). As core professionals, they are not only trained to work with young children but also with school-age children and young people and (in the case of Denmark) with adults with special needs. The main professional focus is on social pedagogy or social work outside the education system.

A fifth category can be described as the infant-toddler professional. In Hungary, for example, the core practitioners who work with under-threes are trained specifically to work in a pedagogical way with this age-group, as is the educatrice in Italy.

The final group of practitioners is the health/care professionals working with under-threes. In some countries this may be a child-focused qualification (e.g. paediatric nurse or children's nurse, as in France, Luxembourg and Romania), in others it may be a general health or social care qualification for working with people of all ages (as in Bulgaria, Poland and Portugal).

In some cases these core practitioners are supported by a fully qualified assistant with an early years specialist focus, as is the case in Slovenia. In other countries (e.g. Cyprus, Greece, Ireland), they work alone with a group of children, without any kind of qualified or non-qualified assistant except for children with special needs. In the Baltic countries there are few assistants to be found on a daily basis, but regular support is provided by tertiary-level trained specialists in specific areas of learning (e.g. music, physical education). These divergent understandings and policy approaches towards the professional preparation of staff working with young children in education and care settings raise a number of questions regarding decisions about future professionalization policies [4].

What is the desired balance between pedagogy and other disciplines; between age-focused, specialist and generalist approaches; between highly qualified core practitioners and less qualified auxiliary staff?

Can coherent professional profiles be achieved within systems which are not fully integrated, i.e. where one ministry is responsible for the entire early childhood sector and also public funding streams and staffing policies are the same across the sector? Will decisions be taken in countries with split systems (e.g. Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania) or partially split systems (e.g. the UK countries) to create more unity, coherence and consistently high-level professional requirements across the sector? Will parity be reached with primary school teachers in terms of qualification level, status and pay? Two workforce challenges in particular could be described as pressing or 'emergency' issues: developing more inclusive approaches towards professionalization and improving the gender balance, i.e. attracting more men into the workforce. I shall now look at these two issues more closely, dwelling on selected countries in which there are active moves to redress imbalances [7, p. 58].

The purpose of this monograph is to identify issues that summarize research findings and best practices related to the preparation, recruitment, and retention of quality teachers. It was designed to help policymakers make decisions about how best to prepare teachers, recruit outstanding candidates to teaching, and retain them in the teaching profession. The phrase "quality teachers" has been used in this booklet in place of the more traditional "qualified teachers". Whereas qualified teachers meet various licensure and certification requirements, quality teachers are those who positively influence student learning.

Research in the late 1990s and early 2000s has lent support to the long-held belief that good teachers make a great difference to their students' academic achievement. When students have as few as two inferior teachers in a row, they almost never catch up academically with their peers. Thus, recruiting academically successful university students into teaching, preparing them well for the challenges of teaching, and retaining them in the profession have all become key goals in helping students achieve high academic standards. Attention has turned from concern over having a sufficient number of teachers to a concern about having a sufficient number of quality teachers.

Although the challenges of implementing a policy framework that links teacher preparation, teacher recruitment, and teacher retention are great, they must be met. Some of the more important of these challenges have been listed below:

• Align teacher preparation with the needs of diverse learners, content standards, and contemporary classrooms.

• Simplify and streamline hiring processes so teachers are not discouraged from teaching, particularly in "hard-to-staff" schools.

• Ensure that all new teachers participate in quality induction and mentoring programmes.

• Address working conditions so that schools become learning communities for both educators and students. Preparation, recruitment, and retention of teachers 3

• Reinvent professional development for teachers so that it supports sustained growth and is organized around standards for accomplished teaching.

• Ensure better pay for teachers who demonstrate knowledge and skills that contribute to improved student achievement.

• Design incentives for increasing the diversity of the teaching force and for teaching in critical shortage areas.

To create and maintain an effective policy framework aimed at teacher quality, governments must develop and use a system for collecting data to inform policymakers of the results of various policy initiatives. Policy coherence is difficult enough when policymakers are dispersed among separate jurisdictions. However, without effective data gathering and analysis, policy coherence is virtually impossible. Many of the issues touched upon in this principle have been elaborated in the five principles that follow [2].

Teacher supply and demand is affected by policy considerations, local labour market conditions, institutional practices, and societal attitudes toward teaching. In some countries (for example, the United Kingdom, Australia, France, and Germany) there are shortages of teachers in general or in specific fields. In these countries, governments are proposing special recruitment incentives, such as extra pay for hard-to-staff subjects and schools [4].

Effective teacher preparation programmes, both traditional and alternative, must include high standards

for entry and require strong content preparation, substantial pedagogical training, and supervised clinical experiences in schools. In many countries, preparation standards are different for teachers preparing to teach in elementary and in secondary schools. Elementary teachers for primary school are often trained in special institutes or teacher training colleges. Secondary teachers are more often trained at universities, increasingly in "consecutive" programmes in which a degree in a subject area is earned prior to undertaking pedagogical training. These differences in preparation requirements between elementary and secondary teachers do not so much reflect a philosophy that elementary teachers need less schooling as much as a concession to issues of supply, demand, and compensation.

There are four components of teacher preparation programmes that contribute to their effectiveness. The first is the existence of high standards for entry. Over the past two decades, there have been increases in the entry-level qualifications of students enrolling in teacher education programmes, both in terms of undergraduate grade point average and standardized test scores. The second and third components of effective teacher education programmes are strong content (subject matter) preparation and substantial pedagogical training. Heated debates have occurred as to the relative importance of these two areas, but essentially both are keys to effective preparation. In terms of content preparation, most researchers believe in the importance of solid subject matter knowledge. However, the idea that more content is better is not always necessarily true. Rather, there may be a point after which additional content courses produce minimal value. What seems to be needed is not necessarily more content preparation but rather having sufficient knowledge of content to teach it well. In addition, teachers need to know how to organize and present the content in a way that makes it accessible for increasingly diverse groups of learners. Shulman (1987) calls this knowledge, "pedagogical content knowledge."

The link between content and pedagogical knowledge shapes teachers' decisions about materials, instructional approaches, and assessment. In addition to pedagogical content knowledge, teachers must possess general pedagogical knowledge, including competencies in the areas of classroom management and discipline.

As for the strategy of improving Preschool teachers' professional training system in Ukraine the two European investigation should be taken into account: the CoRe (Competence requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care – a study for the European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2011) and Comprehensive Report on Legal Regulation – a study of European Qualification Framework, 2011) [4; 3]. A key document in this context is the 1996 Quality targets in services for young children (European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities, 1996). The document provides a comprehensive set of 40 'targets' (which were deemed achievable within a 10-year time frame at the date of publication), addressing necessary conditions and responsibilities across all layers of the ECEC system, including a focus on adequate public investment. Other key documents with policy recommendations drawn from research evidence include the findings of the EPPE study [9], the OECD Starting Strong I+II reports [8], the "Children in Europe Policy" [1], UNICEF "Report Card 8" [10], a report on early childhood policies in Europe [6] ect.

Recurrent preconditions that are known to enhance service qualities are: staff/child ratios, group size, working conditions (all qualified ECEC staff should be ideally paid a salary in line with that of primary school teachers) continuity of staff.

The first recommendation refers ***to the adequate public investment***. In several EU countries ECEC saw considerable growth in the 1970s, resulting in an ageing workforce today. Considering that large parts of the workforce will be retiring in the next decade, with simultaneous and considerable expansion of ECEC, we can expect the introduction of many new workers to this field. This situation offers unique opportunities for raising staff qualification. Yet at the same time it is a challenge not to lose the expertise (know-how and know-why) that has been built up in the field. Whether the foreseeable change in the workforce will be an important step forward or indeed a regression crucially depends on policy decisions regarding staff competences. Public investment in ECEC is crucial and a series of policy documents advise that at least 1% of GDP should be allocated to ECEC [5, p. 29].

One of the most important recommendations of the European Commission is ***to increase the proportion of graduates (at BA level, ISCED 5).*** Researchers agree that the level of initial professional preparation for ECEC core practitioners should be set at BA level (ISCED 5) and many international reports recommend minimal percentages of BA-level practitioners in ECEC. Sixty per cent is usually mentioned as a benchmark. In our, we support this recommendation. Quality of ECEC would need at least one qualified (ISCED 5) staff member in each 'classroom' or with each group of children who shares responsibilities with other qualified team members. Furthermore, our study sheds some light on the content of these programs for initial professional preparation as well as on their structure. We clearly support the need to raise the level of qualifications for early childhood practitioners; we also want to point to recommendations made by a working group of experts on Teacher Education (Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications, 2005): (school) teaching is seen as a graduate profession at Master's level. There can, in principle, be no justification for applying different (lower) standards to the early childhood profession. From a systemic perspective it needs to be added that inclusive professionalisation needs diversification as well as a general increase of formal qualifications. This means that the full range of qualifications, including MA and doctoral level, needs to be available to the ECEC profession.

The other recommendations concern the regional and national level, they are:

– to ensure equal and reciprocal relationships between theory and practice – higher education programmes offered by universities/training institutes/colleges can be organised in close collaboration with ECEC institutions. Their close collaboration guarantees a reciprocal interaction between theory and practice in both learning

environments, and supports the development of critical reflection as a core professional competence during initial professional preparation;

– to build leadership capacity is a crucial precondition for ensuring strong, reciprocal and equal relationships between theory and practice. At European level, this has long been recognised for education. Effective leadership is seen as a 'major factor in shaping the overall teaching;

– to develop effective policies that address the entire ECEC system – provide ample evidence that increasing staff competences is a multi-layered matter, it is not a question of choice between the different levels, there may be different starting-points according to the specific ECEC context in different countries;

– to rethink continuous professional development – the quality of services and the competence level of staff depend on, but are not only the result of, individual initial preparation, re-think of existing approaches to continuing professional development towards more sustained and comprehensive approaches;

– to increase job mobility – both horizontal and vertical mobility need to be further developed within the early years system;

– to include assistants in adapted qualifying routes – according to the findings of the CoRe survey, a large part of the workforce in many countries consists of assistants with either no or low formal qualifications. Policies for professionalisation and job mobility need to consider that in most EU countries lower-qualified assistants have less access to continuing professional development than their qualified peers; the role of the assistant needs more attention, especially in relation to the EU goals of combating child poverty and fostering diversity and social cohesion.

Conclusion. This study is presented by two categories of conclusions. The first is related with the specifity of preschool teachers' professional training in West European countries which is characterized by high standardization and assigned with the EQF, in most European countries the training last at least three years and the graduate students gets the Baccalaureate diploma, though non-diploma preschool teacher assistant works in preschool establishments almost in all west European countries. The second conclusion is related with the European Commission's recommendations for improving Preschool teachers' professional training system and in Ukrainian context the main strategy lays in: *to work towards a European framework* for quality of early childhood provision to complement the agreed quantitative targets (quality indicators developed within this framework should have a specific (but not an only) focus on the workforce and systemic approaches to professionalisation*; to develop European guidelines* to support Member States to implement research and policy recommendations; *to document and disseminate good practice examples* in order to ensure they are accessible by policymakers and practitioners.

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