

# **Europeanisation in Teacher Education**

**Comparative case studies of teacher education policies and practices in Austria, Greece and Hungary**

**A dissertation**

**submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**at the Faculty of Teacher Education**

**University of Innsbruck**

**and**

**at the Faculty of Education and Psychology**

**Eötvös Loránd University**

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**Innsbruck, November 2018**



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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the launch of the Lisbon strategy in the year 2000, an accelerating process of Europeanisation of national policies related to teachers and teacher education has been witnessed (EDiTE, 2014), so that researchers are increasingly talking about a “European teacher education policy community” (Hudson-Zgaga, 2008), a “European Teacher Education Area” (Gassner, Kerger & Schratz, 2010), and the “European teacher” (Schratz, 2014). Although teacher education systems in Europe are firmly rooted in national histories and conditions, there are a number of European values and ideas, related to how teacher education should look like, or who is the “ideal teacher”, which are diffused across countries via multiple policy and governance instruments, external or internal to the functioning of the European Union (EU). For example, teacher education in Europe has become increasingly universitised (Zgaga, 2013) and research oriented (Gassner, 2010).

The emergence of a Europeanisation process in education is recognised by researchers as “a distinctive spatial, political, and scientific process” (Grek & Lawn, 2009, p. 52), which influences our way of thinking about teachers and teacher education. This dissertation, conducted within the framework of the European Doctorate in Teacher Education (EDiTE), aimed to research the process of Europeanisation in teacher education from an international comparative perspective, exploring how and to what extent teacher education policies and practices in three EU countries, namely Austria, Greece and Hungary, have been influenced by contemporary European policy developments. The concept of teacher education was examined more broadly encompassing the whole continuum of teacher learning, i.e. initial teacher education (ITE), induction, and continuing professional development (CPD).

The following research questions were thus developed to guide the research process:

1. How is teacher education defined and consolidated in the making of EU policy processes and what changes does this imply for European teacher education policy and practice?
2. To what extent and how does contemporary teacher education policy and practice in the respective countries, developed since the year 2000, resonate with European developments?
3. How do actors involved in teacher education enact these policies within the context of their institution?

The first question is more broadly related to the macro-level of European teacher education. The second question addresses the meso-level of national teacher education policies and practices, while the third question examines the micro-level through the perspective of actors directly involved in teacher education, namely teacher educators and teachers. Out of the abundance of possible policy areas related to teacher education, the focus in this study is on the continuum of teacher education, teacher competences and teacher educators, as fundamental teacher policy concepts that were developed, shared and sometimes implemented by EU Member States through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) (Stéger, 2014).

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical framework**

Among the various definitions of Europeanisation which have been employed over the years, this study adopts the definition proposed by Radaelli (2003), which is appropriate to this study's holistic and relatively broad approach in viewing Europeanisation. Specifically, Radaelli (2004) refers to Europeanisation as:

*processes of (a) construction, (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, “ways of doing things”, and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, political structures and public policies (p. 3)*

The definition highlights three particular features of Europeanisation. Firstly, that Europeanisation can derive from different forms of policy process, namely policy formulation (construction); putting policy into practice (institutionalisation); and in a less structured manner (diffusion) where the EU has a limited role to play (Bulmer & Radaelli, 2005, p. 341). Secondly, that Europeanisation is not only about formal policy rules but also about other less discernible aspects such as beliefs and values (ibid.). And thirdly, that the concept of Europeanisation deals with the impact of European policy within Member States, meaning that the process entails two concrete steps, first adoption at EU level, and then incorporation at the domestic level, implying that the former is only one part of the story and negotiation within Member States is crucial (ibid.).

The definition serves the purposes of this study because it refers more broadly to “EU policy process”, including modes of governance which are not targeted towards law making, such as the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) (Radaelli, 2003). Moreover, the definition understands Europeanisation as an interactive process and not as one-directional reaction to Europe, moving beyond a narrow, linear, top-down notion of impact of the EU on Member States (Radaelli, 2004). It rather suggests “creative usages of Europe” and that “domestic actors can use Europe in many discretionary ways” (ibid., p. 4). Without specific pressures from Brussels, actors can draw from Europe as a resource, or use it for their own political purposes, processes that cannot be captured by a narrow notion of impact. “Europeanisation deals with how domestic change is processed, and the patterns of adaptation can be more complex than simple reactions to Brussels.” (ibid., p. 4)

Adopting the understanding of a circular approach to Europeanisation, with emphasis on a bottom-up research design, this study conceptualises European policy process as a reciprocal relationship between political negotiations at the domestic and the European level (Börzel, 2005). Both EU and Member States are co-dependent and involved in networks of links, both horizontal and vertical ones, by which top-down and bottom-up approaches create an entirety (Featherstone & Kazamias, 2001). In the words of Howel (2002, p. 19): “Europeanisation indicates a continual interaction or dialectic between the uniformity of the EU and the diversity of the individual member states.” Domestic actors draw on EU resources and modify power relations, meaning that instead of a causal chain going down from the EU to the domestic level, it is more appropriate to consider that there are multiple ways through which the EU pressure is refracted, amplified, or construed (Radaelli & Pasquier, 2008). Besides, there are various actors and institutions within Member States that do not act in a coordinated way and may respond very differently to European pressures.

It is within the framework of policy learning that this study conceptualised Europeanisation in education, a field upon which the EU has only soft legal competences. Policy learning is a possible source of policy change (Hecl, 1974) and in order to trace the potential changes influenced by Europe, a stages matrix for analysing policy change in areas of soft EU policy has been designed for this study. Drawing on the work of Hall (1993), the study distinguishes between first-, second-, and third-order changes, depending on the learning occurred:

- First-order change *in policy is the most common type of policy learning, occurring when instrument settings are changed in the light of experience and new knowledge, while the overall goals and instruments of policy remain the same. This process of change can display features of incrementalism, satisficing, and routinized decision making that is normally associated with the policy process;*
- Second-order change *occurs when the instruments of policy, as well as their settings, are altered in response to past experience even though the overall goals of policy remain the same. This type of change and the development of new policy instruments may move in the direction of strategic action; and*
- Third-order change, *which rarely takes place, occurs when wholesale changes take place, whereby the instrument settings, the instruments themselves, and the hierarchy of goals behind policy are altered. Third-order change may result from policy failure and is associated with periodic discontinuities in policy* (Hall, 1993, pp. 278-280)

To identify changes in the specific field of teacher education, the perspective of policy ecosystem was adopted. Teacher education is a field with strong institutional character and the most politicised area in education (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Snoek & Zogla, 2009). It is particularly this institutional nature of teacher education and its dependence on government control that makes teacher education more vulnerable to global influences, despite resistance coming from the local level (Caena, 2017; Tatto, 2007). According to Trippstad, Swennen and Werler (2017), teacher education evolved as an institution in three different waves of teacher education reforms, with the current third wave being global and fostering standardisation.

The systemic perspective of teacher education as a policy ecosystem is particularly useful for the present study, because it embraces complexity and allows for multi-level analysis across scales and countries. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system theory understands the relationship between human and environments as a layered system. Applied to teacher education, such layers can include the European, the national and the institutional contexts. The layers are in constant interaction and change with each other, as well as with other policy ecosystems. Tensions between the different ecosystem layers can lead to glocal developments, while boundary spanners and boundary objects moving across space can mediate collaboration and policy learning across the layers (Caena, 2017). Moving away top-down and bottom-up

notions of implementation, the study understands policy as both an object and a process that is enacted in complex and unpredictable ways (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012).

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

With a constructivist ontology and an interpretative epistemology as the philosophical foundations of this study, the chosen research strategy has been qualitative. Specifically, a qualitative orientation tries to emphasise the importance of the contextual understanding of social behaviour (Bryman, 2012), which is particularly relevant to this study's exploratory and descriptive character that pays careful attention to contextual specificities at macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of the policy process.

With regard to research design, the comparative case study approach has been adopted (Barlett & Vavrus, 2017a, b). The specific approach attends simultaneously to macro-, meso-, and micro-dimensions of case study research and engages two logics of comparison: first, the common compare and contrast logic; and second, a "tracing across" sites or scales (Barlett & Vavrus, 2017b, p. 6). Such a processual and iterative rethinking of case studies is appropriate for the study of Europeanisation in teacher education, because it seeks to understand how processes unfold, "often influenced by actors and events over time in different locations and at different scale" (ibid., p. 7). This multi-sited and multi-scalar approach implies the need for a comparison across scales (vertical comparison), a comparison across systems (horizontal comparison), and a comparison over time (transversal comparison).

Data were collected through a document review of both primary and secondary sources, as well as semi-structured expert interviews. Documents can be subdivided in official EU policy documents, official governmental documents of the respective countries, and official documents of higher education institutions. Some can be found in print or virtual format, while often information may be accessible only via websites. Moreover, semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts defined as those people "who are particularly competent as authorities on a certain matter of facts" (Beeke, as cited in Flick, 2009, p. 165). In total, these included 13 European policy experts, 30 national policy experts and 31 teacher educators and teachers in Austria, Greece and Hungary.

For data analysis, the methods of "process tracing" (George & Bennett, 2005) and "qualitative content analysis" (Mayring, 2000, 2014) were employed, while the whole process of analysing documents and interviews was assisted by the software MAXQDA. Process

tracing is a research method that is used by social scientists conducting case studies to analytically access the descriptive dimension of the case study and detect causal processes which do not necessarily appear in a linear way (George & Bennett, 2005). In the present study, process tracing has been employed to explore the relationship between policy changes in Austria, Greece and Hungary, and European developments with regard to teacher education. Qualitative content analysis aimed to assist process tracing by scanning the collected empirical material with categories guided by theory and research questions. To do so, categories were developed in two phases according to both inductive and deductive approaches, considering that categories need to be carefully established and revised within the process of analysis (feedback loops) (Mayring, 2000).

## **Chapter 4: The European context**

The analysis of data at the European policy level argues for the emergence of a European teacher education area. Specifically, the complex policy ecosystem of European teacher education is made up of a multitude of key agents and mechanisms of interaction which complement or compete each other in shaping policies and practices of the specific field. These can be clustered as: policy coordination; cross-sectoral instruments; evidence-based management; the Bologna process; educational programmes; and stakeholder pressure. By means of reciprocal interaction, the specific mechanisms, processes and key agents communicate and produce significant effects on policy formation and implementation, transforming the strictly nation-bound conception of teacher education and resulting in a number of common trends across Europe.

To better understand how teacher education is defined in the making of EU policy decisions, it is also important to analyse how it came about as the result of broader EU policy cooperation in education and training. Until 1992, policy coordination in education starts to be formally organised, mainly through the establishment of various programmes fostering professional mobility and institutional partnerships. Between 1992 and 2000, it becomes evident that the role of teachers in European policy discourse is framed by the discovery of “knowledge” and the need to adapt in the new information era. The 2000 Lisbon Strategy signifies a “transformation” for EU policy cooperation, and the period until 2007 shows on one hand, the growing interest of European institutions to gain influence of teacher education in Member States, and on the other hand, the growing interest of Member States to use European



institutions to modernise their teacher education systems. Between 2007 and 2010, teacher education receives particular attention within European institutions, following international evidence which had proved a positive correlation between teacher quality and student in-school performance. Following the ET2020, teacher education is framed by the policy objectives of effectiveness and efficiency. From 2015 onwards, socio-political circumstances push the EU policy cooperation towards reinventing the European dimension in teacher education.

Among the abundance of European teacher related policies, the study identifies three policy concepts as crucial for the European thinking in teacher education, namely the continuum of teacher education, teacher competences, and the role of teacher educators. Central to the understanding of teacher education is the continuum thinking which implies that teacher education is a lifelong learning process consisting of different phases connected to each other. The establishment of teacher competence frameworks adapted to each level of teachers' career aims to support teachers' lifelong learning process, while a competence orientation could promote a more responsive and learning oriented approach to teacher education. Key agents in supporting teacher learning across the continuum are teacher educators, whose professional identity is expanded to include all those responsible for teaching teachers, and in this sense, they are present and can communicate across different phases of teachers' career.

## **Chapter 5: Austria**

Since 2009, Austria gradually shifted from a two-track teacher education system based on school types towards a common teacher education scheme for secondary school teachers. Policy actors and local stakeholders employed European resources, such as the Bologna process, the EQF, the OMC work and policy recommendations, to influence the development and implementation of reforms, particularly the Teacher Education New reform which reshaped the system into the form it has today.

Process tracing reveals that the development of Teacher Education New was significantly influenced by European policy recommendations, particularly with regard to the continuum of teacher professional development and its different phases, as well as the competence orientation of ITE and the development of professional competence frameworks for teachers. While the Austrian teacher education system is oriented towards the continuum concept, lack of policy provisions and difficulties in organising the induction phase seem to disrupt the connection between the different phases. In addition, the turbulent organisation of

CPD makes it difficult to predict, for the time being, if a significant proportion of secondary school teachers will engage in meaningful professional development.

The introduction of professional competences in the teacher service code of 2013 and the competence orientation of ITE, which already existed in Austria since the early 2000s, appears as a step to define a common professional identity for secondary school teachers. Similarly, teacher competence models find widespread application in ITE and prove useful for the practice of teacher educators, although they are not officially institutionalised. With regard to the role of teacher educators, it becomes evident that discussions were triggered after 2012, mainly in research and professional circles, as a result of the emphasis given by the EU on this topic. Although there is no official definition of the profession, nor a common understanding among the different teacher education providers, it becomes increasingly relevant that a teacher educator needs to possess research competences and relevant initiatives have been launched at local level.

## **Chapter 6: Greece**

Over the past ten years, Greece has been struggling with an economic crisis which has significantly affected the system of teacher education in the country. Due to a hiring freeze and budget cuts in education, developments in teacher education have been halted, considering that induction and CPD basically have not been taking place since 2013. However, the reasons behind the stillness related to teacher education for secondary school teachers can be traced back to long-standing policy issues, including some deeply rooted epistemological beliefs within universities, the discontinuity of education policy, and reactions from pressure groups safeguarding their own interests.

In this context, political actors employed European policy instruments to promote the idea of modernising the Greek education system, including teacher education, in a country that was open to European influences shortly after its accession to the EU. The role of operational programmes funded by the EU was crucial in establishing and implementing the induction period, as well as in organising large-scale teacher professional development programmes. New institutions responsible for the in-service training of teachers were created based on EU funding, but still no comprehensive system of CPD was developed. Process tracing has also shown that there have been sporadic initiatives to regulate the different phases of the teacher

education continuum, but a comprehensive reform addressing the whole spectrum of teachers' professional career has not taken place yet.

Moreover, discussions related to teacher competences are taking place mainly within professional and scientific circles, and so far there have not been any policy initiatives to establish relevant professional frameworks. The development of the national qualifications framework has only recently contributed to the spreading of competences and learning outcomes approach in ITE curricula. Finally, policy developments and practices related to the role of teacher educators remain limited to the local level. Due to the overly diversified ways of delivering ITE, and the strong subject orientation of the teacher faculties, it proves challenging to develop a common understanding on the professional identity of teacher educators.

## **Chapter 7: Hungary**

Since the middle of the 2000s, the influx of EU structural funds and the Bologna process, as well as OMC policy handbooks and the implementation of the EQF have been utilised by domestic actors in Hungary to reform teacher education, which currently reflects several European trends. Findings indicate that Hungary has adopted some of the structural elements related to the continuum concept, including measures to support ITE selection, formalise the induction phase and establish a model for teacher career promotion with a lifelong learning perspective. However, analysis has also revealed some challenges that obscure the effective interconnection among the different phases of the continuum. For example, a lack of communication between ITE and induction is apparent, while CPD is not effectively linked to the newly established system for teacher career promotion.

The development of teacher competence frameworks for both ITE and the career promotion constitutes an attempt of linking the different phases of the continuum, although this is hardly the outcome of policy learning by the government. Here the role of development funds was catalytic in promoting competence-oriented teaching and competence frameworks were the outcome of research and development work, undertaken by national experts with European outreach. The competence frameworks developed for ITE and for career promotion prove to be quite similar, without provisions to differentiate among the different classification levels. The teacher competence frameworks are generally perceived as a progressive instrument,

although there are still ambivalent views regarding their usage from the perspective of teacher educators.

Finally, the role of teacher educators in Hungary is actively promoted by a professional association, namely the Hungarian Association of Teacher Education. Although an official definition of teacher educators' professional role is missing, there seems to be a bottom-up profession-driven process that facilitates the self-understanding of teacher educators. Collaboration among teacher educators is promoted through the association, but tensions between professionals specialising in different components of teacher education are evident.

## **Chapter 8: Discussion**

In accordance with the comparative case study approach, the discussion is organised into vertical, horizontal and transversal comparisons. The vertical comparison across scales reveals that the landscape of European teacher education is constituted by a multitude of mechanisms, processes and key agents of Europeanisation which circulate policies across different scales. These policies are the outcome of mutual adaptation and co-construction between the EU and Member States, and their movement can lead to policy change. The three case studies showed that domestic actors utilised some of the European resources to influence change according to their preferences, although contextual factors, domestic traditions and resistance by stakeholders mitigated the impact of change. In Austria and Hungary, new policy instruments and settings appeared with regard to the continuum of teacher education and teacher competences, while in Greece change was limited to policy settings. There was no transformative change identified in any of the policy areas, while the examples of higher education institutions showed that policy enactment can lead to heterogeneous outcomes.

The horizontal comparison across the teacher education systems offers insights into convergences and divergences in teacher education policies and practices across the three case studies, considering some central issues of the European teacher education agenda. Although convergences regarding the continuum of teacher education and the development of teacher competences can be observed, teacher education systems tend to preserve discernible national characteristics which originate from particular traditions, the socio-political context and domestic actors' preferences. As Caena (2014) argues, different degrees of political commitment and implementation capacities determine the success and speed of policy enactment. In each country, the negotiation between European and national processes leads to

the emergence of distinct “glocal” developments (Caena 2014, 2017) that have the potential to resolve existing tensions within the system or further exacerbate them. Teacher education systems have their own nationally and institutionally driven dynamics and within this context European developments can stimulate policy learning by challenging domestic institutions, policies and processes (Börzel, 2005).

Finally, transversal comparison over time shows that all three countries have moved in different paces over time from a strictly nationally bound and fragmented approach to teacher education towards a more internationally receptive and integrated approach. Teacher education is being Europeanised in the sense that there are some changes in the direction of European developments, and for Radaelli (2008) changes that bring countries closer to common EU goals suggest a manifestation of Europeanisation. Nevertheless, teacher education systems are characterised by historical traits linked to national and institutional contexts which still determine the negotiation between European and domestic processes, perhaps to a greater extent in some countries than in others.

## **Chapter 9: Conclusions**

This study set out to explore the process of Europeanisation in teacher education from an international and comparative perspective by analysing how and to what extent teacher education policies and practices in three case studies, namely Austria, Greece and Hungary, have been influenced by European developments. This final chapter reflects on the main empirical contributions of the study by drawing together the conclusions from the three research questions.

The first research question, “*How is teacher education defined and consolidated in the making of EU policy processes and what changes does this imply for European teacher education policy and practice?*”, was addressed in Chapter 4. The analysis argues about the emergence of a European teacher education landscape constituted by various mechanisms, processes and key agents of Europeanisation, which can be categorised as follows: policy coordination, cross-sectoral instruments, evidence-based management, the Bologna process, educational programmes, and stakeholder pressure. Teacher education policies and practices are therefore defined and consolidated through both vertical and horizontal Europeanisation. In terms of content, European cooperation has over the years loaded the policy area of teacher education with meaning. From a focus on mobility of teaching professionals and the European

dimension, EU cooperation in teacher education was centred after the 2000s around the aspects of improving learning outcomes, achieving effectiveness and efficiency, and promoting active citizenship. This kind of cooperation led to concrete suggestions and initiatives for policy learning, several of which can be categorised in the themes of the continuum of teacher education, the development of teacher competence frameworks, and the role of teacher educators. The way these themes are interconnected and the policy instruments used to promote them depict concrete elements of European thinking and action.

The second and third research questions were addressed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. The analysis of the research question, *“To what extent and how does contemporary teacher education policy and practice in the respective countries, developed since the year 2000, resonate with European developments?”*, was undertaken through process tracing for each of the three case studies. Teacher education systems have gradually moved from a strictly national approach to teacher education towards a more European one, although they did so at different speeds and following different directions. In this process, the socio-political and economic contexts, national traits and rooted traditions, as well as domestic actors’ preferences were crucial factors for policy change. Through certain reforms and policy initiatives, Austria and Hungary introduced new policy instruments and changed the settings of policy regarding the continuum of teacher education and teacher competences. In Greece, policy change was limited to the settings of policy, considering that domestic actors merely absorbed EU funding, while the deterioration of the economic environment and resistance from local stakeholders obscured actual change. Across the three case studies, policy initiatives about the role of teacher educators took place mainly at the local level. Overall, there was no transformation that could change the hierarchy of policy goals and lead to the replacement of domestic rules by substantially different ones.

The third research question, *“How do actors involved in teacher education enact these policies within the context of their institution?”*, was addressed through the examples of higher education institutions which aimed to illustrate the process of policy enactment. Teacher educators and teachers can also utilise European resources to influence change, as was the case for example with the Bologna process at Eötvös Loránd University, or the teacher educator competences at the University of Innsbruck and Eger University. Findings suggest that policy enactment is not a linear top-down process, since a complex set of translations taking place at the institutional level can lead to heterogeneity in practice. This heterogeneity can span from the emergence of glocal innovations, such as the new ITE curriculum at the Western Teacher

Education Cluster in Austria, or the teacher career model in Hungary, to the resistance or retrenchment of policy, such as the ineffective implementation of the Certificate for Pedagogical and Teaching Competence at some subject departments of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Moreover, actors involved in teacher education promote a profession-driven and supportive use of competence frameworks, and resist policy efforts that aim to control their autonomy. Collaboration and networking among teacher educators proves to be a challenge, because fragmentations are still prevalent among the different components and phases of teacher education.

Future research should include more cases to verify the role of the EU and the way that Europeanisation is manifested in teacher education. For example, case studies targeting countries of the EU core could enrich the picture that has been provided in this study. Future analysis should also include other European policies in teacher education and their translations into national systems, so as to better understand the process of policy transfer and the interconnections between the different layers of the system. To this end, future analysis should also essentially address the global context as an important layer of the teacher education ecosystems and thus, examine the influence of international organisations, such as the UNESCO, OECD and the World Bank, on European and national teacher education policies. Last but not least, the ideological underpinnings of both the Europeanisation process and the specific European policies should be examined, in order to grasp the impact of new public management and neoliberalism in shaping the European policy discourse regarding teachers and teacher education.

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