



# Introduction: Teacher Education in Europe – Coherence through Collaboration?

1

Gerard Doetjes, Vlatka Domović, Mirjamaija Mikkilä-Erdmann and Katja Zaki

Questions about what constitutes good, coherent teacher education (TE) are as contentious and universal as the challenges of teacher education itself. Around the globe and across Europe, education policy makers, researchers and educators are addressing local structures, programs and approaches to global issues and challenges. In this context, one problem that is often identified is the fragmentation of teacher education programs into individual phases, domains, and actors, which results in discontinuities as well as gaps between theory and practice. These gaps lead not only to a structural problem for teacher education, but also create an obstacle to the successful training of young teachers: Fragmented structures and a perceived lack of practical experience in the course of study lead to a situation in

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G. Doetjes

Norwegian National Centre for English and Other Foreign Languages in Education,  
Østfold University College, Halden, Norway  
e-mail: [gerard.doetjes@fremmedspraksenteret.no](mailto:gerard.doetjes@fremmedspraksenteret.no)

V. Domović

Faculty of Teacher Education, Department for Pedagogy and Didactics, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia  
e-mail: [vlatka.domovic@ufzg.hr](mailto:vlatka.domovic@ufzg.hr)

M. Mikkilä-Erdmann

Department of Teacher Education, University of Turku, Turku, Finland  
e-mail: [mirmik@utu.fi](mailto:mirmik@utu.fi)

K. Zaki (✉)

Department of Romance Languages, University of Education Freiburg, Freiburg, Germany  
e-mail: [katja.zaki@ph-freiburg.de](mailto:katja.zaki@ph-freiburg.de)

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1

which student teachers often perceive their education as little coherent, practice-orientated and meaningful. Accordingly, in some cases, student teachers find it difficult to establish links between the individual parts of their studies and are thus also prevented from developing a holistic professional competence, which requires the integration and elaboration of different sources of knowledge as well as the development of a professional identity and the accompanying motivational and self-regulatory competencies.

Apart from a rather weak coherence between educational structures and concepts within national TE systems, transnational coherence appears to be particularly weak: The substantial diversity between European TE systems represents a central barrier for the mobility of teacher students and educators. A transnational approach to the issue seems promising in two ways: a systematic comparison of TE structures and concepts in the participating institutions will provide deeper insights into current paradigms of coherence orientation in European TE. Building on this, the joint development and evaluation of teaching concepts and learning opportunities for student teachers is paramount if the internationalization of TE is to become a reality in the future.

Against this background, the ConnEcTEd (Coherence in European Teacher Education) consortium was founded in 2019 and funded for three years in the context of an Erasmus+ strategic partnership grant. ConnEcTEd aimed at the enhancement of coherence in European teacher education in a collaborative way and through a transnational setting: By creating transnational communities of practice, the project partners worked on eight interlinked work packages that focused on different aspects of coherence, namely: Mapping coherence (IO1), Disseminating coherence (IO2), Sharing good practices of coherence (IO3), Measuring coherence (IO4), Co-creating Open Educational Resources (OER) on coherence between theory and practice (IO5), Co-creating OERs on coherence between theory and practice (IO6), Internationalizing the teacher education curriculum (IO7) and a Digital toolkit for transnational collaborations in teacher education (IO8).

The project consortium aimed at building a joint understanding of the notions of coherence, at co-creating means and methods on how to enhance program coherence and the sense of coherence among students as well as the development of instruments for the evaluation and measurement of the latter. As a working definition within the project, the creation of “coherence” was understood as the creation of learning opportunities in which references are created vertically (over the course of study) and horizontally (across the various courses of subject science, subject didactics, and educational science) that enable students to experience their studies as coherent and meaningful. Coherent learning opportunities

can be characterized, for example, by curricular and conceptual links between different areas of professional knowledges and/or their subdisciplines, by personnel cooperation across the pillars of teacher education (e.g. subject science and subject didactics), by theory–practice links, or by instructional-psychological teaching–learning formats that create meaning and relevance, also in connection to the teacher profession and/or development of the professional identity of the students. These learning opportunities demand an explicit linking of the different areas of knowledge. The interconnected knowledge structures should enable competent professional action and be evident in subsequent teaching practice, and they should be perceived as such by teacher students. The creation of coherence should therefore be considered as an essential measure of innovation for the further development of teacher training programs and the promotion of teaching professionalism.

The outcomes of the ConnEcTEd IOs are manifold, with teacher educators, student teachers, teachers, and other stakeholders of TE as target groups. The creation of transnational coherence through a jointly developed vision of European TE, coherent teaching–learning scenarios, the use of innovative practices in the digital era, and a mutual recognition of qualifications and learning outcomes, will hopefully broaden the perspective taken on coherence so far and enable more physical and virtual mobility for students and staff in the future. Thus, the consortium aimed at promoting coherence in and across individual and locally grounded TE systems through the strengthening of conceptual, consecutive and transnational coherence at all participating partner universities as well as the collaborative structures and formats between them.

The developed products are freely available for participating universities, and will be disseminated to the public. Beside the project webpage, which can be consulted under (<https://www.face-freiburg.de/connected/>) and hosts further information on the project, the present joint volume is one of the core final outputs of the project work. It is comprised of theoretical models, empirical studies and conceptual approaches from the collaborative project work as well as from associated colleagues and initiatives.

In the following we briefly describe the volume’s individual contributions, covering theoretical, empirical and practical aspects of coherence in teacher education:

In the first chapter, entitled “**The (in)coherence of European teacher education: A comparative mapping of policies at national and institutional levels**”, authors Vasileios Symeonidis, Katharina Hellmann and Michelle Laux discuss similarities and differences in policies related to lifelong professional development of teachers in five European countries which includes governance, phases

(initial teacher education, induction and teacher professional development), content and domains of professional knowledge. The findings reveal incoherence within and between the analysed teacher education systems and point to the need for further efforts by all stakeholders in both the development of coherent national teacher education systems and the development of a common understanding of coherence in a transnational context.

Subsequently, the chapter by Mirva Heikkilä and Hege Hermansen provides a theoretical contribution for understanding **epistemic coherence in teacher education**. Starting from a brief discussion of the different notions of coherence, the authors focus on knowledge integration and elaboration among student teachers who need to integrate professional knowledge from different domains and establish connections between theory and practice. The authors argue that there is a need to analytically highlight what they coin as *epistemic coherence*, which is understood as the relations between the different forms of knowledge that exist in a teacher education program. They discuss the latter in the context of structural, conceptual and institutional approaches to coherence.

Although experts in initial/pre-service teacher education may assess study programs as conceptually and structurally coherent, the perspective of students of their study experience may differ from the perspective of program developers. In the chapter titled “**Exploring Finnish student teachers’ perceived coherence on their teacher education program**”, Mirjamaija Mikkilä-Erdmann, Julia Nummi and Norbert Erdmann investigate how Finnish class and subject student teachers experience the coherence of their study program and self-efficacy in teaching. Their results reveal that Finnish student teachers perceive their program as rather coherent and feel prepared for teacher profession.

Vlatka Domović, Željka Knežević and Lidija Cvikić, in the chapter “**Coherence in initial class teacher education in Croatia – Student teachers’ perspective**”, analyse prospective class teachers’ perspective on the coherence between different parts of the study program (content knowledge, pedagogical-content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge and school-based practice). The study shows that prospective class teachers in their final year of study estimate that the connectedness between the analysed parts of the program is not in accordance with the expectations of the experts who developed the program. Steps are proposed to improve coherence in the program.

Cindy De Smet and Christine Schmider assess **student perceptions of professionalization measures and coherence after the 2011 French curriculum reform** which restructured French teacher education. The reform followed a competence-based teacher education model and European guidelines inspired by the Bologna process. A new MA teacher education program was developed at the University

of Nice between 2015 and 2019. The study provides insights into students' perceptions of the interlinking of theory (disciplinary and didactical courses) and practice that was in the focus of the reform targeting the professionalization of teacher education.

The chapter **“Co-constructing multidisciplinary coherence in subject teacher education: Students' reflections in group discussions”** by Anssi Roiha and Pilvi Heinonen investigates how student teachers co-construct the understanding of multidisciplinary learning and how they see their teaching subject in relation to multi-/inter-/transdisciplinarity. The chapter brings up interesting issues of coherence in teacher education because it discusses questions related to the development of students' transversal competencies (which is part of numerous national curricula for primary and secondary schools) and the attitudes and competencies of prospective subject teachers for strengthening the development of these competencies in their students.

The paper by Deborah Carrai and Ida Hatlevik, **“Exploring coherence between teacher education and the competence required to facilitate students' oral participation in foreign language classrooms”**, explores if and how newly qualified Spanish as a foreign language teachers perceive coherence between their newly concluded teacher education program and their own acquired professionalism. The study focuses on the facilitation of oral activities in the classroom. For their analysis, they build on a qualitative case study that is divided into two phases: a non-participative observation of foreign language teachers during their Spanish class (with a focus on oral production and participation) as well as subsequent interviews with the teachers on their perceptions of classroom activities.

The chapter **“Perceptions of coherence among teacher education students and newly qualified teachers of foreign languages. An exploratory Norwegian-German study”** by Gerard Doetjes and Katja Zaki covers an exploratory interview study among teacher education students and newly qualified teachers (NQTs) of foreign languages in Norway and Germany. The contribution starts with a sketch of the theoretical foundations, followed by an outline of the chosen methodology—a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews in a transnational setting—and a discussion of selected findings. In this context, a comparison according to cohorts and location of education attempts to shed light on curricular conditional factors and to deduce questions for further research.

In the contribution **“Coherent research-based teacher education curriculum supporting student teacher learning”**, Auli Toom and Jukka Husu outline the importance of coherent research-based curriculum for supporting student teacher learning for the teacher profession. After elaborating on the characteristics of

teachers' work and the essential key capabilities based on current research, they discuss the complexity of student teachers' learning of the mentioned core capabilities as well as the role of teacher education pedagogies in it. Finally, they suggest future considerations for supporting both student teachers' learning as well as teachers' learning in the profession after the pre-service education. They stress that the enhancement of key capabilities for teachers' work requires a variety of meaningful theoretical and practical studies and activities, versatile support, as well as continuous reflection and feedback.

The following chapter by Riitta-Leena Metsäpelto, Anu Warinowski, Anna-Maija Poikkeus and Mirjamaija Mikkilä-Erdmann discusses the process of building coherence in teacher education through a teacher competence model, titled **“Multidimensional Adapted Process Model of Teaching”**. The model, specifying the key competence domains perceived to be critical for the teaching profession and depicting them as a comprehensive teacher competence model, was published in 2021. It is a collective interpretation of the current evidence base and the prevailing discourses on what teachers should know and be able to do. After sketching recent trends in the Finnish educational landscape, the contribution discusses to what extent the model has increased or may increase different notions and levels of (structural and conceptual) coherence in teacher education.

The chapter **“Identifying core practices as a framework for cooperation and development in teacher education”** by Gerard Doetjes and Ida Hatlevik showcases an interdisciplinary cooperation between two teacher educators—one educational scientist and one foreign language didactics lecturer—at the University of Oslo. After sketching the theoretical foundations of how core teaching practices can be a common denominator to enhance structural and conceptual coherence across teacher education programs, the authors describe how an observation-based approach, structured by a focus on core practices, can contribute to a closer connection between pedagogy and subject didactics in teacher education.

The chapter **“Coherence through cultures of remembrance? A design-based research project at the intersection of cultural and literary studies, subject didactics and school practice”** by Frank Reiser and Katja Zaki discusses the adaptability of the 4C/ID instructional design model for a coherence-oriented teaching format at the intersection of subject sciences, subject didactics and school practice. After a brief overview of the context of foreign language teacher education in Freiburg, instructional foundations and the implementation cycles of the IMS are presented. The initial evaluation results are then discussed. Initial findings indicate significant effects in terms of coherence construction and perception among students, but also reveal challenges and limitations of the co-taught

task-based format (e.g. an above-average workload). Furthermore, a bidirectional dependence of course and program coherence is stressed, and the transnational transferability of course designs across local and national contexts is discussed.

The concluding **discussion**—“**Coherence – The what, the why, and the how**”—is written by Esther Canrinus, whose research has substantially contributed, both theoretically and empirically, to the current research on coherence in teacher education. She discusses the lessons learnt from the volume’s chapters and rounds off the publication by detailing new and future directions for research on teacher education.

We hope that this volume enhances the discourse and research on coherence and thereby also inspires co-operation in European teacher education. Finally, we would like to thank all of the authors who contributed to this volume, our copy editor Andrew Johnson for the meticulous proofreading, and Esther Canrinus for her thoughtful and thorough discussion. Furthermore, we are particularly grateful to the EU for the financial support without which this publication would not have been possible.

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The Editors

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