Exploring the coherence of teacher education programmes via a mixed methods approach

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Leading Question of our Research

• Can transnational coherence be achieved (good-practice)?
• How can this possibly be achieved?

• Can (transnational) coherence, perceived by student teachers, be compared?
• What causes these (different) perceptions?
I. The Concept of Coherence in Teacher Education (TE)

II. Coherence from a Transnational Perspective

III. The ConnEcTED Project

IV. Research Questions and Methods

V. Results
   (1) Governance of TE across the Continuum
   (2) Organisational Characteristics of ITE Programmes
   (3) Student Perception of Coherence in Finland

VI. Summary and Pedagogical Implications
I. The Concept of Coherence in Teacher Education (TE)

- TE = Initial Teacher Education (ITE) + Teacher Induction (TI) + Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

- Structural and contextual problems of a fragmented (I)TE led to increased attention towards ‘coherence’
  (Canrinus et al., 2015; Hammerness & Klette 2015; Stéger 2014)

  - Umbrella term: Types of structural and/or content-related alignment, linking or cooperation (Hellmann 2019)

  - Continuous process: Constant communication and permanent adjustments with all stakeholders
    (EC, 2015; Hammerness, 2006; Hermansen 2019; Levine et al. 2023)

  - Offer- and use-side: Professional knowledge domains, phases, contents, theory-practice proportions, actors, policy aspects (offer)
    <--- Professional knowledge and/or competencies (result)
    (e.g. Cramer, 2020; Hellmann et al. 2021).
II. Coherence from a Transnational Perspective

• Pressures towards coherence in the context of a Europeanisation of TE, due to ...
  – ... a lack of transnational mobility of student and in-service teachers
  – ... a lack of comparability of professional qualifications
  – ... a wish for the internationalisation of curricula
    (European Commission, 2018; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021; Kotthoff & Denk, 2007; Symeonidis, 2021)
  – European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (Council of Europe, 2023)

• Transnational coherence in TE is understudied (Symeonidis et al., in preparation)
  – National concepts explored to a certain extent (e.g. Hellmann et al. 2021 (Germany); Lilliedahl et al. 2020 (Sweden))
  – Some attention has been paid to discussing approaches comparatively (Canrinus et al. 2019; Darling-Hammond et al. 2017; Flores 2017; Jenset et al. 2017; Lindvall & Ryve, 2019; Nordine et al. 2021; Symeonidis et al., in preparation)
II. Coherence from a Transnational Perspective

• Transnational collaborative approach useful in two ways
  – Provide comparative insights on how coherence is conceptualized and implemented in difference countries (i.e. „good practice“)
  – Building on this, joint coherent teaching and learning opportunities (TLO) could collaboratively be designed, initiated, adapted and disseminated

• Goal: New possibilities for the creation of coherence between different European TE systems

• Today’s focus:
  – Comparative mapping of national policies related to coherence
  – Identifying convergences and divergences that inform a transnational understanding of coherence
  – Exemplary results of an empirical study in Finland (student perceptions)
Joint development of innovative practices (e.g. regarding teaching concepts, learning opportunities, learning communities) and empirical measures (e.g. student perceptions of coherence in ITE).

Established transnational professional learning communities, providing knowledge about European TE systems and offering access to professional training opportunities (e.g. video-tutorials, virtual lectures)
IV. Research Questions and Methods

• How is coherence currently manifested/achieved in the national TE systems (macro comparative perspective)?

• Coherence conceptualized via...
  – Governance dimension of TE systems across the continuum and the extent to which the different phases of TE are vertically interconnected
  – Structural and organisational characteristics of ITE and horizontal coherence regarding knowledge domains (CK, PK, PCK)

• Data collection:
  – 2 qualitative questionnaires (Jan 2021, May 2022), (2x Finland, Croatia, France, Germany, Norway)
  – Answered by project coordinators (TE experts with more than 10 years of research experience) and team members at each partner university
Exemplary Items from Questionnaire

• Do national and/or regional frameworks and/or standards for TE and/or for teachers’ competences exist (by whom are they composed, authorized, enforced)?
• Do students in TE programs for primary and secondary education (i. e. ISCED levels 1, 2 and 3) usually study one, two or three subjects (and/or other options)?
• Which academic degrees are recommended/required for entering the second school-based induction phase of TE (B.A., M.Ed., State Exams)?
• According to which criteria are students selected for university-based TE in your country (e. g. grade point average, aptitude tests, interviews)?
• Which phases/stages does your national TE consist of, e. g.
• Are there different models for different categories of teachers (for example: primary, lower or upper secondary)?
• Do you characterize your TE systems as being concurrent, consecutive, or both?
• ...
V. Results Summary: Governance of TE across the continuum

- To be published by the end of 2023
V. Results Summary: Organisational characteristics of ITE programmes

- To be published by the end of 2023
V. Results: Perception of coherence in Finnish Student Teachers

- To be published by the end of 2023
VI. Summary

- *Incoherence* within and across TE systems, particularly when it comes to interlinking and governing the different phases of the continuum.

- Focus of policymakers rather on reforming ITE, than developing a comprehensive continuum.

- Continuum remains fragmented; phases do not (need to) communicate.

- Potential of current ITE competence frameworks to facilitate dialogue along the continuum (European Commission 2018) remains idle.

- Structure and duration of ITE proves somehow coherent, distribution of knowledge domains and contents differs significantly among countries (Symeonidis, 2021)

- Difficult to infer “good practice” (i.e. structures and content) from student perceptions, especially transnationally.
Leading Question of our Research

• Can transnational coherence be achieved (good-practice)?
  – yes
• How can this possibly be achieved?
  – To a limited extent (e.g. Virtual lecture series, Joint virtual seminar on FLTE)
• Can (transnational) coherence, perceived by student teachers, be compared?
  – Perceived differently, depending on specific aspects of coherence
• What causes these (different) perceptions?
  – Inferring good practice (structures and contents) from student perceptions hard to find and to interpret.
The diversity of systems and multitude of actors involved reveal a need for coordination and transparent communication, if the EHEA is to be a reality in the future.

Transnational coherence requires a commitment to a teacher’s lifelong learning and a common understanding regarding the purpose of each phase.

The “School of Education” model in France and Germany has recently emerged as a viable solution for governing ITE, but data for its efficiency are rare (see Volume on „Schools of Education“ (2023) by Kotthoff & Altrichter, *Bildung und Erziehung*) and TI and CPD are again not covered (yet?).
Thank you!

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Erasmus+ results platform

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„Coherence in European Teacher Education”

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Selected Literature