

**EDUCATING TEACHERS OF THE 21st CENTURY USING THE EXAMPLE OF THE
JOINT PROGRAMME
“E³: EMPOWERING EDUCATION IN A EUROPEAN CONTEXT”
AT THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF TEACHER EDUCATION STYRIA (AUSTRIA)**

Katharina Kamitz

University College of Teacher Education Styria

Abstract

Increased diversity and a growing multicultural environment in today's classrooms are confronting teachers with new challenges. The requirements for teachers of the 21st century have changed as they are now expected to be global players with international experience and intercultural understanding. The aim of this paper is to discuss different approaches to the question of what a global teacher is and which competences he/she needs and to introduce the joint programme “E³: Empowering Education in a European Context” as an example of good practice.

Introduction

Today's society is experiencing major changes as our populations have become more and more diverse, not only due to immigration but also as a result of steadily increasing globalisation and demographic changes. Without any doubt, these changes are presenting new challenges to our educational systems requiring more diversified skills for future teachers enabling them to respond to the challenges of multicultural classrooms and teaching heterogeneous groups of learners. That raises the question of what a global or “European teacher” is? Which skills and competences does he/she need? The aim of this paper is to show different approaches to these questions including the example of the joint programme “E³: Empowering Education in a European Context” which is conducted by the University College of Teacher Education Styria (UCTE Styria) in collaboration with three other European partner universities. The programme aims at providing prospective teachers with the diverse competences needed nowadays.

Teacher competences of the 21st century

Teacher education has long been at the periphery of internationalisation with teachers being mainly local players nested in local communities and strongly depending on national curricula

and regional regulations (Goetz, Jaritz, Oser, 2011). The increased diversity within today's classrooms, however, is creating new challenges to future teachers requiring them to dispose of a more global understanding and preparing them to teach in a strongly multicultural environment. In fact, according to the OECD, *interacting in heterogeneous groups* is, one of the key competences of the 21st century (OECD, 2009). It is explained by the need to deal with pluralistic societies as well as the importance of empathy and social capital (OECD, 2009). Later on, Schratz marked the term of the *European Teacher* as one who teaches beyond a national curriculum and has knowledge of other European education systems, who speaks more than one European language and engages with the multicultural nature of the European society (Schratz, 2010). He states that teachers in the European Union should not only be trained to educate learners from their particular home country but should also support them in becoming European citizens (Schratz, 2010).

All of the above leads to a common consensus that teacher education needs to become more global adding an international dimension to teacher training programmes (Jaritz, 2011) and that studying abroad has a highly positive impact on future teachers. Above and beyond improving their expertise, students with international experience have much better chances to become globally minded teachers by bringing in a new perspective on the educational system of their home country (Goetz, Jaritz, Oser, 2011). The aims of the European Union for education systems coincide with the Bologna Declaration's objective to put an emphasis on internationalisation in European higher education. This basically means that all European education and training systems should teach "skills required in an increasingly international and multicultural society" and (future) teachers should be "given first-hand experience gained in other European countries" in order to prepare students for their role in society (Jaritz, 2011).

Internationalisation at the UCTE Styria

The University College of Teacher Education Styria is a public educational institution of national and international renown. In order to meet the demands of our multicultural society by educating global teachers, the UCTE Styria has made it its goal to emphasize internationalisation in teacher education striving to pursue the European goal of 20% international student mobility. In order to support this goal various measures have been implemented such as mobility windows, language courses, academic tutoring, and reinforced information policies (Vogl, Krammer, Linhofer,

Weitlaner, 2016). Internationalisation at the UCTE Styria is based on three principles, which are academic mobilities, international cooperation projects, and internationalization at home (Pädagogische Hochschule Steiermark, 2013). The UCTE Styria currently has about 48 partner universities, not only in Europe but also in third countries, such as Thailand and Ukraine. The joint programme “E³: Empowering Education in a European Context” (E³) which is described on the following pages represents a successful example of internationalisation at the UCTE Styria which is aiming at providing teacher students with the international expertise required today.

Joint Programme “E³: Empowering Education in a European Context”(E³)

In 2016 the UCTE Styria, together with the Odisee University College in Brussels, the University College UCC in Copenhagen, and the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), laid the cornerstone for conducting the joint programme “E³: Empowering Education in a European Context”. The course aims at improving international teacher competences, working and studying in an international context and intercultural exchange. The common idea of the programme is to promote international mobility for students, staff, and teachers and to add a European dimension to regular exchange programs. The course is especially designed for international students, lasts one semester and has a workload of 30 European Credits*. It is a combination of seminars, workshops, excursions and school placements and is conducted in 4 consecutive years (2017-2020) – always in spring term – taking place each year at another one of the four participating institutions. In 2017, the programme started in Brussels with a group of 11 international students from Belgium, Spain, Denmark, Austria and Turkey, a total of 24 lecturers from Belgium, Denmark, Spain, and Austria being involved and three staff mobilities for a coordinator’s meeting at the end of the semester.

* The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has been designed to facilitate student mobility within Europe. European Credits (EC) are based on the learning achievements and workload of a course and can be transferred from one university to another which assures a smooth recognition process of courses attended in another European country (European Commission,2018).

Modules and lectures

The course is divided into five modules, each module covering a work load of 6 EC. Each country is responsible for planning and holding one module. The fifth module includes a school placement at a national or international school. Students are being evaluated according to the 3P evaluation system which is based on the principles of *participation*, *progress* and *performance*

(Peha, 2010). Besides that, each student needs to hand in an E-portfolio at the end of the semester including a detailed analysis of each class and a personal reflection on the benefits of his/her mobility in academic, cultural and personal terms. The teaching and learning methods used in the E³ programme are classroom based learning, self-directed learning and blended learning. The different modules of the programme are shown in the following figure:

Module 1 Denmark	Module 2 Spain	Module 3 Belgium	Module 4 Austria	Module 5 School Placement
Professional Teamwork challenges possibilities collaboration groups	– Education of Citizenship in	Teaching in – in Teaching	Communication in Education	School Placement
6 EC 3 Weeks	6 EC 3 Weeks	6 EC 3 Weeks	6 EC 3 Weeks	6 EC 3 Weeks
1 SEMESTER				
TOTAL 30 EC				

Figure 3: The five modules of E³: Empowering Education in a European Context

Module 1 (Denmark) aims at establishing an understanding, tolerance and awareness of participating in groups in an educational context. It deals with both, personal and professional experiences with group participation in educational contexts and will try to explore different ways of structuring a framework for collaboration. The overall aim of this module is to assist and support the student in practicing participation and experimenting group collaboration. During this module students are exposed to both, theory and practice regarding group work in an educational context, during classes and during internship days. The lessons focus on ways of understanding and structuring the collaborative processes within a group - making it possible to acquire experiences with group work during the module. It is based on an overall didactic structure that combines theory and practice in a continuing flux, making participating in a playful and experimental environment viable.

The purpose of module 2 (Spain) is to present some of the main debates and approaches to understand challenges in citizenship education and European society as well as to enable students to reflect critically on issues promoting social and school inclusion. First, the topic of ‘Global Citizenship’ is introduced. Then the question of how Europe shapes ‘Education for the Citizenship’ and topics such as identity and otherness are being discussed. Educational trajectories of migrants, minorities and refugees in Europe as well as the factors of success and narratives of migrant identities and education are examined during this module. The purpose of education will be contemplated with a reconceptualization of how it can be utilized to equip teachers and students assisting them to apply their knowledge and vision to deal with multicultural groups, foster positive educational paths, engage in strategies to develop pupils’ active role, and promote more democratic classrooms.

The third module (Belgium) focuses on how the two concepts of ‘teaching’ and ‘Europe’ are related to each other, analysing this symbiosis more closely by providing a weekly changing focus going from micro, meso to macro level.

The aim of the fourth module (Austria) is to develop an understanding of communicative approaches in the context of teaching. Students understand the importance of modern information and communication technologies and enhance their scientific communication skills. In particular they are introduced to the sociological and psychological concept of communication and the concept of resonance pedagogy. Above that they are dealing with the concept of creative classrooms and develop a practical approach to communicative language teaching.

Module five comprises the school placement at national or international schools. For each module the students get certain practice tasks which they need to incorporate to their internship and which are being discussed in class afterwards and reflected on in their E-portfolio.

How does E³ contribute to a global teacher education?

It has already been examined that the requirements for teachers of the 21st century have drastically changed compared to the last decade. Teachers nowadays are expected to have a global understanding and international experience in order to cope with the challenges of multiculturalism in schools today. At this point I would like to sum up the points characteristic for a global and “European Teacher” of the 21st century mentioned at the beginning of this paper and to look at them again with regard to the E³ programme:

- Interacting in heterogeneous groups” (OECD, 2009)
- Teaching beyond a national curriculum (Schratz, 2010)
- Having knowledge of other European education systems (Schratz, 2010)
- Speaking more than one European language (Schratz, 2010)
- Engaging with the multicultural nature of the European society (Schratz, 2010)
- Becoming globally minded teachers (Goetz, Jaritz, Oser, 2011)
- Bringing in a new perspective on the educational system of their home country (Goetz, Jaritz, Oser, 2011)

Comparing the above requirements for future teachers with the common goal of the E³ international class and the concepts of one will notice that the joint programme fully supports the aim of providing the necessary tools to teach in a global setting. An explicit goal of E³ is to add a European dimension, particularly in lifelong learning and multilingualism. Furthermore, E³ not only promotes student mobility but also fosters the idea of Internationalisation at home addressing local students to join the “international class” at home, too. For those who – for which reason ever – do not strive to spend a semester abroad, the E³ programme represents a great opportunity to experience the flavour of internationalisation at their home institution by joining a class of international students, attending lectures in English held by international lecturers. Above and beyond improving their expertise, improving their foreign language skills and learning about other European educational systems these students do have plenty of opportunities for intercultural exchange and for gaining international experience.

Conclusion

In an era of growing globalization, student mobility and other international strategies have become important aspects in the area of teacher education. Skills and competences required for future teachers have changed, as the teacher of the 21st century needs to be more of a global player than he used to be in the last decade. In order to equip teachers with the competences needed nowadays a great focus has been set on the internationalisation of teacher training programmes. The teacher of the 21st century ideally is a “European Teacher” with a wider perspective that goes beyond borders teaching beyond a national curriculum having knowledge of other European education systems and speaking more than one European language (Schratz, 2010). The joint programme “E³: Empowering Education in a European Context” conducted by

the UCTE Styria and three other European universities supports the aim of fostering mobility and strives at providing young people with the tools needed in the diverse learning environments in European schools of the 21st century.

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