

Executive summary

The structure of primary and secondary school education

The system of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education in all six Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries is relatively analogous at the primary and lower secondary school level. There are two obligations - a school obligation and an educational obligation. Compulsory education encompasses primary and lower secondary education in all six EaP countries. In Ukraine, the obligation to attend the school spreads also over the upper secondary schooling. In all six EaP countries, the age when compulsory attendance begins is defined by the law, but only in Armenia and Moldova is there a compulsory leaving age. The system differs also in the ways in which the EaP countries structure the duration of upper secondary level of education, the transitional opportunities between the levels, and the age for students at each level, including the age when compulsory schooling begins. In Belarus, the two to four years of specialised secondary education is not necessarily free of charge. Notwithstanding some illustrated differences, all countries began their attempts to adjust their systems to a 12-year basic education cycle in line with European standards. These adjustments, however, produced varying results. Belarus, for example, has yet to join the Bologna process and has moved back to 11-year schooling. Similarly in Ukraine, the 11 year long duration of school education was re-introduced in 2010, reversing the reform aimed at introducing 12-year secondary education compulsory for all pupils that began in 2001.

Education at primary and secondary level is provided by a range of schools (e.g. primary, basic and senior schools, secondary general-education schools, gymnasiums, lyceums, colleges, vocational and technical schools). The main aim is to provide for the comprehensive development of a child, starting from the essential level of knowledge and physical skills towards further development of skills and abilities necessary to enter the subsequent, upper education levels and, ultimately, for choosing a particular professional orientation.

Trends in teacher education in numbers

The comparison between the number of pupils and teachers shows varying tendencies. While the number of pupils has been steadily falling in Azerbaijan's and Belarus' primary schools, the number of teachers has been slightly increasing, therefore showing no adjustment to the actual needs of pupil cohorts. The opposite situation can be observed in Moldova and Ukraine, where both number of pupils and teachers have fallen, but at a slightly slower rate in the case of teachers. In secondary schools, only in Armenia and Moldova, can a decrease of total numbers of teachers and pupils be observed. These changes can explain improving pupil-teacher ratios in the considered countries. In the case of Armenia and Ukraine, such processes could be the result of the implementation of school network optimisation that began in the early 2000s. However, the low student-teacher ratio in Azerbaijan does not indicate higher efficiency, as the average work-load of teachers is very low.¹ In Georgia, there has been a decline in the numbers enrolled for primary education, but a steady increase at secondary level. Primary teacher numbers show some decline and small recovery rates, with a quite dramatic increase in the private sector. There has been a steady increase in teacher numbers at secondary level.

The role of primary and secondary school teachers

¹ The World Bank (2008) Project appraisal document on a proposed loan to the Republic of Azerbaijan for a Second Education Developments Project, Equal Access to Quality Education in Ukraine Project in support of the second phase of the Education Reform Programme, Report No: 40973-AZ.

The role of the teacher is obviously to teach and assist pupils, and the expectations towards the teaching profession are generally high in all six EaP countries. A modern teacher, while preserving national values, is perceived as a crucial leader in the educational development and attainment of the younger generation, in ensuring the development of societies in complex and changing conditions. The fulfilment of professional duties should be assisted by continuous improvement of professional skills, participation in in-service education and research, and self-education. There can also be observed, a growing emphasis on increasing teachers' cooperation with participants within and outside the school environment and making the learning and teaching process more demonstrably practical, towards the formation of pupils as independent persons. Given the deteriorating status of the teaching profession that has been continuing since the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991), the continuation of these developments alongside other changes discussed in sections below is crucial for the revival of prestige attributed to the profession.

Institutional and legal background

Educational systems in the six EaP countries are centralised, with the relevant Ministry in charge of education and science area being responsible for teacher education (TE) in the country. Various regional and local authorities are also involved in implementing the school and/or teacher-related policies, depending on both the state approach towards decentralisation in a particular country and on the deficiencies that still exist in the educational management and supervision systems.

Broadly, the legislative framework on education is in place. The first decisions towards regulating and reforming the sphere of education came during the first decade of independence.

At that time, all six EaP states developed and approved their Laws on Education. Beginning in the 2000s, the signing of the Bologna Declaration gave a new impetus to reforms in the sector, which aimed at ensuring the convergence with European (and global) educational standards and implementing

the principles of the Bologna Process in five out of six EaP countries (Belarus, being a non-signatory country). To adjust the legal structures to the norms, standards and basic principles applied in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and to international tendencies in education, new general laws on education have already been developed (Moldova) and approved (Azerbaijan), as well as legal acts and regulations on the organisation of higher education (majority of EaP countries) and professional education (Armenia). The new general laws address also the area of pre-service TE. Concerning developments addressing TE specifically, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in the specialty of 'Pedagogical Sciences' is functioning in Moldova, and the Curriculum Framework for educational qualifications of teachers in general education establishments has been developed in Azerbaijan. In Belarus, the Education Code was adopted in 2011 which features a competence-based approach in schools and in initial-teacher education, though the centralised tendency and other factors have not aided proper implementation of these reforms. National policies, strategies and reforms of TE are wide-ranging in Georgia (based on the law of Georgia on General Education) and include the establishment of a specialised public body focused on teacher professional development.

Government policy in the area of teacher education

Reform of the sector is the main goal of the state policies in the sphere of education in the six EaP countries. Accordingly, the action plans and strategies prepared by the Ministries responsible for education outline a number of the priority directions and support for the implementation of changes in relation to initial and in-service TE. These touch upon important issues such as the improvement of a professional development system for teachers, introduction of interactive training techniques for teachers, thereby offering various social measures to increase the prestige of the teaching profession; enhancing computer literacy among teachers and applying ICT and innovation in teaching; shifting towards a

student-centred approach; encouraging teachers' involvement in policy development and implementation activities and the introduction of distance-learning approaches.

One of the over-arching goals related to teaching profession in the six EaP countries is to increase their competitiveness on the international labour market and/or the integration into the European education area within the framework of the Bologna process (Belarus has not officially joined the Bologna Process process). In 2005, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine signed the Bologna Declaration to direct the development of TE towards the adaptation of the education system to European principles. Some of the Bologna targets have been executed already to a varying degree in these countries. These refer to the progression from a multi-level degree system (Junior Specialist, Bachelor, Specialist, Magister, Candidate of Sciences, Doctor of Sciences) to the European three-level system of academic degrees (Bachelor, Master, Doctor of Philosophy) and the gradual introduction of credit points system in the educational process as well as the Diploma Supplement in higher education institutions (HEIs). The implementation of these reforms is a complex and challenging process. These challenges are mainly attributable to the attachment to the old system experienced in the educational community and scarce resources for financing of higher education, innovation and research on the part of the state. Preserving positive achievements of the past educational system, while constructing institutions typical for an open society, also appears equally challenging in the context of reforming the education system.

Organisation of initial teacher education

In recent years, in institutions in the six EaP countries, more attention has been given to the quality of the secondary school leaving examination as well as to admission procedures to enter higher education. The access to higher education is organised on the basis of competition according to central entrance exams (Armenia and Azerbaijan), or, of marks obtained at the secondary education final exams. The strictest procedure is applied in Azerbaijan, where the selective national entrance examination has a success rate of only one in four applicants.

The initial TE programmes can begin within the framework of pre-bachelor/pre-specialist degree programmes, which last from one to four years of study. Upon their successful completion, graduates can teach in primary schools. The next stages of preparation are the subsequent two cycles of higher education (Bachelor's and Master's degree) that have been introduced in line with the Bologna structure in five of the six EaP countries (Belarus being a non-signatory country). However, the old format of Specialist degree in TE is still functioning in Armenia, Belarus, and Ukraine. The transition to a two-level higher TE in Belarus does not comply as yet with the Bologna system.

Concerning standards and curricula, Armenian higher-education standards have been established, and the curriculum includes both core and compulsory subjects. The National Qualifications Framework is also being discussed and all study programmes as well teacher-education programmes are designed according to the Bologna principles: they relate to qualifications descriptors and educational standards are developed for each specialisation, based on ECTS.² In Azerbaijan, the education standard structure for the content and level of Bachelor-degree preparation is also approved as well as the main requirements for the content at Master's level and the organisation of the educational process has been approved. Moreover, a new curriculum providing training courses for primary teachers has been prepared, together with the textbook 'Basis of Education'. In Belarus new educational standards for the first level (Specialist) have been elaborated and implemented,

² Bologna Process National Report of Armenia. 2007-2009. p.4.

whereas the design of standards for the second stage of teacher education (Master's) is still in progress.

The application of a piloting phase of new curricula has already begun in some universities. In Moldova, the curricula for the 1st and the 2nd cycle study programmes have been approved and educational programmes of the higher-education institutions include a portfolio of courses (modules) which are divided in terms of their obligation and so comprise a choice of compulsory, optional, and elective courses. The state standard for training in the pedagogical sciences includes obligatory academic credits for the psycho-pedagogical module, which involves basic and optional disciplines, as well as different kinds of practices. In Ukraine, also, the standards for TE at the Bachelor-level and qualification-level in all disciplines of school curriculum have been approved already. The curriculum includes two components: normative (obligatory disciplines determined by the state standard) and optional (both compulsory and elective disciplines). As for the Master-level of education, educational institutions are working according to a temporarily approved programme but committees elaborating normative documents for this level of education have now been appointed. In accordance with the state standard for general secondary education, the list of specialties available for the field of TE has been approved. Lifelong learning and competence-based approaches are facets of current development in the non-Bologna Belarus. A regularised profession is being established, with a deadline date of 2014 in Georgia and the two-tier Bachelor and Master structure is in place.

Qualifications

In Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, the minimum qualification required to become a primary school teacher is provided by secondary (middle/intermediary) specialised vocational institutions. Changes to this system are planned in Moldova, where according to the Draft Code on Education, TE will no longer be provided as part of the secondary specialised education system (college). In Georgia, prior to application for teacher certification (voluntary until 2014) the minimum qualification is a Bachelor's degree.

In order to enter a career as a secondary school teacher, a Bachelor's/Specialist's or Master's degree must be obtained first, certifying the a person obtained basic or complete higher education. These are offered within the two-cycle system of higher education, which has been introduced in all six EaP countries according to the Bologna Principles, save for Belarus (Specialist and Master's degrees) which operates a slightly different system. The Specialist degree - a legacy of the education system in the former Soviet Union - is still functioning in some countries in parallel to the preparation of professionals according to European standards. However, in Armenia, the status of the Specialist qualification (5 years) has been equalised in relation to the Master qualification, while in Ukraine the Specialist qualification is granted within the 2nd cycle as an educational-proficiency level of higher education attainment.³

Within the continuation of the education system (3rd cycle doctoral studies), currently only Azerbaijan and Georgia have fully established the new system of doctoral education (Doctor of Philosophy or Doctor of Science) as the 3rd cycle study. In Armenia, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, doctoral studies are still implemented in 'non-Bologna' format of *aspirantura* (Candidate of Science) and *doctorantura* (Doctor of Science) programmes. The introduction of a doctoral degree as

³ EACEA (2010) Higher education in Armenia and Ukraine, country reports available at:
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/reviews/armenia_review_of_higher_education.pdf
(Armenia) and
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/reviews/ukraine_review_of_higher_education.pdf
(Ukraine)

the 3rd cycle study is in Moldova envisaged within the draft Code on Education. In Ukraine, some research programmes have been already modernised, and pilot Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programmes are being offered by selected institutions.⁴ In Armenia, the comparability of post-graduate studies with the 3rd Bologna cycle is currently being discussed.

Induction programmes

As in the vast part of Europe, there are no coherent, state-wide induction systems in the EaP countries, only in Azerbaijan, where the beginning of a teaching career after graduation is preceded by a one-year long induction period. In Belarus, there is a year-long adaptation period and there is also a 'School of Young Teachers' which provides a common platform. Similar programmes are designed by teacher education institutions in Ukraine and implemented as a part of the scientific and technical school activity. In Georgia, the National Centre for Teacher Professional Development (NCTPD) initiated a two-year pilot project of teacher induction, (2009-10) which is currently being developed at state level. In general, however, teachers start their career immediately after graduating from the institution which provides pedagogical education. Familiarity with school life is acquired during student teaching practice and also carried out as a part of an academic programme. Although some forms of support for new teachers have already developed, this is considered to be a considerable drawback in the TE process, contributing to discrepancies between TE at HEIs and future student teaching practice. Moreover, the lack of sufficient methodological support, accompanied by high demands from the employers and society, often become reasons why young specialists leave the profession, since they can experience difficulties meeting these demands during their adaptation period.

Continuous professional development of teachers

Systematic professional development and self-improvement of teachers is an important component of the teaching profession. In Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, the advancement of qualifications of teaching staff is obligatory and should take place at least once every five years. In Armenia, the requirement of a professional refreshment course at least every five years is envisaged by the Enhancing the Quality of General Education project (2009-2014). There have been a number of developments in Georgia, which include a voucher scheme, training in natural sciences (where there has been a decline in pupil achievement) and in the new national curriculum and in languages.

The Ministries of Education play a major role in determining and developing curricula and teaching approaches for these courses. However, more possibilities appear for teachers to choose the modules which correspond to their professional interests. Such changes have been triggered by the reformation taking place over the past years and the new forms of teacher professional development that have begun to appear in response to teachers' needs. These, in part, have served to break the monopoly of the sometimes inefficient state systems of in-service teacher training institutes.

In terms of the key improvements carried out in the area of continuous education of teachers, Moldova, Azerbaijan and Georgia are the most active out of the six EaP countries. In order to promote policies that target the continuous development of teaching staff and ensure the right of every teacher's professional development, standards of continuous education of teaching staff in secondary education have been developed and approved by the National Council for Curriculum in Moldova. As specified by the Regulation on Attestation of Teachers, both basic and optional subjects in three modules should be included in the professional development programme (Psychology and Pedagogy, Discipline Didactics and Speciality, and ICT). Preparation for the relevant state programme for teachers' development

⁴ EACEA (2010) Higher education in Ukraine, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/reviews/ukraine_review_of_higher_education.pdf

has begun also in Azerbaijan. Its strategy is to foster a new mechanism based on the three module-credit system (general foundation of education, subject-related education, and innovations and new tendencies in education). Although there is no national system for sustainable professional and career development of teachers in Armenia, with the support of international organisations (e.g. The World Bank) some steps have been undertaken already towards this development. In Georgia, government-led and funded continuing professional development (CPD) programmes are diverse in format and operation, from voucher schemes, pre-service programmes, sources of professionally-relevant literature and online resources, to seminars and working groups. There are also, for 2011, regional 'Teachers Houses' to be opened up in key cities for teachers to have exclusive access to training, workshops, conferencing, university cooperation, research and professional networking.

Quality Assurance

There are many quality checks and balances in operation within the six countries. Most countries have in place a Quality Assurance Agency and, or systems for Attestation. In Armenia, the National Quality Assurance Agency (ANQA) has oversight of all quality matters in higher education and accreditation, and there is also the Tempus Internal Quality Assurance System. Internal quality assurance structures also exist in HE institutions. In Azerbaijan, as in the other five countries, the Ministry of Education plays a significant role. There is also the State Attestation Commission, the World Bank and the Bologna Process Committee. In Belarus, quality assurance lies within the remit of the Ministry of Education which delegates powers to various attestation committees. Also involved are the National Institute of Education, the Academy of Post-Graduate Education and regional and municipal institutes. In Georgia, the National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement plays a principal role in quality mechanisms and is also the body responsible for accreditation in all HEIs. There are also internal structures within HEIs for quality assurance systems. Moldova is currently developing its National Agency for Quality Assurance in agreement with the Ministry of Education. The new agency will accredit programmes for both initial and continuous training programmes. At the moment, monitoring the quality of TE is carried out by the National Council for Accreditation and Attestation. Ukraine undertakes a complex system of attestation for teachers in the design of a comprehensive evaluation of pedagogical activity. Quality assurance resides within the normative documents and procedures of the Ministries of Education and Science. Also involved are the National Academy of Education, the National Academy of Sciences and other more regional bodies. Quality assurance mechanisms evaluate a range of teacher activity, including research, retraining, professional development, competences, peer activity and the quality of certification. Attestation committees are often associated with granting teacher qualification categories and pedagogical titles.

Innovations

The development of innovations in TE in the six EaP countries has been associated with the search for solutions for practical problems that arose during the reform of the education systems in response to European and global tendencies in learning processes. Whereas in the early 1990s, innovative research gave many teachers the opportunity to answer what was the purpose and essence of their professional activity after the collapse of the communist ideology, today, this is viewed in the context of the education reforms carried out to align the education systems with European principles and standards. If successfully implemented, by helping teachers to face and respond efficiently to challenging circumstances in the modern world, innovative development can be considered also as one of the factors that contributes to

eliminating the problem of low prestige and negative stereotypes associated with the teaching profession.

The examples of innovations (e.g. see Section 7.2) show that innovative practices and processes of modernisation in TE are taking place in the six EaP countries. These include new models of working that benefit pupils, families and teachers, the use of technology in schools as a teaching and learning instrument (engagement with IT in particular), new curricula for general and TE, the restructuring system for of higher education, as well as collaborative partnerships between international and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academia and schools. However, often limitations in scope and slow realisation, place the six EaP countries at the beginning of their transition towards a knowledge-based society, as they have to face a number of obstacles to achieve success (see Table 7.1). The transition exposes uncertainties related to the future of sustainable funding as well as an understanding of innovation in education as an instrument capable of enhancing both teaching and learning. Barriers to progress can be experienced also when new facets in the training of teachers are faced with the difficult institutional and business climates that still persist in these countries, leaving them far behind the leaders in quality of education, research and development (R&D), investment and exploitation of technological innovations.⁵ There is also the matter of underdeveloped international cooperation between higher TE institutions, limited opportunities to use literature not approved by the Ministry of Education and uncertainty in legislative-regulatory matters which can lead to varied interpretations.

Interaction with external participants

Partnerships between TE institutions and schools are being developed in the six EaP countries.

The tendencies towards developing schools as centres for professional development of teachers can be observed, particularly in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova. Such developments are both new and challenging in terms of financing new professional-development programmes, development of materials for teachers' learning and financial support and recognition of those teachers who commit their time and efforts to this work. At the moment, with some exceptions (e.g. 'Dunya' Lab School in Azerbaijan or Mkhitar Sebastatsi Educational Complex in Armenia), the extent of such collaboration is considered as moderate. In general, the TE institutions are mainly responsible for the education of new teachers, while schools are rarely perceived as equally important providers of teachers' learning.

The influence of the third sector on the TE sector has been noted in all six EaP countries, although with a varying extent. The networks between schools, TE providers and national and local NGOs are vital in terms of assisting the implementation and spreading successful innovations beyond pilot programmes that are provided by a number of large-scale donors. Such initiatives break the monopoly of the state institutions in providing the in-service education of teachers and thus balance the ministerial authority, the power of local and regional authorities, and the educational administrators. At the moment, a majority of professional development courses for teachers are organised by government institutions.

The cooperation between TE institutions and the private sector is a rare phenomenon in all six EaP countries. Due to the lack of an institutional framework which would facilitate cooperation between universities and private enterprises as well as the traditional lack of cooperation in this area, there is almost no interest on the part of

⁵ OECD (2007): PISA 2006. Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World. Paris, OECD.

business to participate in initiatives related to TE. Moreover, after decades of underinvestment in research in the higher education sector, private entrepreneurs do not perceive TE institutions as business partners. In other words, they do not see the need for establishing cooperation with institutions that provide TE because they cannot see its benefits. There is some evidence of the business sector showing interest in languages, psychology and natural science, however, and there are cases of business and school cooperation. These, emanating largely from personal relations, refer mainly to international corporations, which play significant role in the ICT-provision, as well as local, small-scale character business support in a form of voluntary or 'patronage' support and assistance.

The proper implementation of modernised education mechanisms throughout the process of reformation, to a large extent depends on the cooperation with international organisations and experts. For the past two decades they have been involved in supporting the development of education in several ways. These include: financial support to national and institutional projects in education; financial and expert support for both individual projects and private development projects on education; expert evaluation and assistance; organizing and participating in seminars, conferences and roundtables; mobility programmes for teachers; joint search of concepts and the most effective models of TE; integration into the common educational space; and creating methodological and cultural centres in schools, offering methodological support for school teachers.

The need for further development

A number of commonalities exist in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, in terms of problems that need to be tackled towards the improvement of the overall quality of initial and in-service TE. With regard to pre-service TE, these include above all, recommendations for the future: upgrading the threshold of qualifications (secondary-professional education) to enter the teaching profession; completing the certification programme (Georgia), defining and establishing workable standards for teachers, increasing teachers' salaries, up-dating the curricula to better respond to modern school environment demands; improving the organisation of classroom practice; upgrading the quality of assessment and monitoring systems; establishing closer links with schools; financial security; practice-orientated TE; increased international cooperation and creating research centres that support TE. As for in-service TE, the major challenges identified can be grouped around the following themes: 1) modernising in-service TE to respond to teachers' preferences and demands of the labour market; 2) creating incentive and support mechanisms for both young and experienced teachers to remain in the profession; 3) nurturing a stronger sense of personal development and career prospect and 4) developing consistent and continuous support throughout the professional life of a teacher.