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EDUCATOR PREPARATION IN TRANSITION: FROM CONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE TO CLASSROOM REALITY¹

Prof. Julia Doncheva, DSc

Department of Pedagogy,
University of Ruse “Angel Kanchev”
Tel.: +359 082/888 544
E-mail: jdoncheva@uni-ruse.bg

Prof. Valentina Voinohovska, DSc

Department of Informatics and Information Technologies,
University of Ruse “Angel Kanchev”
Tel.: +359 082/888 645
E-mail: vvoinohovska@uni-ruse.bg

Assoc. Prof. Berik Matayev, PhD

Higher School of Pedagogy, Pavlodar Pedagogical University named after Alkey Margulan,
Pavlodar, Kazakhstan.
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0610-5108>
E-mail: matayevba@pspu.kz.

Akhmetova Dinara

Master's student, Pavlodar
Pedagogical University named after Alkey Margulan, Pavlodar, Kazakhstan.
Tel. +77773179995
E-mail: dinaraakhmetova11@gmail.com

***Abstract:** This paper examines the contemporary challenges and future directions in the university-level training of future pedagogical professionals. It identifies key gaps between theoretical instruction and practical application, and proposes strategic improvements based on innovative approaches and collaborative models. Statistical comparisons from international education systems highlight the need for balanced, practice-oriented pedagogical curricula. The study emphasizes the importance of aligning university training with the realities of the teaching profession.*

***Key words:** teacher education, pedagogy, higher education, practice-theory gap, university training, educational reform.*

INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Relevance of the Topic. The preparation of future teachers in universities is a critical pillar for the sustainability and quality of educational systems worldwide. In the 21st century, educators are expected not only to master academic content but also to adapt to diverse classrooms, integrate digital tools, and foster critical thinking. However, teacher education programs often lag behind these expectations. According to OECD data (2021) (OECD, 2021), only 52% of education graduates across EU countries report feeling "well prepared" for the teaching profession after completing their university training.

In the 21st century, the complexity, role and importance of the formative and educational functions of the social environment in relation to the development of the social competence of the individual have

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significantly increased. The technological renewal of the educational process creates many risks in everyday educational interaction. The research needs for applying an integrative approach in the process of pedagogical interaction is especially relevant today, when the concept of “information society” is not just a theoretical construct, but a social reality that poses its challenges to the adaptive abilities of children even before they enter school (Doncheva, J. 2025).

EXPOSITION

Key Problems in University – Based Teacher Training. Several long-standing and emerging issues can be identified in the preparation of future educators:

- Theory-Practice Disconnection
- Insufficient Practical Experience
- Outdated Instructional Methods
- Low Student Motivation
- Limited Collaboration Between Universities and Schools (Angelova, Sv., Topolska, Evg. 2022, Voinokhovska, V. 2013).

The child's self-affirmation in the socio-cultural environment and his/her emergence into the position of a subject of his/her own activity, behavior and communication is determined by his/her potential for the realization of active communication with others. It corresponds to the system of ideas, skills, relationships and competencies, which have fundamental functions for personal prosperity. Their significance for the individual and society imposes the need for targeted pedagogical support for each child (Darling-Hammond, L. 2017, Shoilekova, K. 2021). Providing it is a challenge for the pedagogical community, focusing the attention of scientists and practitioners on the development and justification of technologies for mastering communicative competencies and behavioral attitudes - key for the future of the child's personality.

Perspectives and Possible Improvements.

Despite the outlined difficulties, numerous strategies offer hope for meaningful reform:

- Curriculum Modernization: e.g., Finland and the Netherlands.
- Extended Practicum Phases: e.g., Germany includes 20–24 weeks vs. EU average of 8–12 weeks.
- Mentorship Models
- Technological Innovation
- Reflective Practice and Portfolio Assessment (Damyanov, K. 2021, Zeichner, K. 2010).

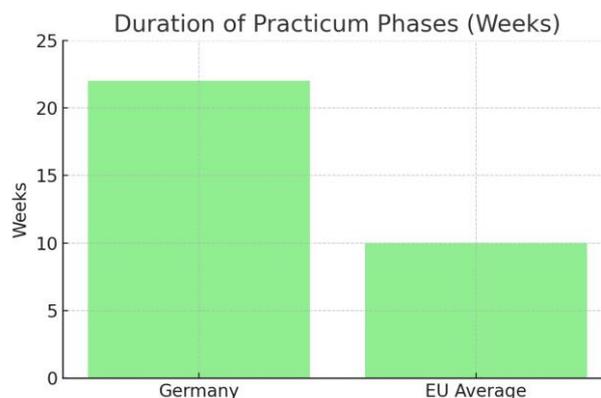


Fig. 1: Average Practicum Duration in Teacher Education (Weeks)

This chart compares the average number of weeks allocated to practicum in teacher education programs across selected countries. Germany provides a substantially longer practicum period of about 22 weeks, which is nearly double the EU average of 10 weeks. Extended practical experience is linked to higher confidence and readiness among novice teachers, emphasizing the importance of integrating extensive school-based practice into university curricula.

Every child deserves to be respected and loved, based on the principle that there is no human being who does not need to be loved. Love affects his overall development, existence and being as a whole (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2022, Shoilekova, K. (2021a). The principle of respect for the person can also be interpreted through the prism of the need to create a positive emotional climate within the framework of activity and communication, which in their dynamism diversify and enrich the manifestations, optimize possible interpersonal relationships, stabilize the individual tone and make his work more productive and desirable (Voinokhovska, V. 2012).

Statistical comparison with Kazakhstan:

Teacher Preparedness (Novice Teachers Feeling Well Prepared, %)

- Singapore: 82%
- Germany: 65%
- EU Average: 52%
- Kazakhstan: 48% (approximate, based on regional education reports)
- Bulgaria: 43%
- Romania: 41%

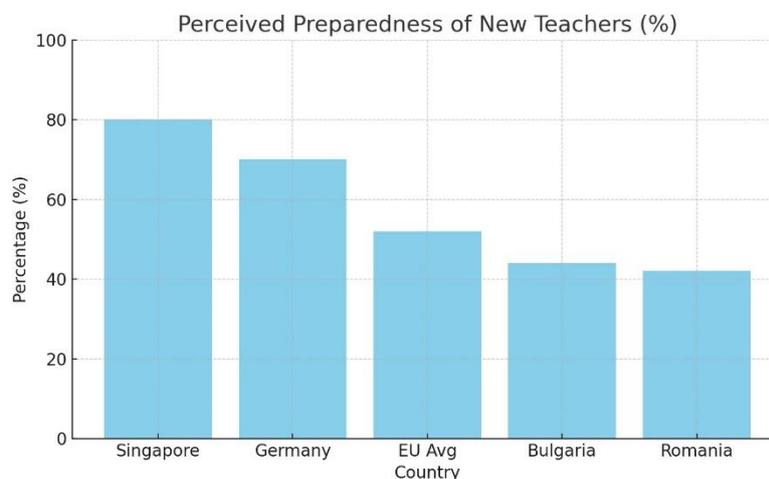


Fig. 2. Teacher Preparedness (Novice Teachers Feeling Well Prepared, %)

Compares the perceived readiness of novice teachers in various countries, including Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan shows a moderate level of perceived preparedness at 48%, slightly below the EU average of 52%, and significantly lower than Singapore (82%) and Germany (65%). This suggests opportunities for improving teacher education programs in Kazakhstan to enhance practical skills and confidence among new educators.

Average Duration of Practicum in Teacher Education (Weeks)

- Germany: 22 weeks
- EU Average: 10 weeks
- Kazakhstan: 14 weeks (based on national education standards).

Illustrates the average duration of practicum periods in teacher education programs. Kazakhstan offers about 14 weeks of practicum, which is above the EU average of 10 weeks but still less than Germany’s extended practicum of 22 weeks. Increasing practicum duration may further improve the practical readiness of future teachers in Kazakhstan.

Along with the achievements in science and technology, which have completely changed modern society, the role of human capital in economic growth is also changing - humanity has completely different ways of healing, working, and even communicating. There are completely new industries, new needs, new

ways of reducing costs, new ways of generating profits. And all this is due to the evolutionary human knowledge (Feiman-Nemser, S., 2001).

The Nature and Goals of Teacher Education. University-based teacher training must cultivate not only knowledge but also ethical, emotional, and social competences (Al-Mosawi, Fatima R., Yaseen I. K. 2019). The goal is to develop professionals who are reflective, adaptable, and responsive to students' needs.

Synthesis and International Comparison. When compared internationally, the variation in satisfaction and effectiveness of teacher training is striking. In Singapore, for example, over 80% of novice teachers report feeling "very well prepared," compared to less than 45% in Bulgaria and Romania (OECD. 2019).

The problem under consideration has its social significance for the unity of knowledge and practical activity (*understanding and experiencing knowledge*), which leads, on the one hand, to the purposeful functioning and development of the overall child potential and, on the other hand, to the synthesis of the variable structures of the educational process for stimulating the individual manifestations of the child's personality in the direction of improving social experience. From birth to the beginning of organized school education, they must solve a number of tasks regarding their physical, intellectual, emotional and social development in order to optimally develop their personal potential in the future. This feature is part of the strategies of modern education for their active inclusion in cognitive activities (Dineva V., 2017, Doncheva, J., G. Ivanova, Dilshod Oblokulov, 2024).

CONCLUSION

University teacher education must evolve beyond the traditional theory-heavy model to address contemporary educational demands (Alexandrache, C. 2014, Al-Obaydi, L. H., 2019). A robust teacher preparation program should offer an integrated curriculum, real-world teaching opportunities, and strong partnerships between universities and schools.

Education is a constructive force, but at the same time it can reproduce existing inequalities and practices of exclusion in society. In order to stop this process, it is necessary to start with education.

Education system is based on European and national democratic principles and values, which guarantee prerequisites for the full development of the personality. One of the aspects of the European education model is related to the need to harmonize the criteria for the quality of education in the member states of the European Union. A more specific such document is the European Qualifications Framework, which has an impact on education systems, the labor market, as well as on individual citizens. In general, in it, the quality of education is measured through the relevant results - knowledge, skills and attitudes. They are indicators of what the learner knows, understands and can apply after completing the educational process. Skills in particular are defined as the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how when performing tasks and solving problems. Current expectations for education are for innovation and high adaptability to life situations (Legurska, M., 2019). "Currently, there is a transition from a modern to a postmodern view of knowledge, especially in the so-called national (multiethnic) states – the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc. Modern theory assumes that there are *facts* that can be covered by objective research and transmitted as *knowledge* and *truth*. The postmodern view assumes that the formation of knowledge is influenced by economic, social, cultural, political and other factors and as a result there is no single statistical message and no single authoritative voice. The opinion that *ethnic* and *religious minorities* should actively participate in the presentation of their culture around the world is increasingly being imposed.

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