

## Quality: The case of teachers and teacher education

**Szabó László Tamás**

**Abstract:**

*An essential topic in teacher education is treated here: theory vs. practice. In the first part it is dealt such elements of teacher training as teaching as reflective practice; teacher as reflective practitioner stressing advantages of these conceptions not ignoring their disadvantages and eventual risks as well. Further it is argued about students' beliefs brought when entering teacher education. The second part deals with "ecological" approach of teacher education as key element of good quality teacher profession by the example of the Finnish "miracle" in PISA project.*

*The third part characterizes some basic issues of the teacher education in Hungary seen from the perspective of "Bologna" reform.*

*For the issues treated here a monography of the author (Tanárképzés Európában //Teacher Education in Europe) can be considered as a background.*

**Key concepts:** *teaching as reflective practice; language used in teacher education vs. language of change; teacher training students' concepts brought into the training; teacher competencies.*

The relation of theory and practice in teacher education is a perpetual (and mostly) unsolved problem. We can hardly find such a related topic which would be so suitable to focus all the things that are usually mentioned among the defects in education, on the 'debit' side. The most frequent complaint of novice teachers is that they did not receive satisfactory preparation concerning the practical activities of teacher tasks. From the other side, i.e. that of the employing institution (school) the same complaints are formulated concerning new graduates: theoretically they are more or less prepared, but as for their practical preparation...(!)

A possible answer for this fact can be that the time for refining the practical skills during the training is little. (It would be true if we did not know that time is always little.) The time devoted for practical issues seems little even if we know that there are such countries (mainly in the western side of the EU) where obtaining the permanent teacher status with its full rights is bound to a probationary or trainee period, which lasts from six months to two years. For instance, Belgium: at least 240 days; England and Wales: one year; Scotland: two years; Germany: it varies depending on the provinces and on the study results of the candidates, however, the so-called *Referendarzeit* preceding the second state exam means a full academic year in school under the guidance of a tutor; Portugal: two years; Spain: half a year (Szabó 1998). The acknowledgement of the probationary period usually ends with a supervisor report based on the school and professional performance of the candidate.

In France the stagiaire period ends with a competition exam in case of the future teachers of secondary schools, the result of which is decisive for both the forthcoming status and work conditions of the candidate.

The abovementioned periods are remarkable time periods, which relieve the 'merging' of the candidate (that has a serious stake at this time) by – metaphorically saying – 'locking through'.