



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

## Competence-based teacher education: A change from Didaktik to Curriculum culture?

**Citation for published version:**

Pantic, N & Wubbels, T 2012, 'Competence-based teacher education: A change from *Didaktik* to Curriculum culture?', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 61-87.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2011.620633>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.1080/00220272.2011.620633](https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2011.620633)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

Journal of Curriculum Studies

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

© Pantic, N., & Wubbels, T. (2012). Competence-based teacher education: A change from Didaktik to Curriculum culture?. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 44(1), 61-87 doi: 10.1080/00220272.2011.620633

**General rights**

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

**Take down policy**

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact [openaccess@ed.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@ed.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Pantić, N., & Wubbels, T. (2012). Competence-based teacher education: a change from Didaktik to Curriculum culture? *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 44 (1), 61-87.

## **Competence-based teacher education: a change from Didaktik to Curriculum culture?**

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the substance of competence-driven changes in teacher education curricula by testing the possibility of using a framework distinguishing between the German pedagogical culture of Didaktik and the Anglo-Saxon Curriculum culture to describe the substance of these changes. Data about the perceptions of competence-driven changes in teacher education curricula has been collected in 30 in-depth interviews with teacher educators, student teachers and their school mentors in Serbia, and analysed with help of qualitative data processing software. The coding procedures involved classification of utterances into five groups relating to the perceptions of 1) teacher evaluation; 2) teacher competence in subject matter, pedagogy and curriculum; 3) understanding of the education system and contribution to its development; 4) teacher competences in dealing with values and child-rearing; and 5) changes in teacher education curricula related to these groups of competence. The perceptions in each group of utterances were interpreted in terms of their alliance with Didaktik or Curriculum cultures. The findings indicate that the framework cannot be used as a continuum since the utterances aligned with the two cultures coexist in the individual responses, but could be useful as a reflection tool in teacher education curricula.

### **Introduction**

In many countries teacher education institutions restructure their programmes setting competences as the aims of the new curricula. Ostinelli (2009: 293-301) lists examples of teacher competences from Italy, Germany, England, Sweden and Finland, and discusses a variety in their contextual underpinnings. Examples from South East Europe include countries such as Slovenia (Zgaga 2003) and Serbia (Pantić & Wubbels 2010). Such restructuring reforms are often accompanied by discussions about the duration of programmes, accreditation (e.g. within the European Credit Transfer System) and assessment. There is less discussion about the implications of such reforms for the substance of curricular goals and content, and learning experiences within 'the black box' of the programmes (Darling-Hammond 2006).

If we want to understand the substance of change in teacher education brought about by competence-based curricula we need to consider the differences it involves compared to 'old ways' of educating teachers. Such consideration of the differences between the existing and the desired models of teacher education can help us identify the consensual and/or competing forces in the change process (Fullan 1993). Typically, changing systems are characterised by the coexistence of an old and new 'state of things'. The emergent new state may have common elements with the old one, and the wider apart the two states are, the more difficult the transition process may be (Anchan *et al.* 2003). Thus, understanding the substance of competence-driven changes compared to the 'old ways' can provide insights into the nature of, and range of implications for, teacher education reforms and the challenges they present.

A critical consideration of competence-based teacher education needs a framework for evaluation of its contribution to the enduring challenges for teacher education curricula planners and implementers, such as building a link between theory and professional practice that enables practising theory and theorising practice (Darling-Hammond 2006, Korthagen 2001, Verloop *et al.* 2001). The way research evidence informs practice is not a matter of straightforward application of knowledge. Education professionals' decisions are value-laden and linked to the consideration of the meanings of knowledge for wider social purposes, economy, human development and well-being (Carr 1999, Day 2002). Another perennial challenge for teacher education is the preparation of teachers to deal with the complexity of moral issues that arise daily in increasingly multifaceted education environments (Carr 1999, Darling-Hammond 2006, Klaassen 2002).

We start this paper with a description of changes in teacher education in Serbia. The main novelty compared to the existing teacher education design seems to be in the approach that seeks to pre-define the outcomes of learning as teacher competences. Pre-defining the outcomes of learning is also one of the major distinctions between the culture of *Didaktik* inherent in teacher education in continental Europe, and the Curriculum culture predominant in the English-speaking world. In *Didaktik* curricular aims are defined as general directions that address what curricular content could signify to a student in an open-ended encounter (Westbury 1998, 2000). In the Curriculum culture the goals are pre-defined considering what a student should be able to do or know, with an attempt at a rational evaluation of the degree to which goals have been reached. The Curriculum theory is based on the work of Tyler (1949) which remains the foundation of curriculum making to the present day, despite significant subsequent criticism in curriculum research (Pinar *et al.* 1995). For example, Wise (1979: 65) warned that excessive prescription of outcomes can lead to a phenomenon of 'hyperrationalization' when compliance with bureaucratic norms and procedures takes precedence over educational process.

We describe the distinction between the curriculum and *Didaktik* approach in some detail and then start the exploration of competence-driven changes in teacher education by looking at what the scope of teacher competence is. For this we start with a study of perceptions of teacher competence in Serbia (Pantić & Wubbels, 2010), which found that teachers and teacher educators understand teacher competence to involve four domains of competence: 1) self-evaluation and professional development, 2) subject matter, pedagogy and curriculum, 3) understanding of the education system and contribution to its development, and 4) values and child rearing.

Next, we describe the methods employed in the empirical part of this paper to gather data about practitioners' perceptions of the four groups of competence, and of their perceptions of the changes related to setting those competences as the basis for teacher education curricula. In the *Results and discussion* section we explore the usefulness of the *Didaktik* / Curriculum framework for describing the competence-driven change. We consider whether the perceptions of change related to setting competences as the aims of teacher education curricula might be interpreted as a shift from *Didaktik* towards the Curriculum culture.

### *Change of teacher education in Serbia*

Serbia, like other countries in the region, is affected by global influences and in particular by European processes. Globally, teachers' roles are changing under the influences of access to information and use of communication technologies, drives for accountability parallel to decentralisation of education systems, and increasing diversity of student populations. Implications of these influences for change in teacher preparation are internationally discussed with a view to establishing the competences teachers need in order to meet the challenges related to the cultural, social and value implications of teaching (Garm & Karlsen 2004, Ostinelli 2009, van Tartwijk *et al.* 2009).

The reforms of teacher education link to the changes at primary and secondary levels of education including decentralisation, becoming open to local communities and the diversification of values (Radó 2010). The last of these involves much complexity relating to the lack of consensus and clarity about the values (Radó 2001). It is sometimes suggested that changes in teacher education are slow to follow those taking place in schools (Zgaga 2003).

Reforms of teacher education in Serbia, as elsewhere in Europe, are also tied to the Bologna process<sup>1</sup> involving a great deal of debate on how best to structure the new curricula to be accredited by the education authorities, and setting competences as the outcomes of student learning (Garm & Karlsen 2004, Zgaga 2003). Although the structures of teacher education programs vary greatly across Europe, many common features have been identified in discourses on teacher education in different European countries (Garm & Karlsen 2004, Ostinelli 2009, Sayer 2006). Some of the common dilemmas include questions about the appropriate ratio of time allocation between subject disciplines, pedagogical and psychological subjects; when and how much practice student teachers need; and, recently, about intercultural competence, and the place of research in teacher preparation (Garm & Karlsen 2004, Ostinelli 2009, Price 2001).

Comparing teacher education in Italy, Germany, England, Sweden and Finland, Ostinelli (2009) established significant differences between teacher education in the decentralised English education system, and those of continental Europe, with the English teacher *training* putting emphasis on the 'executive character of the teaching profession', 'binding objectives' and 'measurable standards' (Ostinelli 2009: 304). On the other hand, education systems in continental Europe 'tend to pass from a kind of Napoleonic, top-down set-up to more decentralised situations where schools and teachers tend, at least on paper, to become more autonomous' (Ostinelli 2009: 297). The same author found that teacher education systems in continental European countries share a vision of 'developing extensively the professionalism of the teacher within a rigorous but flexible framework' (Ostinelli 2009: 304). This resonates strongly with the German *Didaktik* culture presented below, but it should also be noted that there is a variety of schools of *Didaktik* in continental Europe (Hopmann 2007) just as there is variety in the English culture of curriculum making which, according to Reid (1997), is largely based on pragmatism rather than on principle.

Changes in teacher education are part of changes in higher education which, according to some authors (see e.g. Arthur 2006) represent a departure from the Humboldtian values of academic freedom to teach and learn 'without being spoon-fed or constantly tested' towards an Anglo-Saxon model of predefined outcomes (Arthur 2006: 241). In order to explore whether such a change in the case of teacher education represents a move from *Didaktik* towards the Anglo-Saxon Curriculum culture we will first look at the major distinctions between the two cultures.

### *Didaktik and/or Curriculum*

A way of thinking about the substance of change involved in the introduction of competence-based curricula is offered by distinguishing between the classical German culture of *Didaktik* and the Anglo-Saxon Curriculum culture (Hopmann 2007; Westbury 2000). The two cultures differ fundamentally in their approaches to a) the aims of classroom teaching which are, in turn, rooted in the different traditions and historical contexts, b) the functions of curricula within the institutional systems, and c) the roles individual teachers are given in relation to these different aims and curricular functions of the two cultures. Below, we briefly outline Curriculum and *Didaktik* approaches to each of these three aspects before moving to a fuller discussion of the differences between the two cultures in relation to teacher competence and teacher education.

The primary aim of classroom teaching in the Curriculum culture is to help students master the contents and skills defined as the desired outcomes of the various stages of education. According to Hopmann (2007:115) the purpose of teaching and schooling in this culture is to 'transport knowledge from society to a learner'. Thus, a measure of effective teaching is the level to which students 'know something' or 'are able to do it'. In the *Didaktik* culture the essential aim of teaching is 'Bildung' – unfolding by learning a process of the formation of the student self and linking it to the world. An important distinction is embedded in the concept of *Bildung* between 'matter' and 'meaning' (Hopmann 2007:114). Any subject matter or content of learning is only a tool in enabling the development of the learner's individuality. Thus, teaching deals with the content as an 'educational substance', but its real meaning(s) emerge within the learning process itself, in the meeting of a

---

<sup>1</sup> European reform process based on cooperation between ministries and higher education institutions from 46 countries with the view towards enhancing comparability of degrees and quality assurance processes, mobility of students and staff.

unique individual with the particular subject matter. In this culture it would not be possible to foresee the multitudes of future meanings that could emerge from teaching and learning nor to pre-specify them as outcomes of education (Hopmann 2007:120).

The function of curriculum in the American institutional contexts of the Curriculum culture has been by and large *organisational*, historically focused on building school systems with a well-articulated, rational managerial framework for planning, objectives writing, instruction, test development and curriculum evaluation. Schools have a 'curriculum-as-manual' with 'templates for coverage and methods' to guide and control their daily work, developed by each school system in the light of its circumstances (Westbury 2000:16-19). In the German context the function of the curriculum was separated from the management of education in schools when it was first developed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Westbury 2000:22). The state curriculum, the *Lehrplan*, lays out the content (subject matter and topics) to be taught - an authoritative selection from German cultural traditions that becomes educative only when interpreted by teachers who are directed in their work by the aim of *Bildung* (Westbury 2000:17).

The role of individual teachers differs substantially in the two cultures. According to Westbury (2000), in the Curriculum culture a teacher starts by asking what a student should be able to do or know as set in the curricular objectives. Considering the tradition of the public control of schools, this means that once the curriculum is developed for a school system a teacher is expected to 'implement' the system's or district's curriculum decisions. In *Didaktik* a teacher starts by looking at the object of learning and asking what it could or should signify to the learner. Working within the 'text' provided by the state curriculum, teachers have 'pedagogical freedom' to construct their lessons autonomously and to select their teaching approaches with a view to possible meaning(s) for their students (Hopmann 2007:117; Westbury 2000:26-27).

Next we discuss some of the most dramatic differences in the implications of the *Didaktik* and Curriculum cultures for teacher preparation (Hopmann 2007, Hudson 2007, Westbury 1998; 2000). However, the two cultures also have some common concerns to which we will point in relation to the four domains of teacher competence.

### *Teacher competence and change in teacher education curricula*

The concept of competence has been contested in the literature since it first emerged in the late 1960s, drawing on behavioural psychology and conceiving teacher competences as observable events in teachers' performance (Harris 1997; Zuzovsky & Libman 2006; Valli & Rennert-Ariev 2002). Accordingly, adequate teacher preparation had to be effective in shaping future teachers' performance in their daily teaching by applying a range of methods or class management techniques learned from experienced teachers (described in van Huizen *et al.* 2005). This idea, that competences conceived as observable behaviours in professional contexts can form a valid basis for curriculum development, has been much debated (Barnett 1994; Day 2002; Korthagen 2004). Critics argued that the focus on classroom management, subject content and pupil test results underestimated the aims and values fundamental to teacher identity, motivation and commitment, such as 'core moral purposes' (Day 2002: 682–684) or room for teachers to personally interpret their role or respond to specific demands and conditions of a given situation (van Huizen *et al.* 2005). Barnett (1994) argued that competent professionals must be able to form a view of their own profession and its changing relationship with society's demands. This means teacher education must equip future teachers with much more than an ability to use particular teaching techniques. It requires more knowledge and a deeper understanding of the historical, political and economic context for a particular education system—comprehension that might not necessarily manifest itself in an observable, immediately assessable way.

We share the view that the attainment of theoretical and contextual knowledge continues to be essential for teachers, and we adopt a broad concept of competence as inclusive of knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities, as well as of teachers' beliefs and moral values. A similarly broad understanding of teacher competence is evident in other recent competence frameworks (Koster *et al.* 2005; Tigelaar *et al.* 2004; Stoof *et al.* 2002). They adopt the following concept of competence: 'an integrated set of personal characteristics, knowledge, skills and attitudes that are needed for effective

performance in various teaching contexts' (Tigelaar et al. 2004: 255). Defined in this way, competences represent a potential for behaviour and not the behaviour itself (Korthagen 2004).

In the following subsections we seek to identify elements of *Didaktik* and Curriculum cultures (see Table 4.1) in the four groups of teacher competence identified earlier (Pantić & Wubbels 2010) and in the changes related to setting those competences as the basis for teacher education curricula.

The four groups of competence include:

1) *Self-evaluation and professional development* involve competences that relate to teachers' reflection on their educational impact and development. In this paper this aspect of competence has been renamed Teacher evaluation since *Didaktik* and Curriculum theory have their distinct approaches to teacher evaluation, while teachers' professional development based on this evaluation is outside the remit of this paper.

2) *Subject matter, pedagogy and curriculum* relate to competences in a teacher's subject field and methods of instruction, and competences in implementing, adapting or developing the school curriculum.

3) *Understanding of the education system and contribution to its development* involves wider understanding of the context of schooling in which they teach, such as the institutional setting.

4) *Values and child rearing domain refers to competences* in dealing with values and moral issues that arise in teaching practice.

In addition to exploring in more depth these four groups of teacher competence, we seek to understand the substance of change involved in introducing competence-based curricula in teacher education, which makes the fifth aspect of distinction between the two cultures. Below, we look at how the elements of the distinction between *Didaktik* and Curriculum cultures are relevant for these five aspects of distinction.

### *Teacher evaluation*

In the Curriculum culture teachers are the 'agents of the system' trained and certificated to teach the curriculum. They are animated and directed by the system, and not the source of animation for the system (Westbury 2000: 21). In other words, their job is to make sure students reach the externally defined outcomes for certain levels of education in a given system, and not to define their own teaching goals. In this culture, evaluation and feedback about the quality and appropriateness of teachers' work are provided primarily through student assessment (Hopmann 2003, Westbury 2000).

In the *Didaktik* culture professional licensing authorises autonomous practice within the state's legal and administrative frameworks. As reflective professionals, teachers work within the framework provided by the state curriculum, but are not controlled by it (Westbury 2000). Their professional decisions and their impact are not evaluated by their clients or employers, but either through formal or informal self-evaluation and/or by their peers. Such evaluation focuses on education process and on people with little external control over the outcomes of schooling (Hopmann 2003).

### *Subject matter, pedagogy and curriculum*

In the Curriculum culture subject matter is described as a repository of information, skills and objective understandings or ways of knowing that stand apart from the learner and the teacher, and can be taught using appropriate methods, and rationally evaluated (Westbury 2000). The curriculum framework is developed at the level of the school system where the objectives for learning and evaluation are set, while teachers are primarily concerned with curriculum *implementation*. Thus, the construction of the content for classroom use is at the school or district level rather than being chosen by an individual teacher. What happens in classrooms as curriculum is transformed into teaching is not seen as a major problem. It is assumed that 'teachers can, and should, faithfully implement the curriculum if it is well developed and teachers are appropriately prepared to use it' (Westbury 2000:

20). Teachers' tasks are understood primarily as the question of *how* the encounter between the children and the object of learning is to be engendered in practice. Teachers are mostly concerned with the method, while the questions of *what* and *why* are the responsibilities of the school system managers. Such a role, the teacher as the implementer of the curriculum, has been much criticised in the later reconceptualisations of the Curriculum theory (Pinar et al. 1995), most notably by Shulman (1987: 15) who endorsed the need for a teacher's pedagogical knowledge 'to transform the content knowledge he or she possesses into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by the students'. In the critique of the traditional Curriculum theory calls have been made that teaching should be acknowledged as 'an interpretative process' and that, in order to teach effectively teachers, must be 'reflective' – similar to the *Didaktik*'s image of teachers as reflective practitioners (Westbury 2000: 36).

*Didaktik* is essentially a body of theories and frameworks which can assist *the planning of teaching* by teachers themselves (Westbury 2000). Teachers work with the 'text' provided by the state curriculum, searching for ways of offering students experiences that can assist their development towards 'a comprehensive worldview' (Westbury 2000: 27). He/she thus interprets the contents in the contexts of values they represent (see the section *Values and child rearing* below). In *Didaktik*, a teacher must re-enact the pedagogical decisions made by the curriculum designers, embedded in the curriculum content, and explore their deeper educational potential. Subject matter should be seen through a pedagogical lens with specific students in mind, although some interpretations (Klafki 2000: 148) suggest that content *per se*, independent of the persons who assimilate it, can contribute specific substance or value to education. Lesson planning in this culture starts by asking the larger questions about: *what* the content matter comprises; what wider sense or attitude can be exemplified by this content; what knowledge, skills, and experiences do the students already have in relation to this content; can the activities come alive and be effective outside the school walls; what significance could it bear for the future of those to be educated. Only then does a teacher ask the questions of *how* the content is structured; how are individual elements related to each other; what tasks and ways of teaching are appropriate for enabling a productive encounter between the learners and the content. In Klafki's words:

'Good preparation for a lesson...is always a new small-scale, and provisional construction as well as a synthesis of prior experience..., while at the same time recognizing that, in the end, each and every lesson holds in store a myriad unforeseeable possibilities and that the openness of teachers' minds to new situations, impulses, and the difficulties arising from the moment is a criterion for their pedagogical competence.'

(Klafki 2000: 143).

#### *Understanding of the education system and contribution to its development*

In the Curriculum culture, in line with its search for a 'rational', scientific basis for effective institutions, the curricular framework is developed at the level of school and the school system. Thus, the intersection between schooling, culture and society is at the school or district level (Westbury 2000). Innovation in curriculum development is based on empirical evidence, although some reconceptualists in Curriculum theory preferred criticism of the wider culture to practical problems of curriculum development (Wraga, 1999). In this culture, however, curricular changes seek to accommodate client needs and market trends.

*Didaktik* has traditionally been more philosophical than empirical as a field (Künzli 2000). Paradigm shifts are based on theoretical critique that is distanced from, and pre-eminent over school practices. Innovation in school, or rather classroom, practices happens mainly as a result of individual teachers following scientific advances in their subject field or equivalent academic discipline, educational sciences, technology, etc., and integrating these advances into their teaching. Yet, throughout its history, *Didaktik* has also faced attempts by states to limit teachers' curricular choices (e.g. by prescribing methods) which met with teachers' enduring criticism of national curriculum guidelines as being out of touch with classroom reality, and claims that *Didaktik* alone should decide on what to teach whom (Hopmann 2007:114).

### *Values and child rearing*

In line with its rationality the Anglo-Saxon Curriculum culture has traditionally attempted value neutrality, with curriculum makers seeking to optimize the combination of educational and social goals in a school system that institutionally transmits ‘appropriate understandings of content seen unproblematically as this or that view of an authoritative selection from a larger, objectively valid subject matter’ (Westbury 2000: 31). Such views have been denounced as sexist and classist with the reconceptualised Curriculum theory (Pinar *et al.* 1995) becoming more engaged with the political and philosophical implications of the curriculum. The reconceptualists’ call for understanding rather than developing the curriculum led to a number of political, ideological, racial, gender and other investigations of curricular representations, showing the improbability of curricular neutrality, and sometimes arguing for spelling out the values promoted through education and schooling. For example, Noddings (1984) argued in her ethic of caring that moral education should begin with care for other human beings rather than with rationality. Dewey’s and progressive movements’ calls for child-centered pedagogies also shared some of Didaktik’s concerns (Hopmann 2007:114).

Didaktik is essentially concerned with the educative potential of the content. The idea is that students could be led to a comprehensive worldview that is inherent in, say, the sciences, mathematics or Greek and Latin literature. Everything that claims to be content of education must have significance for the future of those to be educated. Any specific content must contain general substance:

‘...opening up the young people to systems of order (legal, social, moral, etc.), responsibilities (such as human welfare or politics), necessities (such as the mastery of cultural skills, a minimum of vital knowledge, etc.) human opportunities (e.g., to enjoy and be active in leisure time, e.g. in the arts, in the choice of profession, etc.)’

(Klafki 2000: 150).

Teachers decide what must be done in a particular setting with particular material with particular students in light of the values associated with *Bildung* as the formation through which a person will become a ‘personality’ (Klafki 2000: 147). Blömeke (2006) describes *Bildung* as both process and the product of human development, guided by reason, and comprising self-determination, participation in society, and solidarity. Teachers have the freedom to decide which content and methods are relevant to reach these goals combining the broad curriculum guidelines and their own ideas. Meaning-making by teachers and pupils is central for *Didaktik*’s concept of teaching as a moral and reflective activity (Hopmann 2007, Westbury 1998).

### *Teacher education curricula*

The two cultures have different implications for teacher education, one of the central questions being that of whether the outcomes of learning should be pre-set or open-ended. In the Curriculum culture, the main purpose of teacher preparation is mastery of practical skills useful for teaching a given curriculum. According to Wraga (1999) such preparation as a rule includes the integration of professional and liberal arts education, connections between the classroom and the real world, and responsiveness to local realities.

In the *Didaktik* culture, a distinction is made in teacher education curricula, between general *Didaktik* as a theory of teaching and learning, and their formative power, and subject *Didaktik*, also called *Methodik* (Klafki 2000), as theories of teaching specific subject fields applying *Didaktik* methods and analysis. A knowledge base for teachers involves general and subject *Didaktik*, various sciences and social sciences that are the foundations for school subjects; pedagogy, developmental and child psychology.

Some authors (e.g. Wraga 1999) observed that, by joining universities, teacher education institutions came to identify closely with the academic orientation of sciences and social sciences

departments adopting a notion that ‘pure academic’ knowledge is somehow more worthy than ‘applied’ knowledge, and that practitioners’ work will be enhanced by exposing them to large amounts of theory that can guide their work.

Teacher education curricula based on competences seem closer to the Curriculum culture in which teachers account for pupils’ learning and development with reference to predefined goals (Hudson 2002, Singer-Gabella & Tiedemann 2008). In the empirical part of this paper we explore whether the perceptions of changes in teacher education curricula can be interpreted using the continuum between *Didaktik* and Curriculum cultures. The main research question is: What elements of *Didaktik* and Curriculum cultures can be identified in practitioners’ perceptions of changes in teacher education?

## Methodology

### *Approach and data collection*

Qualitative enquiry has been chosen for a research study about a change, depending on beliefs and involving organisational and social change (Merriam 1998). Research suggests that the success of reforms critically depends on the extent to which they are compatible with teachers’ beliefs about what is worthwhile in education (Beijaard *et al.* 2000, Day 2002, Day *et al.* 2007, Fives & Buehl 2008, Grossman *et al.* 2007). This is why in this study we explore professionals’ perspectives on teacher competences and the integration of these competences into existing teacher education curricula. The data was collected through 30 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with teacher educators, student teachers and their school mentors.

In order to get rich data that can be used to see if the framework distinguishing between the cultures of *Didaktik* and Curriculum is useful for the interpretation of the perceptions of change in teacher education, we designed the interview scheme as an open-ended enquiry. The scheme comprised three parts, asking the participants to discuss: a) what the essential elements of an ideal teacher education program are; b) in what way the program at their institution has and/or should be changing; c) how they understand the notion of competence as a basis for teacher education curricula.

### *Participants*

The interviewees came from four higher education institutions in Serbia (three universities and one higher education school for pre-primary teachers). The faculties and departments within the institutions were selected with the aim of having different types of teacher preparation for different levels of education represented in the sample. At two institutions, educating pre-primary and lower primary teachers, educating teachers is the institution’s primary activity with the vast majority of graduates going on to teaching jobs. At the other two institutions, departments preparing subject teachers have been selected. Only a small proportion of these institutions’ students opt for teacher courses in addition to the courses associated with their respective scientific discipline. The selected departments prepare mathematics and chemistry teachers. All institutions from which the participants came have started to reform their curricula.

The participants within the institutions were selected by means of so called ‘snowball’ sampling, i.e. every interviewee was asked to identify another, targeting individuals who participated in curriculum development at their institution, and would thus be able to provide information about the curricular changes. The participants included fifteen teacher educators, ten student teachers and five teachers who act as mentors for students during their school practice. All members of the management and staff expressed both willingness to participate in the study and positive views about the need to reform teacher education. It is possible that those with contrary opinions were not selected.

All teacher educators participated in curriculum design of their course, and five were at the same time managers: two deans, two vice deans and one head of department. Three taught future pre-primary teachers, two taught both pre-primary and primary teachers, five prepared lower primary teachers, and five prepared subject teachers (three at the departments for mathematics, two at the

departments for chemistry). All pre-primary teacher educators taught developmental and child psychology, while among the teacher educators preparing primary teachers, there were those teaching so called *Methodik* (i.e. subject *Didaktik*) of Serbian language and literature, one taught *Methodik* of arts education, one history, and two taught developmental psychology and social pedagogy. Among the five teacher educators preparing subject teachers, three taught subject content (or the equivalent academic field), two taught subject *Methodik*, and one child psychology. Five participants were men and ten were women, mostly in their 40s, with a couple of participants in their 50s and three in their late-30s. Participants' years of experience as teacher educators ranged from five to over thirty years. Four out of five mentor teachers were experienced, female, primary teachers. One was a male mathematics teacher. The age of mentor teachers ranged from 33 to 61 years. Among the ten student teachers there were five primary and five secondary teachers of chemistry and geography. All (student) teachers were either close to graduating or had already graduated, four having recently started working in primary and secondary schools. Four were men and six were women, mostly in their mid-20s.

### *Analyses*

The data collected in the interviews was transcribed and analysed qualitatively to provide thick descriptions (Geertz 1973) of issues involved in the change of teacher education curricula. In the analysis we sought utterances addressing one of the five aspects of distinction between the *Didaktik* and Curriculum cultures: 1) teacher evaluation; 2) subject matter, pedagogy and curriculum; 3) understanding of the education system and contribution to its development; 4) values and child rearing, and 5) utterances about the change of teacher education curricula. In each group of utterances we interpreted the interviewees' perceptions in terms of whether they are closer to *Didaktik* or Curriculum cultures by seeking to identify elements of either (see Table 4.1) in the responses. At the same time some categories emerged from the data that could not be interpreted as falling in line with one of the two cultures, which were coded as 'other' categories. In total, 14 categories have been arrived at by means of constant comparison of the transcripts with the help of software for qualitative data processing. About 10 % of the data has been analysed by two raters reaching Kappa measure of inter-rater agreement of .88 after several rounds of training.

## **Findings and discussion**

Table 4.1 presents the elements of *Didaktik* and Curriculum cultures that cover the content of utterances in each category, and numbers of respondents and utterances coded in each category.

Below we present some of the responses that were interpreted as illustrative of elements of *Didaktik* and Curriculum cultures in the perceptions related to the four groups of competences. We also discuss the perceptions of change in teacher education and some of the implications of these findings for teacher education curricula.

### *Teacher evaluation*

The dominant perception (21 respondents) of appropriate evaluation of successful teaching seems to be in tune with the view inherent in the *Didaktik* culture, as based on self-reflection:

'Who can judge someone's work?...I do not know how I would judge someone's work. You can look at whether they use new learning tools, whether they use new literature, but that is not a measure of their work...A measure of a teacher's work, if he is good, is his own sense (feeling). I am aware that I do not always carry out lessons the way I would like to them to be...and that it could have been done much better.'

Some of these participants also endorsed the view that teacher evaluation could be based on peer-assessment: 'The state has to trust its teachers, has to trust its academic institutions...because the state does not know what pedagogy or *Didaktik* is, teachers themselves should evaluate the program and

their work, and with other teachers of the same subject'. A few participants shared this view, that only the colleagues teaching the same subject can give a legitimate evaluation of a teachers' work.

15 respondents advocated teacher evaluation based on the teaching's effect on students, closer to the Curriculum culture of appropriate evaluation of successful teaching. For example, one teacher educator contended:

'We need to be able to check the results of a teacher's work. Today, the results are not measured... what is the result of a teacher's work? The fact that a student lived two blocks from the school, so he had to attend and finish that school, and was looking forward to finishing with it, is that a result of [teachers'] work? That means you are nothing!'

Table 4.1. Overview of categories with number of responders and examples of utterances in each category.

	<i>Didaktik</i>	Curriculum	Number of respondents with utterances in both cultures	Other categories
<b>teacher evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>based on peer-evaluation, and</li> <li>self-reflection</li> </ul> 21 (28)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>based on student achievement</li> </ul> 15 (21)	9	
<b>subject knowledge, pedagogy and curriculum</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>what and why</li> <li>goal as direction</li> <li>curriculum as frame of reference</li> <li>theory as initiation</li> </ul> 14 (30)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>how</li> <li>practical tasks</li> <li>curriculum implementation</li> <li>subject matter first</li> </ul> 27 (47)	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>motivation</li> </ul> 5 (6)
<b>understanding education system and contribution to its development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>innovation and contextual adjustment by individual teachers</li> <li>change based on theoretical critique</li> </ul> 17 (24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>innovation and contextual adjustment within institution</li> <li>change following the market trends</li> </ul> 11 (22)	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>institutional and wider societal context of education</li> </ul> 9 (18)
<b>values and child rearing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>exemplification</li> <li><i>Bildung</i> first</li> </ul> 24 (57)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>value neutrality</li> </ul> 4 (7)	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>child rights</li> </ul> 4 (5)
<b>change of teacher education curricula</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>competences as broader goals</li> <li>teacher educators' freedom</li> <li>broader theories and disciplinary knowledge</li> </ul> 24 (51)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>competences as pre-defined outcomes</li> <li>students in the center</li> <li>preparation for practice</li> </ul> 30 (88)	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>changes as Potemkin's villages</li> </ul> 6 (6)

Nine of these voices come from the same respondents who see self- and/or peer evaluation as appropriate ways to evaluate teachers. Also in those utterances the call for product-oriented teacher evaluation, was only once perceived to be appropriately based on school achievement only. When the importance of evaluating teacher's work against student attainments was raised, responses reflected a belief in the importance of broader outcomes for student lives, than of attainments alone:

'Students provide evaluation of their teacher, of their school. Who did what? Who entered which faculty? Why did they not enter? What happened to that child? Why did the child fail when it had an IQ of 130...and all of a sudden became very dumb? What happened to that child? Who is to blame?'

In summary, the views on teacher evaluation seem to be dominated by the views of *Didaktik's* self- and peer evaluation processes as more appropriate, with little mention of possibilities for justification of teacher evaluation by non-professionals, such as external authorities, parents or communities. Nevertheless, 15 participants expressed a need to base teacher evaluation on the effect on their students of teaching, views closer to the teacher evaluation approaches inherent in the Curriculum culture.

### *Subject matter, pedagogy and curriculum*

The perceptions of subject matter and its relations to teaching and pedagogy seem to reflect a mixture of elements of both Curriculum and *Didaktik* cultures. For example, we interpreted a view of the knowledge of subject matter as the primary and most important source of teacher expertise, as aligned to the Curriculum culture: '...all education of teachers needs to be primarily based on the expert field...i.e. mastering the knowledge in the expert field itself ...you cannot do without that...the way you teach someone the Serbian language cannot be more important than your actual knowing Serbian orthography, grammar, literature, right?'

The participants (14) whose utterances were interpreted as in line with the *Didaktik* culture offered views about the need for teachers to have a much wider perspective on the subject matter than they actually need for teaching it. For example, one educator of future mathematics teachers elaborated:

'When someone tells me: 'Why, at the fourth year of the faculty you were telling us things that I will never use in a primary school?' That is horrible! This is not a hairdresser's course, so you learn only the things you will use on the job...You need to know at least five times more than you will tell in front of the [black] board tomorrow'. I was in a situation of knowing...only as much as I was telling. It's a very bad feeling...You must not allow yourself to know about functions only what you will tell *gymnasium* students.'

Others thought that teachers should know the essence of a subject, but still more than they need to teach pupils. For example, mathematics teacher educators saw the need for 'more elementary mathematics, such as theory of numbers, geometry, and teaching methods, social components and awareness of their role'. One participant said that she 'would base all first grade mathematics on measuring and money'. Another one suggested: 'You would teach them [student teachers] higher mathematics but constantly bearing in mind how they will transmit it, that is you would give them the basis that *methodicians* can then use to teach them how they would explain the notion of number to children'. Teacher educators of primary teachers particularly viewed an ideal teacher as a kind of researcher looking into the suitability of the curriculum and textbooks for their students, for example:

'A teacher needs to be constantly checking the programme... looking at what the children did not understand and what they did understand? Is the textbook good or not? Was that lesson good? Should it be shorter? Is it harmonized with other subjects? Do we achieve the general educational goal through it or not...'

These utterances resonate with the *Didaktik*'s view of curriculum as a frame of reference within which teachers can exercise their autonomy and pedagogical expertise. However, the same participant went on to explain that such expertise has been underestimated in the existing teacher education: 'Methods as skills in transferring knowledge is...only slowly gaining a status today with the external influences... so far [subject] didakticians...were seen as those who could not do better [in their academic discipline]...some kind of lower beings'. A colleague teaching the subject content confirmed the existence of such attitudes towards teacher educators teaching *Methodik*:

'People who teach *Methodik* at different faculties, with a few exceptions, are people who did not manage to get affirmed in their [subject] field of expertise, so they found a shelter in this, how this subject is to be taught to others. In my opinion...one learns how to transmit disciplinary knowledge if one is interested, one learns that in one long established subject called *Didaktika*.'

Opinions about what is essential for teachers varied according to what the teacher educator being questioned actually taught: subjects content, psychology and pedagogy, or subject *Methodik*.

At the same time, there seems to exist a dominant view (27 respondents) that 'teachers need to be prepared for the job of teaching' better than in the existing preparation. We interpreted these utterances as resonating with the Curriculum culture since the participants elaborated that they saw current teacher preparation as inadequate for teachers' practical daily activities such as administrative tasks, filling in the register, dealing with discipline, communicating with parents, classroom management, and so on. The concerns expressed by participants about teachers not acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills essential for their future job was particularly present in the comments about the current preparation of subject teachers. They are educated in a particular discipline that is the equivalent of the school subject, and not specifically for teaching practice. This concern is illustrated in the utterances below:

'[Our] teacher knows a lot about her subject, but little about her job...she leaves the school [teacher education faculty] completely insensitive to the nature of her job, because the faculty has not prepared her for what she will do, she is prepared to be a good expert for literature...'

'Ideally, an educational institution should set a kind of vision for itself: whom do we educate, what do we educate them for, where do we send them, and what do we need to do to make sure they, and we who educate them, achieve that vision...It is necessary to constantly keep in mind that vision, and the objective...does she need the mathematics to build bridges or to help children think logically and solve problems?'

This kind of approval of goal-setting, characteristic of the Curriculum culture, was one of the most common points in this group of utterances, alongside the stressing of the need for more practice which should also start earlier in teacher training programmes and have clearly defined goals.

The perceptions of competence related to curriculum design, adaptation and implementation were interpreted as aligned to the Curriculum culture when participants suggested that the purpose and curricular aims and themes should be selected by an external authority, and that teachers' expertise is about ensuring that those aims and content are mastered by students in the most effective way (e.g., 'they [teachers] need to be competent implementers of the recommended programme.'). Such perceptions are all in line with the Curriculum culture's core question of *how* to enact the curricular tasks, and a view of curriculum plan as a course of action covering the pre-selected content.

Utterances about the curriculum were interpreted as aligned to *Didaktik* when participants saw teaching as a job that involves more breadth and depth than a mere implementation of an external plan. For example, the views that 'the most important thing about teaching any particular unit is to know why it is taught', or 'what it could mean for a particular child' resonate with *Didaktik*'s core questions of *what* and *why*.

The topic of motivation was brought up by five participants as an important issue in changing teacher roles and in their critique of the present preparation of teachers. Some participants suggested

that a particular version of *Didaktik* is adopted in existing teacher preparation that assumes a direct link between the subject matter and its educational value. The specific subject *Didaktik* is narrowly linked to individual subjects neglecting the broader meanings or general principles to be conveyed by means of specific content examples, thus issues related to motivation that are at the core of lesson planning in *Didaktik* analysis seem to be skewed in the present preparation of teachers. One teacher educator remarked:

‘They learn in their *Methodik* that a lesson is carried out in nine stages. In those nine stages there is practically nothing about how one could motivate children by giving them tasks to solve. Or, if there is, they are not able to say why they should do it. Instead, it is a stage, and that is it...they relentlessly write those lesson plans which mainly consist of what they will tell the children. And if the children appear at all in those plans then they invent a child’s response...incredible waste of time and energy...they literally invent what a child would say.’

These utterances were coded as ‘other’ since they seem to criticise the mechanistic practices of implemented *Didaktik* as unsatisfactory in adequately addressing the issue of motivation, but without aligning themselves with Curriculum either.

### *Understanding of the education system and contribution to its development*

In this group we coded the utterances about the institutional and wider contexts of education and schooling, about links between teachers’ competence and the social contexts in which they engage, and about educational change. Utterances were coded as close to *Didaktik* culture when respondents saw the institutional and wider contexts of schooling either as something that individual teachers need to integrate into their teaching or to take into account as obstacles to it. Utterances were coded as close to Curriculum culture when the participants saw school as an institution of central importance in answering to the community and environment in which it operates.

17 respondents whose utterances have been interpreted as aligned to the *Didaktik* saw initiation of change in a local school and community as a particularly challenging aspect of teacher competence, as, for example, did this respondent:

‘...when they [teachers] go to the school they do not go to a context that enables them to implement what they learned here in the best way. They go back to an inert environment, where after two years they...adapt. Only the strongest ones have the courage to stand up for their beliefs, the others conform...and all the effort here was in vain.’

It seems that a teacher’s room for ‘standing up for their beliefs’ is confined to their own classroom in which they can exercise autonomy to innovate within their subject. Gudmundsdottir et al. (2000) rightly observed that in *Didaktik* culture teachers of the same subject are more alike than teachers of the same school, which can create subcultures within schools aligned with school subjects (Grossman & Stodolsky 1995).

Some among these participants linked the need for teachers to consider the context in which they work to the diversity of students in today’s schools, like this respondent: ‘Classrooms are more and more heterogeneous in their ethnic makeup, there are more and more Roma children [in schools], so the methods of teaching to read and write cannot be the same as they were 20-30 years ago when the classrooms were much more homogenous than today, or so it was supposed’. This is again resonating with the *Didaktik*’s call to accommodate the characteristics of pupils.

11 participants emphasised the importance of responding to societal needs beyond the school walls, a perception evocative of the importance of the local context in the Curriculum culture: ‘...if we know that we have so many illiterate people, so many poor, so many refugees, we need to, maybe through electives, maybe as part of the regular curriculum, strengthen those subjects...We introduced multicultural education to raise students’ awareness of the reality for which they are being prepared’. A few of these participants brought up the topic of the importance of school as an institution in a community and environment in which teachers operate. One pre-primary teacher educator explained:

‘They [teachers] have to realise that a kindergarten is not isolated, it is a social institution painted with all the colours of the society...and in itself a socio-cultural system. Each kindergarten has its culture, ethos...so they have to be ready for what will be expected of them...including that we count on them to change [institutions]...I know many good teachers, but we need to look at the institutions. What is the sense of an institution that makes us behave in this or that way...even though sometimes we ourselves are not happy to behave that way?’

The utterance above resonates with the focus of Curriculum theory on the institutional level as ‘defining the connection between schooling and both a culture and a society’ (Westbury 2000: 34). It also recalls the argument that teachers are no longer only entrusted with operating a scientifically grounded pedagogy, but also with assuming a wider evaluative reflection on the socio-cultural purpose of education and schooling (Carr 1999; Lauglo 1995). Liston and Zeichner (1990) argued that such reflection should not focus only on implicit social and cultural frameworks. Rather, it should include an examination of the institutional features of schooling. Teaching professionals, they argue, must be able to analyse and change particular institutional arrangements and working conditions, especially those that might obstruct the implementation of their aims (Liston & Zeichner 1990). It should be noted that our participants viewed the contribution to school development as being a call of duty for teachers rather than for administrators.

There were also nine respondents who raised issues about the institutional and wider contexts without relating them to teachers or institutions. These responses were coded as ‘other’.

### *Values and child rearing*

The vast majority of responses (24) in to this group of competences were related to the *Didaktik*’s question about a wider sense or attitude that can be exemplified by the content in the education process conceived as *Bildung*, as in the following examples: ‘Every subject has its upbringing value...we should not forget that we are not just educating, but also nurturing young people. Unfortunately, lately, it is questionable whether we even educate them’. Or:

‘One needs to prepare a lesson well to select interesting problems from ordinary life, so to say, as far as possible, those are usually the nicest problems in mathematics...one of the most important things that you need to learn in school is to be accurate and neat! Yes, one needs to be neat and not fuzzy – that is what mathematics teaches you: you have to stand behind your result.’

14 of these participants maintained that some degree of agreement about values should be attempted, as this teacher educator argued:

‘In my time...there was no dilemma about values. We did not think about whether it was worth being educated...whether being a good pupil was important...whether listening to folk or rock music made a difference...whether reading or non-reading of books made a difference. There was no dilemma about these things...Promotion of values has to be some kind of a social consensus. At least we should agree about some elementary values that are simply part of human archetype...like work, order, honesty, sincerity, etc... We promote an authoritarian society, through an authoritarian school, through an authoritarian teacher... If we consider the broader social context, we talk about democracy, about individual freedom for each person, as values. A teacher must promote these values through interpersonal rapport with those she educates... and in order to be able to do that she has to pass through this teacher faculty having the right to come to me and say: I do not agree with that...’

Four participants reluctantly endorsed the possibility of dealing with values in education and teacher preparation, which we coded as alignment with the Curriculum’s effort to be value-neutral. Such reluctance was usually associated with a fear of indoctrination from the past: ‘[Our] Pedagogy as a science used to be very “ideologised”, and served everyday societal goals of bringing up children in the spirit of becoming good communist citizens.’ Or:

‘Of course, we all subscribe to some values whether we are aware of it or not. The experience from previous years made us loathe any kind of imposed system...it does not mean that there is no ideology today, but it is hidden. If it was public, regulated, I do not know, set by the state, I think it is better to keep it like this for now’.

In four responses coded as ‘other’ the participants advocated putting the child’s rights at the center of education and perceived this as missing in the existing preparation of teachers, as one respondent put it:

‘...the rights of children as equal beings are very important regardless of how naughty or impudent they are...one has to be patient...to learn how to respect them...we are very weak there. A child is often, mostly without guilt, humiliated, punished in this or that way, I do not think children are gangsters...or tough guys, or such. Our curriculum as it is now absolutely does not recognise things like that.’

There seems to exist a great deal of agreement among the participants that teachers’ moral roles are very important. Yet, not everybody agrees that values should be an explicit focus of teacher preparation, recalling the Curriculum culture’s claim of rationality and value neutrality. However, the vast majority of opinions given in this study seem closer to the *Didaktik* culture’s signifier of importance, moral formation as in *Bildung*. What precisely is moral about teaching remains to be explored, bearing in mind the different, sometimes competing, bases for teachers’ moral roles, but this is beyond the scope of this paper.

### *Change of teacher education*

All 30 participants in the study recognised a need for change in teacher education, and characterized the inherited institutional and curricular structures as inadequate in the changing context of education. When respondents called for change they gave arguments aligned with the Curriculum culture, such as a need for greater accountability of teacher education institutions, establishing a common vision and quality assurance, as expressed by this teacher educator: ‘We have little guidance with a clear notion of what is needed and what we want within which we could then find a freedom...instead our freedom is a total freedom’.

Participants saw the biggest advantage of the new approaches was that they could now ‘follow a student better and make them active’, or as one respondent put it: ‘Now we have to adjust our requirements to the student workload...for the first time we think about students, not only about us lecturers’.

At the same time six teacher educators criticised the present state of reforms at their institutions. One respondent described those changes as ‘Potemkin’s villages’:

‘The programme has not changed essentially. Some cosmetic changes have been made. I call them Potemkin’s villages. In fact, the same programme has been disguised in a new form required by the Bologna [arrangements]. Now we talk about *credits*, not about *hours*, and so on, but the hours and the literature in many cases, remain the same or very similar.’

The answers about the place for competence in teacher education revealed an interesting mismatch between the proclaimed preference for competence and the underlying understanding of it.

All but one respondent supported the idea that curricula should have predefined goals, some explicitly suggesting the form of competences: ‘We need to rethink well the structure and the content of the curricula and syllabi, think carefully about what are the outcomes and expected competences of students when they finish certain levels of study, that has not been done at all.’ The one teacher educator who rejected such an idea explained:

‘I know implicitly what my goal is. No one has ever required me to say what my goals are. For my subject, no one has ever required me to put that down...For me those are empty phrases...I

don't know "my goal is to develop in them...whatever". I cannot say that in a way that a non-mathematician could understand...'

However, 24 participants whose utterances about change in teacher education were coded as aligned to *Didaktik* culture, seem to understand a notion of 'competence' very broadly, as does this teacher educator:

'Competence is responsibility for what I teach them, and how I do it and what I give them as aims in life through what they hear from me. I am for competence and it should be very broadly set and agreed within a community. How am I supposed to develop them if I dissent?'

Some of these participants discussed what makes a 'competent teacher', suggesting that this has always been the goal of teacher education and that only the word 'competence' itself is new. However, one teacher educator explained what this actually meant:

'Before, the focus was on what they [student teachers] needed to know in the Serbian language and to lead a lesson implementing certain *Methodik* – that above all was a competence...to be able to tell you something, for example, about Dositej Obradović, and to be able to tell you the stages of a lesson dealing with Dositej Obradović – that was considered as competences. Everything else about teacher - student relations, student - student relations, motivation...did not exist.'

The participants in this group expressed some scepticism towards the notion of competence on the grounds that it involved too much prescription, suggesting that it is important to strike the right balance between the preparation for practical tasks and for the underlying theories. The disagreement was mainly about the question of the order in which students should be exposed to theory and practice. Seven teacher educators considered that theory must come first, as this teacher of developmental psychology proposed:

'When I teach theory I present research findings and why they are important...Once they know that, once they get a map of a child's mind...then lesson planning, selection of contents and methods will be a logical thing for them. They will put things in a logical context. Because if you start lesson planning without knowing anything about those you plan it for, you do not do anything.'

Other teacher educators and all student teachers thought that practice should come either before, or in parallel with the theory, and that student teachers should have more opportunity to teach in actual schools.

## Conclusions

In summary, the responses about different groups of competence vary in their alignment with *Didaktik* and Curriculum cultures. For example, perceptions of appropriate teacher evaluation and place of values in teacher education are closer to *Didaktik*, while the majority of responses about subject, pedagogy and school curriculum are closer to the Curriculum culture. However, often both approaches can be traced in the different utterances of the same individuals (see the fourth column of Table 4.1), with some respondents being critical of different elements in both cultures, and only two student teacher individual responses featuring a whole set of views in line with one (Curriculum) culture. This indicates that a framework regarding *Didaktik* and Curriculum cultures as two poles of a continuum cannot be used to fully capture and describe the change. Rather, most respondents' perceptions of different aspects of change vary reflecting one or the other culture on different issues, confirming the coexistence of the 'old' and 'new' ways in the transition period (Anchan *et al.* 2003; Fullan 1993).

Existing teacher education seems to be based on a belief in a systematic subject-based preparation, and is slow in responding to the call for better connection with the reality of teaching in

real contexts, as has been found in other European countries too (Garm & Karlsen 2004, Ostinelli 2009). Even when the accountability-driven changes set desirable outcomes concerned with teacher performance in real life, as in the case of Norway, ‘the problem is that the system tends to measure teacher competence in a more narrow sense as subject knowledge’ (Garm & Karlsen 2004: 739). This situation is probably due, at least to some extent, to the divisions between teacher educators themselves that are entrenched along the lines of their own subjects.

Again as in Norway (Garm & Karlsen 2004), in our study the student teachers call for more preparation for the actual practice of teaching – their future work. The historical tension between academic knowledge and the need for more practice seems to persist, while the need to build more coherent links between theory and practice seem as great as ever in the context of school students’ diverse life-experiences, pre-existing knowledge, cultural habits, learning styles, and so on. The challenge in Serbia seems to be similar to that pointed to by teacher educators in other countries using *Didaktik* analyses as a framework for the preparation of teachers. The analysis tends to remain incomplete as students, and teacher educators, seem to relate to subject matter as a structure of knowledge, at the expense of subject matter as used in everyday life, in connection to other subjects, or in the frame of schooling (Hopmann 2000: 198). In practice the focus on the breath of subject matter itself seems to have constrained teacher reflection on the educational potential of the content intended by the open-ended framework for *Didaktik* analysis.

The changing contexts of education and schooling seem to need more empirically based findings of what works in the practice of teaching in real contexts. This should perhaps be closer to Shulman’s concept of pedagogical content knowledge, concerned with how the educational potential of the content can be transformed into representations appropriate for a given group of students (Shulman 1987), than to Klafki’s focus on the educational potential of content based on the interpretation of curricular texts (Gudmundsdottir *et al.* 2000).

On the other hand, as Garm and Karlsen (2004) rightly remark, focus on outcomes and teacher performance threaten to move teacher education away from broader cultural, social and value-oriented understanding of the teaching profession. Teachers are more and more judged by the public and expected to take on more responsibilities (Hopmann & Künzli 1997). In this context the cultural and social orientation becomes even more important if teachers are to develop into reflective, flexible and innovative professionals, assuming greater roles in curriculum design and consideration of the broader social purposes and competing values in public education.

Teacher educators, students and mentors by and large perceive existing teacher education as inefficient in preparation for practice, and approve orienting the curricula towards goals defined by the future job of teaching and the concrete tasks it involves. On the face of it, such perceptions are in line with the views of adequate teacher preparation in the Curriculum culture. However, the participants seem to view preparation for practical tasks as involving broad understandings of the theoretical and moral implications of teaching. Particularly, preparation for motivating students requires more in-depth insights into creating meaningful encounters between learners and content, closer to the *Didaktik* culture. This ambivalence of views clearly suggests that an effective change towards a competence-based model of teacher education would need to operate within a broadly conceived notion of teacher competence.

The *Didaktik* / Curriculum framework can be useful as a tool for stimulating reflection about change and giving teacher educators and student teachers feedback that could help them organise their thinking about changing teachers’ roles and relations between content, students and contexts of education and schooling.

## References

- Anchan, J. P., Fullan, M. G., & Polyzoi, E. (Eds.). (2003). *Change Forces in Post-Communist Eastern Europe: Education in Transition*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Arthur, L. (2006). Higher Education and the Knowledge Society: issues, challenges and responses in Norway and Germany. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 1(3), 241-252.
- Barnett, R. (1994). *The Limits of Competence: Knowledge, Higher Education and Society*. The Society of Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.
- Beijaard, D., Verloop, N., & Vermunt, J. D. (2000). Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Identity: An Exploratory Study from a Personal Knowledge Perspective. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16(7), 749-64.
- Blömeke, S. (2006). Globalization and Educational Reform in German Teacher Education. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 45(4), 315-324.
- Carr, D. (1999). Professional Education and Professional Ethics. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 16(1), 33-46.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Constructing 21st-Century Teacher Education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 57(3), 300-314.
- Day, C. (2002). School Reform and Transitions in Teacher Professionalism and Identity. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 37(8), 677-692.
- Day, C., Flores, M. A., & Viana, I. (2007). Effects of National Policies on Teachers' Sense of Professionalism: Findings from an Empirical Study in Portugal and in England. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 30(3), 249-265.
- Fives, H., & Buehl, M. M. (2008). What Do Teachers Believe? Developing a Framework for Examining Beliefs about Teachers' Knowledge and Ability. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 33(2), 134-176.
- Fullan, M. G. (1993). *Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Garm, N., & Karlsen, G. E. (2004). Teacher Education Reform in Europe: The Case of Norway; Trends and Tensions in a Global Perspective. *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*, 20(7), 731-744.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Grossman, G. M., Onkol, P. E., & Sands, M. (2007). Curriculum Reform in Turkish Teacher Education: Attitudes of Teacher Educators towards Change in an EU Candidate Nation. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 27(2), 138-150.
- Grossman, P. L., & Stodolsky, S. S. (1995). Content as Context: The Role of School Subjects in Secondary School Teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 24(8), 5-23.
- Gudmundsdottir, S., Reinertsen, A., & Nordtomme, N. P. (2000). Klafki's Didaktik analysis as a conceptual framework for research on teaching. In I. Westbury, S. Hopmann, & K. Riquarts (Eds.), *Teaching as a reflective practice: the German Didaktik tradition* (pp. 319-334). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Harris, A. (1997). The deprofessionalization and deskilling of teachers. In K. Watson, C. Modgil, & S. Mogdil (Eds.), *Teachers, teacher education and training* (pp. 57-65). London: Cassell.
- Hopmann, S. T. (2000). Klafki's model of Didaktik analysis and lesson planning in teacher education. In I. Westbury, S. Hopmann, & K. Riquarts (Eds.), *Teaching as a reflective practice: the German Didaktik tradition* (pp. 197-206). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hopmann, S. T. (2003). On the Evaluation of Curriculum Reforms. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 35(4), 459-478.

- Hopmann, S. T. (2007). Restrained Teaching: The Common Core of Didaktik. *European Educational Research Journal*, 6(2), 109-124.
- Hopmann, S. T., & Künzli, Rudolf. (1997). Close Our Schools! Against Current Trends in Policy Making, Educational Theory, and Curriculum Studies. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 29(3), 259-66.
- Hudson, B. (2002). Holding Complexity and Searching for Meaning: Teaching as Reflective Practice. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 34(1), 43-57.
- Hudson, B. (2007). Comparing Different Traditions of Teaching and Learning: What Can We Learn about Teaching and Learning? *European Educational Research Journal*, 6(2), 135-146.
- van Huizen, P., van Oers, B., & Wubbels, T. (2005). A Vygotskian Perspective on Teacher Education. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 37(3), 267-290.
- Klaassen, C. A. (2002). Teacher Pedagogical Competence and Sensibility. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18(2), 151-58.
- Klafki, W. (2000). Didaktik analysis as the core of preparation of instruction. In I. Westbury, S. T. Hopmann, & K. Riquarts (Eds.), *Teaching as a Reflective Practice: The German Didaktik Tradition* (pp. 139-159). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Korthagen, F. A. J. (2001). *Linking Practice and Theory: The Pedagogy of Realistic Teacher Education*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Korthagen, F. A. J. (2004). In Search of the Essence of a Good Teacher: Towards a More Holistic Approach in Teacher Education. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 20(1), 77-97.
- Koster, B., Brekelmans, M., Korthagen, F. A. J., & Wubbels, T. (2005). Quality Requirements for Teacher Educators. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21(2), 157-176.
- Künzli, R. (2000). German Didaktik: Models of Re-presentation of Intercourse, and of Experience. In I. Westbury, S. T. Hopmann, & K. Riquarts (Eds.), *Teaching as a Reflective Practice: The German Didaktik Tradition* (pp. 41-54). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Lauglo, J. (1995). Forms of Decentralisation and Their Implications for Education. *Comparative Education*, 31(1), 5-29.
- Liston, D. P., & Zeichner, K. M. (1990). Reflective teaching and action research in preservice teacher education. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 16(3), 235-254.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring, A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ostinelli, G. (2009). Teacher Education in Italy, Germany, England, Sweden and Finland. *European Journal of Education*, 44(2), 291-308.
- Pantić, N., & Wubbels, T. (2010). Teacher competencies as a basis for teacher education - Views of Serbian teachers and teacher educators. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(3), 694-703.
- Pinar, W. F., Reynolds, W. M., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P. M. (1995). *Understanding curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Radó, P. (2001). *Transition in Education*. Budapest: Institute for Educational Policy, Open Society Institute.
- Radó, P. (2010). *Governing Decentralized Education Systems: Systemic Change in the South-East European Context*. Budapest: Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, Open Society Foundations (OSF/LGI). Retrieved August 18, 2011, from [http://lgi.osi.hu/publications/2010/418/Rado\\_Decentralizing\\_Education\\_final\\_WEB.pdf](http://lgi.osi.hu/publications/2010/418/Rado_Decentralizing_Education_final_WEB.pdf)

- Reid, W. A. (1997). Principle and Pragmatism in English Curriculum Making 1868-1918. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 29(6), 667-682.
- Sayer, J. (2006). European Perspectives of Teacher Education and Training. *Comparative Education*, 42(1), 63-75.
- Shulman, L. S. (1987). Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(1), 1-22.
- Singer-Gabella, M., & Tiedemann, P. (2008). Tasks and Trajectories in Learning to Teach. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 40(4), 457-480.
- Stoof, A., Martens, R. L., van Merriënboer, J. J. G., & Bastiaens, T. J. (2002). The Boundary Approach of Competence: A Constructivist Aid for Understanding and Using the Concept of Competence. *Human Resource Development Review*, 1(3), 345-365.
- van Tartwijk, J., den Brok, P., Veldman, I., & Wubbels, T. (2009). Teachers' practical knowledge about classroom management in multicultural classrooms. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(3), 453-460.
- Tigelaar, D. E. H., Dolmans, D. H. J. M., Wolfhagen, I. H. A. P., & van der Vleuten, C. P. M. (2004). The Development and Validation of a Framework for Teaching Competencies in Higher Education. *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning*, 48(2), 253-268.
- Tyler, R. W. (1949). *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press.
- Valli, L., & Rennert-Ariev, P. (2002). New Standards and Assessments? Curriculum Transformation in Teacher Education. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 34(2), 201-225.
- Verloop, N., Van Driel, J., & Meijer, P. (2001). Teacher knowledge and the knowledge base of teaching. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 35(5), 441-461.
- Westbury, I. (1998). Didaktik and curriculum studies. In B. B. Gudem & S. Hopmann (Eds.), *Didaktik and/or Curriculum: An International Dialogue*, American university studies, education Series XIV, Vol. 41 (pp.47-78). New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.
- Westbury, I. (2000). Teaching as a reflective practice: what might Didaktik teach Curriculum? In I. Westbury, S. Hopmann, & K. Riquarts (Eds.), *Teaching as a reflective practice: the German Didaktik tradition* (pp. 15-39). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Wise, A. (1979). *Legislated learning*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Zgaga, P. (2003). Reforming the universities of South East Europe in view of the Bologna Process. *Higher Education in Europe*, 28(3), 251-258.
- Zuzovsky, R., & Libman, Z. (2006). Standards of Teaching and Teaching Tests: Is This the Right Way to Go? *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 32(1), 37-52.