

TEPE 2020 Policy Statement

The theme of the 14th TEPE conference was *Sustainability and ethics in teacher education and education policy*. Through this theme, the TEPE network explored teacher education, the teaching profession and teacher education policy through explicitly ethics and sustainability-related perspectives. This theme connects with important global developments, trends and discourses, and therefore reflects societal needs. The conference addressed three sub-themes, namely:

- Towards more sustainable education and overcoming global learning crisis: a new challenge for teacher education policy and practice
- Teaching as an ethical profession, and
- Sustainability in teacher education and teacher education policy

This policy statement summarises the main observations from the conference based on key notes, the panel and discussant reports. It addresses stakeholders such as Universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of Teacher Education, Student Unions, Teacher Unions, Teaching Councils, Governments and European Bodies including the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

Promoting teaching as an ethical profession

Society, schools and education are places of diversity in terms of people's backgrounds, dispositions, values and moral compass. Teacher education at all levels (pre-service, in-service) will need to educate a diverse student body for increasingly diverse schools. Teaching practice is as one of the domains in which diversities meet; student teachers, practice supervisors and the schools as communities have diverse backgrounds, needs, and even norms. Whilst it may be challenging to navigate ethical considerations, it is necessary to begin with the recognition of the teaching profession is an ethical profession. Learning to understand and appreciate diversity is an ethical dimension involving aspects of respect, beneficence and justice. It is vital that ethical competence is recognized as a crucial area of teacher's professional competence. Teachers' ethical codes help to manifest high standards of ethics in daily practice. At best, ethical codes or guidelines support and empower teachers in their work.

The following recommendations are provided:

All stakeholders should:

- strengthen commitment towards ethics in teaching and teacher education,
- support the development of ethically outstanding teachers who apply moral virtues in their practice,
- support research on the ethical pillars of teaching and teaching profession.

The European Commission, European Council and European Parliament should:

- support the teaching profession as an ethical profession,
- consider the issue of ethics in teacher education and education policy in EU research programs.

Governments should:

- strengthen their commitment to valuing diversity in society, including school and teacher education, and support teachers and teacher educators in their work towards a more just society,
- strengthen their commitment to teaching as a valued and ethical profession through supporting the advancement of professionalism,
- promote the development of teaching profession as ethical profession, requiring the highest standards of professional practice to perform it well,
- encourage Universities and other HEIs to promote greater emphasis in teacher education curricula on developing ethical competence of prospective teachers,
- encourage Universities and HEIs to promote greater emphasis on creating opportunities for developing teacher educators ethical and pedagogical competences,
- support the teaching profession in exercising agency and collectively assuming authority of ethics as a core component of professional competence,
- support the development of research on the pedagogy of teaching ethics in teacher education.

Teacher education institutions should:

- develop, based on research, the pedagogy of teaching ethics in teacher education,
- lay the ground for developing ethical and thinking competences in initial teacher education, and provide continued opportunities for doing so in in-service teacher education,
- ensure that teacher educators have opportunities to develop their ethical competence while also developing their pedagogical competence,
- acknowledge in teacher education curricula that developing ethical competence as part of teacher's professional competence requires opportunities for reflection.

Professional bodies, networks and unions should:

- facilitate the development of ethical guidelines, especially supporting the teaching profession in exercising agency and collectively assuming authority of ethics as a professional competence.

Promoting sustainable teacher education policy and practice

Considering the grand sustainability challenges, it becomes all the more important to recognize the role of teachers, future teacher and teacher educators as educators of values and thinking skills. There is a need to consider not only knowledge and curriculum content, but also 21st Century skills and the concept of Bildung. It is vital that future teachers are able to raise new generations that

think sustainably and assume responsibility for the environment and human development globally. The current sustainability challenges requires to question earlier ways of thinking and to seek new solutions and creativity. However, embarking on new avenues of thinking and problem solving may entail risk of failure. This raises the question of how to promote student teachers' development in these domains without fear of failure. Consequently, there may be a need to rethink the role of assessment in relation to social competences, collaboration skills and ethical compass as assessment criteria strongly influence what is emphasized, taught and learned.

The following recommendations are provided:

All stakeholders should:

- strengthen commitment towards sustainability in teaching and teacher education.

The European Commission, European Council and European Parliament should:

- advance policy education recommendations on sustainable education and teacher education,
- consider the issue of sustainability in teacher education and education policy in EU research programs.

Governments should:

- strengthen the attractiveness of teaching as a profession to ensure sustainability of the provision of teachers,
- support teacher education institutions in creating learning cultures that give student teachers an opportunity to develop their understanding about collaborative working and learning,
- improve the necessary preconditions and provisions for the continued professional development of teachers in the context of teaching profession as ethical profession.

Teacher education institutions should:

- ensure that learning goals are inclusive enough for encompassing the domains of ethics and sustainability competences,
- create learning cultures that give student teachers an opportunity to develop their understanding about collaborative working and learning,
- exhibit sustainable values and responsibility in curricula and in actions,
- support sustainability competences in initial teacher education, and provide continued opportunities for doing so in in-service teacher education,
- ensure that learning goals are inclusive enough for encompassing the domains of ethics and sustainability competences.

Professional bodies, networks, and unions should:

- adopt sustainability competences as part of teachers' professional competence, and support the development of these competences in initial and in-service teacher education.

Responding to the global challenge

The concept of sustainable teacher education policy implies a sustained vision and persistent work towards key goals rather than buzz words and short-term goals. Teacher education should be seen as part of systemic change in education and in ensuring greater equity and quality for all students' learning. Pre-service teachers need opportunities to develop a global perspective to educational challenges. One area of promise for future learning is connected with a rapid development of technology, e.g. artificial intelligence in teaching and learning, and it must be applied wisely.

The following recommendations are provided:

All stakeholders should:

- recognize and support teacher education as a driving force in conceptualizing and designing the learning opportunities of the future locally, nationally and globally,
- contribute to an ethical, respectful and sustainable application of artificial intelligence in teaching and teacher education.

The European Commission, European Council and European Parliament should:

- advance policy education recommendations on sustainable education and teacher education with a view to overcoming challenges in learning globally,
- support multidisciplinary platforms for peer learning between policy makers, practitioners and researchers at institutional, national and European Level.

Governments should:

- recognize that in education, not only access to education matters; The quality of education and educational services that support different learners have a high influence on learning.
- nationally and internationally continuously discuss the importance of competent teachers and high-quality teacher education with the intention to induce systemic and sustainable improvements in educational systems,
- recognize teacher education institutions as partners in the process of policy development,
- support teacher education institutions in creating learning cultures conducive for innovative, sustainable and ethical thinking and practice.

Teacher education institutions should:

- facilitate learning cultures that allow student teachers to develop global responsibility, innovative thinking, creative problem-solving, and collaborative working and learning.
- promote research that helps teachers to find new perspectives to current practice and encourages to seek new ways to teaching and learning.

Professional bodies, networks, and unions should:

- support teacher education institutions in creating opportunities conducive for global responsibility, innovative, sustainable and ethical thinking and practice.

About the Conference

The conference took place online May 13-15, 2020 as a consequence of the global COVID 19 pandemic. The conference was organized by Professor Hannele Niemi and Professor Erika Löfström at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki. The conference offered four distinguished keynotes and more than 30 paper presentations. The key notes were:

- General Director of the Finnish National Agency for Education **Olli-Pekka Heinonen** on *The future of education systems: Initial observations from the process on “Highest performing systems for tomorrow”*
- Professor **Tuija Turunen** (University of Lapland) with the topic *I am a teacher educator. What is your superpower? - Educating teachers to make a difference*
- Professor **Eve Eisenschmidt** (Tallinn University) on *How to multiply teachers: solving a shortage of teachers*
- Professor **Ritva Reinikka** (Aalto University School of Business and Helsinki Graduate School of Economics) on *The global learning crisis: Time to focus on quality in learning and teaching*

Furthermore, the conference hosted a panel discussion chaired by professor Hannele Niemi on the theme *The role and responsibilities of Higher Education and Teacher Education in contributing to solve global learning poverty*. The panelists were Professor Pavel Zgaga, Professor Ritva Reinikka, Professor Tuija Turunen, Senior Ministerial Advisor Marjo Vesalainen, and PhD student Vilhelmiina Harju.

The presentations organized along three parallel sessions feature 3-4 presentations. These had all undergone a double blind peer review process in which each submission was reviewed by two experts. At all the parallel sessions, there were a discussant who summarized the main take-home messages from the session. The discussants were Dr. Marco Snoek, Dr. Lili-Ann Wolff, Dr. Kirsi Wallinheimo, Dr. Päivi Kousa, Professor Erika Löfström and Professor Hannele Niemi.

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