

## **Teacher Education Policy in Europe (TEPE) Conference 2010**

**Tallinn University, Estonia**

Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> September – Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2010

### **Introduction**

The fourth TEPE Conference was hosted by Tallinn University and took place from 30th September to 2nd October 2010. The conference addressed the theme of *Developing Quality Cultures in Teacher Education: Expanding horizons in relation to quality assurance*. It involved 90 participants from 20 countries in Europe and beyond in discussions on various aspects of teacher education policy in Europe through 30 plenary and workshop presentations. These conclusions aim to synthesise key messages of the Conference.

### **Aims of the conference**

The Joint Declaration of European Ministers of Education – the Bologna Declaration of June 1999 – called for the promotion of European co-operation in Quality Assurance (QA) with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies. At the Bergen Ministerial Conference in 2005, common European standards and guidelines for QA were approved and have been implemented in almost all national systems. Today, QA is mainly carried out at the university level encompassing all disciplines and study areas. On the other hand, in some disciplines and study areas, we witness approaches to developing quality cultures at the European level with respect to the specific nature of a discipline. Teacher education faces particular challenges in the promotion of co-operation in QA due to the very diverse approaches towards its organisation at the national level and the resulting fragmentation at the European level.

### **Conclusions**

The conference affirmed the importance of advancing quality cultures in Teacher Education further at both national and institutional levels in order to promote teachers' competencies, as a crucial precondition for high quality learning in the future. Further it recognised that we are entering a new era in quality management for higher education which is moving away from a mechanistic to a holistic and cultural view of quality in education. This involves an emerging understanding that quality improvement in this field calls for the development of organisational cultures based on shared values, necessary competencies and new professionalism.

With regard to competence, the conference firmly rejected narrow conceptions arising from behaviourist and positivist thinking associated with checklist and tick box approaches to quality assurance and strongly affirmed an alternative and more liberal concept. This sees the achievement of competence as accompanied in its appropriation and in its exercise by the attitudes, beliefs, and personal culture of the person who acquires and exercises the competency in question.

Whereas, much attention has been paid to mastering instruments of quality control or accreditation in the past decades, the focus is increasingly on developing the capacity to respond to change, allowing ownership for individual development, promoting distributed leadership in organisations and enabling professionals in their own professional learning and development.

Against this background the conference agreed on the importance of co-operation with other key players in the at the international level such as the Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE) and on the proposal to seek to establish the basis for a European network on quality in teacher education in collaboration with other key stakeholders.

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